



ASIA/IRAN - False News with regards to the execution of an evangelical pastor

Tehran (Agenzia Fides) - The Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani is still alive. The news about his execution circulated last week have been discredited by reputable sources contacted by the association Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW).

Last September, the court in Rasht had acquitted Nadarkhani of apostasy but sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for the work of evangelization carried out by him among the Muslims. The Pastor, who previously had spent three years in prison, after an initial release on bail was arrested again from December 25 to January 7, 2013, to then be finally released.

In recent days, the news of the alleged execution of Nadarkhani started to circulate on the basis of the spread of some photos of a death sentence which actually dates back to 2007. "It is important that news about such serious matters are carefully checked for reliability" said the executive director of CSW Mervyn Thomas, condemning the spread of "rumors" that have needlessly created anxiety among family members and Christians related to Pastor Nadarkhani.

Meanwhile, in a statement sent to Fides Agency, the association Middle East Concern asks for prayers for the fate of five Christians detained in Iran to be put on trial on Sunday, March 10 at the Revolutionary Court of Shiraz. They were arrested in October and took part in prayer meetings, the five - from Muslim families - will have to respond to allegations concerning the protection of public order and national security and the ban on proselytizing activities of evangelical brand. Another group of evangelical believers from Muslim families, were arrested in February 2012 and since then held in Shiraz, are still awaiting trial.

The statement of Middle East Concern also mentions the continuing imprisonment of Pastor Behnam in Iranian prisons - with serious health problems - and of Pastor Saeed, who has an Iranian and American dual citizenship. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 09/03/2013).