



CONFÉRENCE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DU CANADA
CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

October 6, 2011

Mr. Kambiz Sheikh-Hassani
Chargé d'affaires and Head of Mission
Embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran
245 Metcalfe Street
Ottawa, ON
K2P 2K2

Dear Mr. Sheikh-Hassani,

I wish to bring to your attention the urgent case of Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani who was condemned to death in Iran for converting to the Christian faith. Although his sentence has been commuted, his life remains in danger as he is still being detained on other charges. In addition, he remains under pressure to recant his conversion.

In 1948, Iran voted in favour of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 18, which stipulates that *"Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief..."*

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States, when addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on 27 September 2011, said that *"lack of respect for religious freedom is a threat to security and peace"*. The solution to the problem, he said, lies *"in a shared commitment to recognize and promote the religious freedom of each individual and each community"*. This requires *"sincere inter-religious dialogue, promoted and practiced by representatives of the various religious and supported by governments and international institutions"*.

In this same spirit, we request that your government respect its international commitment to human rights, and that Pastor Nadarkhani, and all other persons in your country who are in similar situations, be treated in accordance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thank you for your attention to our request.

Sincerely,

The Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien
Archbishop of Kingston
Chairman of the Human Rights Committee
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Cc: The Honorable John Baird, Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs