

H.E. Mr. MAHDI HONARDOOST

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Athens, Greece

Your Excellency:

I was shocked and appalled to learn that two women, the 27-year old Maryam Rostampour and the 30 year old Marzieh Esmaeilabad are held in prison in Tehran since March 5, 2009. Their arrest took place after their apartments were searched and property confiscated. Maryam and Marzieh were interrogated at the Police and Security Station 137 in Gysha before being taken to Vozara Detention Centre. They were placed in a solitary confinement in the infamous Evin prison, deprived of medical attention and often blindfolded for interrogations for several hours for five months. They suffered sleep deprivation as part of their interrogation, and have not received adequate medical attention until today, just because they left Islam and converted to Christianity.

As you probably know better than me, article 23 of the Iranian Constitution states: "The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief." Article 18 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party, states: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." But despite all this, Maryam and Marzieh were – and still are – treated like criminals for being Christians, and when they appeared before the court on Aug. 9 the deputy prosecutor questioned them about their faith and told them that they had to recant in both verbal and written form. There is also certain information that they are being tortured and ill-treated while in detention. Finally an Iranian newspaper wrote that **they are sentenced to death!**

This terrible news has already spread rapidly on the Internet and has caused many negative comments about Iran.

I am uniting my voice to that of Sabatina James and many other known and unknown activists and ordinary people from all over the world, demanding that human rights be respected and **Maryam Rostampour and Marzieh Amirizadeh Esmaeilabad be released immediately.**