

CHRISTIAN MARTYRS

The Hidden Stones in Our Foundation

Iran – Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr (1946–1994)

Assembly of God leader Haik Hovsepian-Mehr was martyred by Muslims in Iran after the nation became an Islamic republic in 1979. Here are some 11-year-old excerpts from his writings. The situation in Iran remains the same.

(The Islamic) Revolution has been such a great blessing for the church, because we have learned so many lessons that otherwise we couldn't have learned. The persecutions helped the elect to remain in Iran and continue the work in spite of all kind of hostilities from the enemies. At the same time, it helped the church to know who are the real ministers of the gospel and who (are) just pay-workers! Before the revolution we had many so-called Rice Christians, but after it, we had not had even one! The reason is that anyone coming to Christ these days has to pay the price with his life or at least lose many financial gains and profits. Unity of the church workers from different denominations was another great blessing we experienced.

One Presbyterian pastor in the city of Tabriz was badly beaten so that after one week imprisonment, he had spinal problems and also dizziness. A brother in the city of Abwas was jailed for 27 days. He was threatened and asked to cooperate with them (the police) bringing news of the new converts. Praise God all pastors were faithful in their ministries, though most of them were going through hard times.

(Emigration) of some of the pastors and church members leaving Iran was another threat to the existence of the church here. (A great number of) church leaders and members, seeking a better life both spiritually and financially, started to (flee) to other countries. This was another blow of the Devil to the church. Almost more than one-third of all evangelical pastors left Iran. Hundreds of Christians immigrated to (the) West, and the church faced a big crisis.

Persecution continued. The enemies of the gospel miserably tried to arrest more pastors. One pastor was hanged in jail just two years ago in December 1990. He has a totally blind wife and four children. He was a Muslim

convert who was ordained a Pentecostal pastor in the city of Mashhad. Another elder of the church is spending his eighth year of imprisonment. He is accused of changing his religion and becoming an (apostle) according to Islam. Many other members also were arrested. Their only accusation was proselytism. It is incredible how these dear Muslim converts stood for their faith. In one case, when Rev. Hossein Soudmand was martyred for his faith, a Muslim convert came to me with tears in his eyes and said, "I am worried why I was not martyred like that pastor." Soon this brother was arrested. He was accused of selling New Testaments out in the streets. He was jailed for 45 days. He was told he would be killed for his faith. He said goodbye to his wife and children but was released after a few days. This is a very common thing in Iran for Christians to go to jail or expect martyrdom.

There are many Muslims who come to church and express their desire to be converted, but they are frightened of execution. I am sure that as this problem is solved, we will have many converts.

One thing which I should like to emphasize here is that nominal Christians (ethnic Armenians) have no special problems. The government of

Iran has tried (its) best to solve their problems, and they have never been persecuted just for being a Christian. The persecution starts when we evangelize.

Bishop Haik's death, and the deaths of other Iranian Christian pastors, has produced fruit. Today several thousand Muslim converts to Christ worship Jesus as Lord and Savior in the privacy of their homes. A rough estimate of the number of these believers is between 15,000 and 25,000. Even if the lower figure is correct, this could place Iran as a world leader in Muslim conversions.

The courage and sacrifice of our brothers and the pain suffered by their widows has not been in vain. Pray for our Christian family in Iran as they reach out. VOM is heavily involved with printing Bibles and literature for Iran. 🌐



Haik Hovsepian-Mehr

A Christian martyr is one who chooses to suffer death rather than to deny Christ, or His work...sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God...endures great suffering for Christian Witness.