

# REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS

Dear friend,

During the month of November as we focus on Prayer for Persecuted Christians, I'd like to share with you the story of Pastor Hossein Soodmand from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Rashin, Pastor Soodmand's daughter, was 13 years old when her life changed forever.

*"I was playing outside in the yard when a car stopped in front of our house. We didn't know who they were. After 10 minutes they invited my father to come sit in the car. I couldn't hear their conversations but I felt there was something wrong. Fear swept over me."*

Moments later, Rashin watched helplessly as the car, with her father, sped away.

Pastor Soodmand was born into a Muslim family. As a young man he left Islam and converted to Christianity. He became a devoted minister who loved both Muslims and Christians alike and dedicated his life to sharing the Gospel message of salvation. Everybody trusted him and it was not unusual for people to call on him at all hours of the day or night.

*"My father had a loving and caring heart. I remember how my father would patiently answer questions from people who would come to ask about Christianity."*

As a result of his loving ministry, Pastor Soodmand's home church grew rapidly. Many Muslim's came to Christ. He became a threat to the Islamic Republic.

On that fateful day, Pastor Soodmand was taken to Mashad prison. After a month of intense torture and suffering he was released back to his family with an ultimatum:

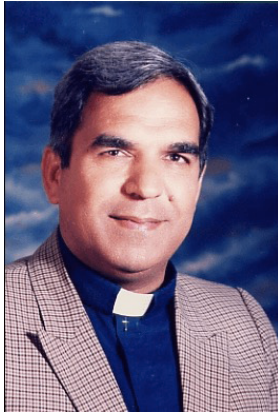
***"Stop your ministry, deny your faith and return to Islam or we will kill you!"***

Pastor Soodmand refused to obey the Islamic authorities mandate to deny his faith and to stop evangelizing Muslims and issued a formal statement:

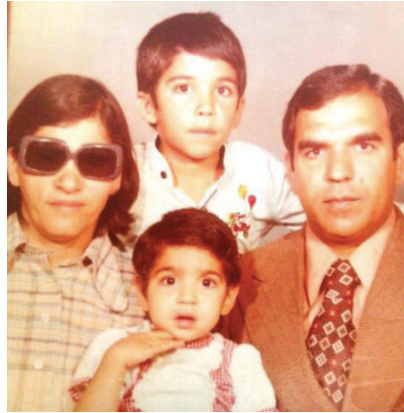
*"I am a follower of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, and I am ready to sacrifice myself for my sheep. For me to escape from the persecution would cause the hearts of my flock to become cold and weak. I never want to be a bad example to them. I am ready to go to prison and, if necessary, to give my life."*

Two weeks later Pastor Hossein Soodmand was executed by hanging.

Rashin never imagined that she could survive the loss of her beloved father. Or get over the pain of his death. But his faith and strength taught her to keep her eyes on her Heavenly Father, to bring her fear and tears at the feet of Christ.



*Pastor Hossein Soodmand*



*Pastor Soodmand & Family*



*Rashin*

Pastor Soodmand left behind his blind wife and four children.

## CARING FOR THEIR FAMILIES

Today in Iran, Christians continue to be persecuted and imprisoned. Since the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, millions of Muslims who have become disillusioned with Islam have turned to Christ. Pastor Soodmand is a great example of unrelenting faith and the inspiration for Christian leaders in Iran today. His story, and the story of other Christian martyrs, is a powerful example of how the execution or imprisonment of Christians affects entire families. Families are left to struggle without a father, a husband and often, the breadwinner.

After my father was thrown in prison in communist Bulgaria, Mother struggled to feed her two children, Rhoda and me. Through my own childhood experiences, often going hungry and missing my father, I have great empathy for the Iranian families facing the same dire situation today.

If not for the kindness of Godly people who God nudged their hearts to pray for us and also send us practical support through loving care packages, we would not have survived. Often this help came at our most critical time of need.

Just like the situation was for my family, families of imprisoned Christians in Iran need our support.

As followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should not be apathetic to the plight of our brothers and sisters in Iran.

Together we can be of great help!

Paul Haralan Popov

P.S. As November is dedicated to focus on prayer for Persecuted Christians, please join us not only in prayer but to also bring aid and support to the suffering prisoner's families. Your help will be a great encouragement to our suffering brothers and sisters and their sons and daughters!

## REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN IRANIAN

Rev. Hossein Soodmand • Rev. Haik Hovsepien • Rev. Arastoo Sayyah • Bahram Dehghani  
Rev. Tateos Michaelian • Re. Mehdi Dibaj • Rev. Mohammad Yusefi Ravanbaksh  
Ghorban Tourani • Manouchehr Afghan • Esther Yeghnazar