

PRISONER PROFILE

Prisoner Name: **Ebrahim Firouzi**

Location: **Iran**

Arrested: **August 2013**

Sentence: **5 years + 2
years internal
exile**



Arrest and background

Over the past five years there has been a well-organised crackdown by the Iranian authorities on the house churches in Iran and particularly on believers from a Muslim background. This focus on arresting Christians who have converted from Islam is only one part of the Islamic regime's strategy to suppress the growth of the church.

Ebrahim Firouzi is a Christian convert who was imprisoned in ward 10 of Rajai-Shahr prison together with other Christian prisoners. He was arrested on August 21, 2013. Prior to that he had been convicted of several charges including propaganda against the Islamic regime, evangelism, contacts with anti-Islamic agents abroad and founding a Christian website for which he was sentenced to one year in prison and two years of exile to the remote town of Sarbaz. Although he completed his initial sentence on January 13, 2015, Iranian authorities kept him detained on new charges of 'acting against national security'. According to Mohabat News, Branch 28 of the central Revolutionary Court then sentenced Ebrahim to an additional five years in prison. At the time Ebrahim's lawyer stated that a five-year sentence is the highest possible punishment for the charges laid against his client.

Prior to his imprisonment Ebrahim had been arrested several times for his Christian activities. He was arrested for the first time on January 11, 2011, and then held for 154 days before being released conditionally. Later on March 7, 2013 he was arrested for the second time. On this occasion when Ebrahim 'disappeared', family and friends were extremely concerned for his safety. Initially they were unable to discover exactly what had happened to him but, after contacting a number of his friends and work colleagues, they were informed that he had been detained by several plain-clothes security officers while on his way to work. Once the family understood that their son had been arrested they began visiting local police stations, hospitals and other places in an effort to find him. Eventually his father found him at the Robat-Karim courthouse. Ebrahim's head had been shaved and he was dressed in prison clothes. At the time the authorities refused to explain exactly why he had been arrested but Ebrahim's father was told that his son could be released on bail of approximately US\$18,000.

While on a short leave from prison during his one-year sentence, Ebrahim was arrested again in a meeting at a friend's office on August 21, 2013. This time he was accused of spying.

Local reports state that during his imprisonment, Ebrahim suffered acute pain in the left side of his chest and that the authorities withheld the necessary medical treatment.

Ebrahim Firouzi is one of approximately 90 Christians currently imprisoned across Iran simply as a result of their faith and their desire to meet, study the Bible and worship together with other Christians.

Pray:

1. That he would experience God's presence, peace, power and protection in prison.
2. For his health, and specifically for healing of the acute pains in his chest.

UPDATES

March 2016 - Appeal for prayer for Christians and churches in Iran: Ebrahim, who remains imprisoned in Rajai-Shahr Prison in Karaj in Iran, has appealed for prayer for Christians and churches in his country. In his appeal Ebrahim noted God's promises to those who remain faithful to him. He emphasised that he wants to stand strong in the face of persecution, but acknowledged that he cannot do this alone and so appealed for prayer. While he longs to be free from prison, he noted that 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.'

He continued: 'Jesus is our example; the Saviour who came among us to be crucified and save us. We sometimes have to sacrifice our freedom to live in God's love, so I can't think only about myself when there are so many believers suffering persecution. My freedom and getting out of prison cannot be my only purpose. We think especially about the suffering of new believers. If my being in prison stirs the international community to work to prevent such future persecution of new believers, then my choice is to remain in prison.'

'I ask you to pray for the reopening of the churches in Iran that the government has forcibly closed - let the sound of worship and praise be heard in the buildings again! Pray for me to be a good example before the other prisoners.'

October 2018: It was reported that Ebrahim had been continually refused medical treatment for severe toothache, which spread throughout his jaw and face to the point that he was unable to eat solid food.

December 2018: Ebrahim's mother Kobra Kamrani died on 3 December. The authorities refused to allow Ebrahim to visit her before she died. The funeral was held on 4 December, before Ebrahim had an opportunity to apply for permission to attend.

October 2019: Ebrahim was released from prison on 26 October but was sent for two years in exile in the remote province of Sistan and Baluchestan. In **March 2020** that exile was extended by a further 11 month owing to an "unauthorised" leave of absence, when Ebrahim visited home to sort out some family affairs related to the death of his mother while he was in prison. In **September 2020** Ebrahim was threatened with new charges of "insulting the sacred" and "propaganda against the state through promoting the Christian faith", but the local prosecutor dismissed the charges. However, in **February 2021** Ebrahim was summoned again to answer charges of "insulting the sacred" (blasphemy) and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic in favour of hostile groups". Ebrahim went to the prosecutor's office the next day, Monday 8 February, and was transferred immediately to Chabahar Prison. On Saturday 13 February 21 Ebrahim began an indefinite hunger strike in protest against the new charges, saying he wouldn't eat again until they were dropped. He ended his hunger strike two days later after receiving assurances from intelligence agents, after which he was transferred to Zahedan Central Prison. He was released on bail on 27 February 2021. (Source: Article 18)

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