

My One-Year Mission in Jail

Dear xxxxx,

What do you think when you hear about persecuted Christians? Do you envision some weak, fearful Christians who pity themselves because they are arrested? Let me tell you that among those who have been in jail and tortured, I have found the strongest Christians.

Ali's Story

I want to introduce you to one of my heroes. His name is Ali. He used to be a *Basij* (member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards). Before he came to Christ, he was a reciter of Quran and a religious leader (see picture).



Shortly after he came to Christ, he called us. I saw excellent leadership potential in him right away and invited him to be trained as an evangelist/church planter. His mission was to go city to city, evangelize, and form core groups that would be turned into underground house churches by our other gifted leaders.

While traveling city to city, Ali was arrested two times. The first time, he was jailed for one month. His second arrest was more serious. He was sentenced to one year in jail, during which he was tortured.

A while back, I interviewed him about his experience.

Hormoz: Were you ever afraid when you were arrested?

Ali: At first I was. I thought, my life is now ruined. The life of my wife and kids are also ruined. But then God told me, "I am sending you there because people are in jail who will never come out. I am sending you on a mission to tell them about me." You see, there were over 2,300 people in that jail. While I was there, hundreds heard the Gospel. Even during the first month that I was there, I led 23 people to Christ; three were on death row.

Hormoz: When in jail, did you ever say, "Jesus, I was serving you. Why did you allow me to be arrested and tortured?"

Ali: This is exactly what my interrogator asked. He mockingly said, "Where is your Jesus now? Why does He not save you?" I answered him, "Because I am here for you. He is the one who sent me here so that you can hear about His love. He wants to set you free."

Hormoz: Tell me about your torture.

Ali: I was bound, blindfolded, and beaten regularly. But the torture and jail time really built up my faith and character. The presence of God was so heavy and tangible. The intimacy that I had with the Lord Jesus while in prison, I never

(over, please)

experienced outside the prison. He is always with us. He never forsakes us. So now I tell people, "It is your loss if you have not experienced prison."

Hormoz: How do you feel about those who tortured you?

Ali: Even while they had me blindfolded and were cursing and beating me, I was praying for them and blessing them out loud. I would tell them, "I am sorry that you had to get up early this morning and leave your loved ones on a weekend like this and come here because of me. May God bless you." After my release, I still check my heart to make sure there is no root of bitterness in me.



Ali's House Church

My friends, there are many heroes of faith like Ali today. They are humans like you and me with families, dreams, and needs. They experience fear when arrested and pain when beaten. But through God's special grace, they not only endure but overcome. As Jesus teaches us, they are joyful in persecution (Mt 5:10–12) and bless those who curse and torture them (Mt 5:44).

Partner to Serve Our Persecuted Brothers and Sisters

Together, we have been serving the persecuted Christians of Iran in two ways: (1) We have advocated for those who are in jail by hiring lawyers to defend them, and (2) We have supported their families financially in order to provide for their basic needs.

Ali asked me to tell you this: "If you are willing to sacrifice your finances for Jesus, we are willing to sacrifice our lives for Him."

Would you respond to Ali's challenge and give sacrificially to help the 2 million persecuted Christian in Iran not just survive but thrive? We at Iran Alive can do so much more to strengthen the underground church in Iran and accelerate its growth. But only if you help. Would you give sacrificially to the persecuted Christians who are pouring out their lives and health? I pray you will be generous towards your suffering brothers and sisters.

Please participate in our matching gift campaign this month. That means what you give will have double impact for His Kingdom. We are so blessed in the West and often take it for granted. Let's share some of our blessings with our persecuted brothers and sisters. And let's be blessed by them also. Yes, they can bless us. We can learn so much from them about love, dedication, intimacy with God, the sufficiency of Christ, and the sacrificial life of faith and service.



Sacrificing with you for Christ and Iran,

Hormoz Shariat

Hormoz Shariat, Ph.D.
President & Founder, Iran Alive

 **Donate Now!**

P.S. You can challenge others by adding to our matching grant seed money. Go to www.IranAliveMinistries.org and click on the "I want to challenge others" button.