ACAT (Harrow) - prayer case of the month *(November 2023)*

Please pray as you feel led for **Anooshavan Avedian (61). He is an ethnic Armenian house-church leader who is serving a ten-year prison sentence in Iran for teaching other Christians in his home, which a judge described as “propaganda contrary to and disturbing to the holy religion of Islam”.**



**Anooshavan Avedian** was arrested with two converts in August 2020 when approximately thirty Ministry of Intelligence and Security agents raided his home in Narmak, northeast Tehran, where around 18 Christians including members of his family had gathered to pray and worship. The agents confiscated all Bibles and communication devices and demanded that everyone fill in forms providing personal information including passwords to phones and social media accounts. Members of the church were subsequently forced to sign official documents promising that they would not attend further house-church meetings, nor make contact with any other Christians.

**Anooshavan Avedian** and the two converts were held for a period in Tehran’s notorious Evin Prison, where they were subjected to solitary confinement and intensive interrogation sessions. The two converts finally received a range of non-custodial punishments.

Although he was sentenced in April 2022, **Anooshavan Avedian** was only summoned to start his sentence in September 2023. As well as his decade-long prison term, he faces a further ten years of ‘deprivation of social rights’ after his eventual release. This means that he will not be allowed to join any political or social groups, including meeting other Christians, and that his employment options when he is released will be restricted.

Ethnic Armenian and Assyrian Christians in Iran are permitted to meet for worship, but only if they use their own ethnic languages, not the national language (Persian or Farsi). The vast majority of Iranian Christians are converts from Islam and they are not permitted to meet for worship in Persian, nor to join Armenian and Assyrian churches. They have no option but to meet for worship in secret house-churches, constantly at risk of discovery and raids.

Update: Narges Mohammadi (our prayer case for June 2023 who is also held in Evin Prison in Iran) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2023 “for her fight against the oppression of women in Iran and her fight to promote human rights and freedom for all”.