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Two Iranian women are awaiting sentencing in Iran after a court found them guilty of apostasy following their conversion to Christianity. Maryam Rustampoor and Marzieh Amirizadeh were initially arrested on the 5th of March, 2009, for professing faith in Jesus Christ. They have languished in a prison cell in Teheran until the beginning of this week, when they were put on trial for forsaking the religion of Islam. While the Iranian government claims to uphold the religious freedom of minority groups living in the country, under Sharia law it is illegal for any person who was born a Muslim to convert to another religion. For those who are caught, it usually means an automatic death sentence. A few years ago, a man by the name of Abdul Rahman was convicted of apostasy by an Afghan court, and received a death sentence for professing faith in Jesus Christ. This was not done under the Taliban regime, this was done under the moderate Afghan government supported by the US administration. Thankfully the sentence was subsequently quashed after a lot of prayer and pressure from world leaders. The sentence that awaits these two Christians could be much the same. But despite suffering illness and mistreatment at the hands of their captors and having the threat of a death sentence hanging over their heads, the two girls have remained steadfast in their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Judge Haddad, who was presiding over the case, questioned them on their new found faith in Jesus Christ.

Quote: *"Mr. Haddad, asked the two women if they were Christians. "We love Jesus," they replied. He repeated his question and they said, "Yes, we are Christians." Mr. Haddad then said, "You were Muslims and now you have become Christians." "We were born in Muslim families, but we were not Muslims," was their reply. Mr. Haddad's questioning continued and he asked them if they regretted becoming Christians, to which they replied, "We have no regrets." Then he stated emphatically, "You should renounce your faith verbally and in written form." They stood firm and replied, "We will not deny our faith." During one tense moment in the questioning, Maryam and Marzieh made reference to their belief that God had convicted them through the Holy Spirit. Mr. Haddad told them, "It is impossible for God to speak with humans." Marzieh asked him in return, "Are you questioning whether God is Almighty?" Mr. Haddad then replied, "You are not worthy for God to speak to you." Marzieh said, "It is God, and not you, who determines if I am worthy." Mr. Haddad told the women to return to prison and think about the options they were given and come back to him when they are ready (to comply). Maryam and Marzieh said, "We have*

already done our thinking."

Maryam and Marzieh's story is not unique by any means. Many Iranian Muslims are turning to Jesus Christ. One man who I came in contact with was forced to flee from Iran after a fatwah was issued against him. He became a Christian after having seen a vision of Jesus Christ. He started preaching the gospel to Muslims and hundreds of Muslims were getting saved. He fled to England after the authorities in Iran moved against him. He was later advised to move to Northern Ireland after Muslim groups in England threatened his life. Remember Maryam and Marzieh in your prayers, and the Christians in Iran who are forced to practice their faith in secret for fear of persecution. Perhaps you wonder why these two girls, who have their whole lives ahead of them, would willingly surrender their freedom and possibly even their very lives for the sake of what they believe. As Jim Elliott once said, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. It is said of the tribulation saints, that they loved not their lives unto death, and that they will gain the victory through the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11). Do you have eternal life? The Lord Jesus Christ said of all those who put their trust in Him for salvation, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand ", John 10:28. Jesus Christ loves you. He died for you upon the cross so your sins might be forgiven. Why don't you trust in Him for salvation today.

Acts 14:21-22
And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Source Elam