

THE RUTHERFORD INSTITUTE

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“The investigation of individuals’ beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief.”— Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, Chapter 3, Art. 23

October 21, 2011

Via U.S. Mail and Facsimile

The Honorable Mohammad Khazaei
Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ambassador Khazaei:

According to reports coming out of Iran, Iranian officials have now leveled charges of rape and extortion¹ against 32-year-old Youcef Nadarkhani, the Christian Iranian pastor who was sentenced to death on charges of apostasy². That these highly suspect charges, which were not referenced in any way during Nadarkhani’s 2010 apostasy trial before the Iranian Supreme Court, have only now emerged reflects poorly on the integrity of the justice system in Iran.

Should Iran, one of the world’s oldest civilizations, ever truly hope to take its place as a world leader alongside other developed nations, it must begin by prioritizing

¹ CNN, “Iranian Pastor Faces Death For Rape, Not Apostasy – Report.” Last modified September 30, 2011, Accessed October 19, 2011.

http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-30/middleeast/world_meast_iran-christian-pastor_1_violent-crimes-apostasy-execution?_s=PM:MIDDLEEAST.

² Youcef was convicted of apostasy after protesting his government’s decision to teach Christian schoolchildren—including his 8- and 6-year-old sons—about Islam. Over the course of the past two years Youcef has spent in prison, he has suffered various forms of irregular punishment, including a denial of access to his attorney, the arrest of his wife, threats to place his two sons in the custody of Muslim families, and the administration of drugs in an attempt to force him to recant his religious faith.

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compassion over clericalism and legalism and, in the process, respecting the human rights of its people.³ In doing so, Iran can also set an example for other nations, including the United States, to follow. To this end, releasing Nadarkhani and dropping the charges against him would send a strong message, not only to other Islamic nations but to all nations, that Iran's strength lies in its ability to traverse the moral high ground.

We⁴ urge you to do all within your power to urge the government leaders and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran to be vehicles of mercy and peace, in keeping with the true mandate of the prophet Mohammad.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely yours,



John W. Whitehead
President

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CC: The Honorable Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State
Ban Ki Moon, United Nations Secretary-General
Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

³ VOA News, "Iran Slams UN Human Rights Report," *New York Times* (Oct. 20, 2011), <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Iran-Slams-UN-Human-Rights-Report-132226988.html>.

⁴ The Rutherford Institute is a civil liberties organization dedicated to the defense of constitutional freedoms and human rights.