

Mr. Martin Lessenthin
Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte
IGFM-Deutsche Sektion e.V.
Borsigallee 9
D-60388 Frankfurt/Main

Dear Mr Lessenthin,

I am writing to thank you for your letter concerning the death sentence imposed by the Iranian authorities on Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani [...].

I have been following the case and remain extremely concerned about the situation of Father Nadarkhani, as well as of others in a similar situation. As you are aware, Pastor Nadarkhani was one of two individuals whose cases my predecessor, Jerzy Buzek, specifically raised in his speech [...] on 10 October. Furthermore, Pastor Nadarkhani's case featured prominently in the European Parliament's November Urgency Resolution on recent cases of human rights violations in Iran (see annex) and received much attention during the plenary debate. His case does indeed deserve this strong signal from the European Parliament, as both freedom of religion or belief and the abolition of the death penalty are core values of the European Union and the European Parliament, and of the citizens we represent.

In the meantime, despite our efforts and those of the wider international community, Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani continues to face the death sentence for apostasy. The case has on two occasions been referred to the Supreme Leader of Iran, who has yet to issue a decision, but a final ruling is expected at any time. Accordingly, we must remain vigilant and will continue with our efforts at every possible level to press for Pastor Nadarkhani's immediate and unconditional release, and for protection of all human rights, including the freedom of religion or belief, in Iran.

[...] I can assure you that the European Parliament the Subcommittee on Human Rights, Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I personally, will continue to follow the case closely and to raise this extremely serious issue through all available channels.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Schulz
[President of the European Parliament]