

## November 2011 Germany, Iranians, Brother Ivan

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Titus, and there's an MP3 about this at <http://www.aletheiacollege.net/audio/titus.mp3>

### GERMANY

We often mention our Iranian brethren, and we shouldn't forget their plight and difficulties both within Iran and also in seeking asylum in various Western countries. You can read a recent press report at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/iranian-pastor-on-death-row-under-pressure-61949/>

which describes in detail how Christians are persecuted for their faith in Iran, and how a non-trinitarian pastor is currently facing execution for preaching. With the religious Police so active in Iran hunting down Christians and any whiff of preaching activity, ecclesial life as we know it in many countries is impossible.

Here are some extracts from the article:

"The mistreatment of a pastor in Iran awaiting a decision on his death sentence for refusing to recant his faith amounts to physical and psychological torture... Yousef Nadarkhani, sentenced to death a year ago after a court of appeals in Rasht, Iran, found him guilty of leaving Islam ... is in deteriorating health... he has undergone physical and psychological torture... Authorities have also continued to pressure Nadarkhani to recant his faith while in prison. Last month they gave him Islamic literature aimed at discrediting the Bible... After finding him guilty of apostasy, the court of appeals issued a written confirmation of his charges and death sentence... The Supreme Court had also determined that his death sentence could be annulled if he recanted his faith. The court gave Nadarkhani three chances to recant Christianity in accordance with sharia (Islamic law), but Nadarkhani refused to do so... There are two more Christians from the Church of Iran, a denomination that Iranian Christians accuse of being "non-Trinitarian," who are also serving prison sentences... Another wave of arrests is expected this December and January, a favorite time for Iranian authorities to make the rounds at Christian house group meetings, according to the Church of Iran source... Noorollah Ghabitizadeh has been in prison since Dec. 24, 2010. Authorities originally held him in Dezful and later transferred him to Ahwaz as punishment for starting a Bible study... Authorities have reportedly put Ghabitizadeh under intense pressure to renounce Christianity and return to Islam. In his first trial hearing two months ago, a judge pressured him by telling him his death penalty for apostasy would be decided in that court hearing"

Please pray for our brethren in Iran, and especially for several contacts we have who would like to be baptized but fear the repercussions. We may wonder why ever people would accept Christianity under such conditions, let alone preach it, and the answer surely lies in the simple power of the Gospel and the unique power and attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have quite a group of Iranian brethren in Latvia and they are very active spreading the Truth through the internet.

One Iranian brother Sherwin introduced the Gospel to his brother who was baptized in Sweden. This brother had been interested in our teachings for some time previous to that, and whilst living in Greece he had shared the Truth with another young man, S. Sajad is now at an assylum seeker centre in Germany, and there he has started a *Bible Basics* class with two men somewhat older than him, T and O. It was our pleasure to visit them this week and baptize these three men into the Lord Jesus.

They are currently in an asylum seekers' centre which is a disused hospital, they are sleeping on old hospital beds in fairly spartan conditions. The walls of their room are covered in graffiti in Albanian left by the previous inmates, who were from Kosova. However they are provided with food and clothing, which they aren't given at the refugee centres in Latvia. Here they study the Bible and *Bible Basics* regularly- you can see the Albanian graffiti on the wall

They are an interesting group of brethren. In secular life in Iran, they were an electrician, an accountant and an engineer specializing in developing agricultural machinery, and are each from a different ethnic group within Iran. Each of them in different ways came to convert to Christ and then were providentially led to a fuller and more complete understanding of the Gospel and thence to baptism. It was therefore a true pleasure, after long discussions, to take them to the local swimming pool and baptize them into the Lord Jesus:

One of our brethren was raised in the Yezidi faith in Iranian Kurdistan. They are the only religion we're aware of apart from ourselves who formally deny the existence of a personal Satan. You can read a bit more about them in chapter 3-2 of our publication *The Real Devil* , online at <http://www.realdevil.info/3-2.htm> . Each of our new brethren has his own network of contacts both in Iran and other Iranians elsewhere in the world, and they are already spreading the Gospel to them. They request more copies of Farsi Bibles and literature, as it's very hard to obtain them in bookshops, and they have little money. We find ourselves spending quite a lot on refugee support issues and we appreciate your continued donations which enable this. Please do pray for our dear brethren, and for those seeking to assist them.

### **BROTHER IVAN**

We're pleased to report the arrival of the first of the various chess sets which Carelink readers have kindly undertaken to send over. When we get a few more we will set up a tournament. Our brother Vladimir can see much better after his cataract operation but limited sight was a handy excuse for him at times:



Indeed, the chess set has proven so popular it seems to remain on the table during our "Bible breakfast" sessions of doing the *Bible Companion* readings over breakfast some mornings:



You can see sister Judite on the far left of the above photo. We reported in previous messages of the traumas she has gone through in recent times, not least in giving birth to a stillborn baby and being treated very inhumanely by [supposed] health care staff. We also reported how we provided housing for her and her husband IVAN [Janis]. Although Judite is of limited literacy, she always attends the meetings, as does her husband Ivan. Indeed he has been coming for as long as she has, but has resisted being baptized- until recently. We're always delighted to report baptisms, but it really is a great joy to report his baptism this week. Judite was simply overjoyed. You can see Ivan here receiving a pre-baptismal 'obodrenie' from brother Voldymar, and a very happy Judite standing with him after his immersion:



We continue supporting them, but along with many of our brethren and sisters, the only time they get to eat meat during the week is at the meals we provide at the feeding scheme:



**With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks**