



Iran: Church closed

Central Assemblies of God Church has been forced to close down its regular Friday afternoon services and can only hold two services on Sundays, Farsi Christian News Network (FCNN) reported.

The Assemblies of God authorities announced at the conclusion of their Oct. 30 service that Friday worship services would no longer take place and only Sunday services, in two separate shifts, would be conducted. The church, which is the largest public and formal gathering of Iranian Christians in Iran, was forced to close by the Iranian Ministry of Information.

The church has faced extreme pressure from government authorities. "Reverend Soorik ... has been under ongoing pressure from the officials of the Ministry of Information to close down the church on Fridays, the official weekly holiday in Iran, and lately was warned that the Pasdaran Militia (The Revolutionary Guards) had been demanding the closure of the church," FCNN reported.

The Rev. Soorik decided to voluntarily close the church instead of waiting for security officials to close it. Central Assemblies of God Church is the latest church to be forced to close services in Iran. According to FCNN, the Assyrian Pentecostal Church of Shahrara was shut down in 2008. It had offered services on Fridays and Sundays in the Farsi language to Farsi speaking Iranians for more than eight years.

Even though the government has not given reasons for shutting down the services, believers in Iran think the recent wave of media and Web-based attacks on Christian media, satellite channels, and evangelistic activities demonstrate the Iranian government's intent to prevent Christians from worshiping.

The Voice of the Martyrs stands with and supports persecuted believers in Iran. VOM encourages you to pray for believers who face challenges daily as they live for Christ with courage and faith.