

# BWA voices solidarity with Iranian pastor facing death sentence

October 3, 2011

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (ABP) - An international Baptist leader called on Baptists around the world to call on their government leaders to advocate on behalf of an Iranian pastor sentenced to death after refusing to recant his faith.

Last week [the White House condemned](#) the reported impending execution of Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, 34, for leaving Islam as a teenager. Over the weekend Iran claimed his conviction was not for apostasy but violent crimes including rape.



Youcef  
Nadarkhani

Raimundu Barretto, director of freedom and justice for the [Baptist World Alliance](#), said Oct. 3 he had lobbied Iran's representatives in Washington, the United Nations and the United States ambassador-at-large for religious freedom to do all they can to "reverse this terrible verdict."

"It is distressing and outrageous for someone to be sentenced to death for a crime of conscience," Barretto said. "We firmly stand in solidarity with

Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, are praying for his release, and are making all efforts possible to influence the outcome of this situation."

Barreto, who is Brazilian, said he also contacted Brazil's U.N. office because Brazil and Iran have a "somewhat good relationship."

Barreto called on the world's Baptists to make representation to their own governments on Nadarkhani's behalf.

"We encourage Baptists in different countries to call on their government representatives to increase communication with the Iranian government on this situation," he said.

*-Bob Allen is managing editor of Associated Baptist Press.*