



OPEN DOORS USA

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Iranian Christians Refuse To Accept Election Results

SANTA ANA, CA (June 16, 2009) – In Tehran many Iranians haven't accepted the results of the presidential elections held last Friday. News reports show protesters streaming through the streets of Iran's capital. There are also reports that Ayatollah Khamenei has directed the Guardian Council to examine claims of election fraud after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared the runaway winner.

Open Doors learned through its contacts that voters are frustrated and have lost trust in Iran's government in cities outside of Tehran.

Iranian Christian Daryush (not his real name) from Shiraz reports: "In my neighborhood there is no evidence of any skirmishes or demonstrations and also no celebration from the elections anymore. The streets have been swept clean. But the evidence that we have trouble in Shiraz is the constant presence of the various security forces and the military helicopter I saw flying overhead. But I have only driven around my own neighborhood, so I can't speak for the entire city."

In other districts of the southwestern city of Shiraz the situation is grimmer. Daryush shares: "Friends told me that young people in Shiraz are being arrested and that they've seen young men and women being beaten or worse. A friend who lives near the university and student dorms told me she heard screaming, shouting and gunfire in the early hours of the morning. The predominately young demonstrators are calling Ahmadinejad a dictator and yell chants like 'Ma dolate zoor nemikhaim' meaning 'we don't want a government of force.' They also yell at the security forces and call them traitors and vote-stealers. A friend said that within the security forces are pro-Mousavi followers, 'saying 'beechareh shodim!' or 'we are without hope.'"

Daryush shares that the "majority of people I spoke with consider the elections a fraud and don't accept the results at all. A friend of our family lives in Shahe Cheragh, which is a predominantly religious and

conservative district of Shiraz. He said that even in that district a huge numbers of votes went to Mousavi.”

Daryush continues: “There are those who have never voted, didn’t vote this time and will never vote under this regime. They look at the rest of us as naive ones and say, ‘See, we told you that the one who had been previously selected would win the election.’ Others I speak with say they will never participate in an election again because ‘it was a total fraud.’”

While some Iranians never accepted this form of government, a certain percentage has considered the Islamic Republic of Iran to being a “limited’ democracy.” Daryush explains that “although the candidates were hand-picked and had the regime’s stamp of approval, at least we had a choice within those limits. This election, however, showed us that the Iranian people don’t have a ‘limited democracy,’ but as some are now saying ‘no democracy at all...we have an Islamic dictatorship.’”

Open Doors spokesman John Fox observes that Christians in general voted for Mousavi and hope for new elections: “We cannot generalize our observations to all Christians, but we asked 29 Christians from Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan and all voted for Mousavi. One of them said, ‘for us *bad* is better than *worse*. Mousavi also promised more religious freedom, so I hope he does not lie.’”

Open Doors USA President/CEO Carl Moeller adds that “we need to continue to pray for the situation in Iran, especially for the Christians caught in the crossfire. This could be a pivotal point in the history of Iran and the future of believers who live there.”

An estimated 100 million Christians worldwide suffer interrogation, arrest and even death for their faith in Christ, with millions more facing discrimination and alienation. Open Doors supports and strengthens believers in the world's most difficult areas through Bible and Christian literature distribution, leadership training and assistance, Christian community development, prayer and presence ministry and advocacy on behalf of suffering believers. To partner with Open Doors USA, call toll free at 888-5-BIBLE-5 (888-524-2535) or go to our Website at www.OpenDoorsUSA.org.

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