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ASIA/IRAN - Christians arrested in "house churches" at New Year and during the Christmas period

Tehran (Agenzia Fides) - The Iranian security authorities arrested four Iranian Christians, gathered together in a house to celebrate the New Year with a moment of prayer in the town of Karaj. The police broke into the house, beat and arrested Sara Rahimi – Nejad, Mostafa Nadri, Majid Sheidaei and George Isaiah, transferring them to an unknown location. As reported in a note sent to Fides by "Mohabat News", Iranian Christian news agency, the police in plainclothes seized personal belongings, books, notes, computers, CDs and DVDs. In past days, the families of the four, who went to the prison in Evin were told to go away. During the Christmas period, another group of Christians had been arrested: Faegheh Nasrollahi, Mastaneh Rastegari, Amir Hossein -Nematollahi, Ahmad Bazyar and Hosseini, who gathered in a house church in Tehran.
According to Fides sources, the pressure on the Christian community in Iran intensifies during the Christmas and New Year season: the police carry out raids to discourage the faithful who get together in so-called "house churches", considered to be illegal and dangerous.
Often the police try to extort confessions in which Christian prisoners admit to being "paid from abroad to promote Christianity in Iran".
According to a recent report by the NGO "Open Doors" Iran is among the top ten countries in the world where Christians are most persecuted. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 14/01/2014)

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