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GIVEN WHAT TO SAY

It was early in the morning the day after Christmas. It was cold. Mehdi Forootan sat in the back seat of an undercover police car in front of his house in Tehran, Iran. An officer pointed a camcorder at him. "Do you know why you were arrested?" the officer asked him. "No," Forootan replied.

The officer turned off the camera and looked Forootan in the eyes. "I can beat you until blood is coming out of your mouth and every part of you. The next time I turn on the camera, you tell me why we are taking you," the officer said and turned the camera back on.

Forootan spoke of his faith in Christ, and he spent the next 105 days in Iran's harshest prison. On Dec. 26, 2010, authorities had arrested Forootan in a wave of persecution against Iran's underground church. More than three months later, he was one of a few who had not been released.

During one interrogation, an officer turned on a camcorder and pointed it toward him, demanding that Forootan tell him about his "crime." Forootan began to tell him how he had struggled with substance abuse as a teenager, "and how when I was in university I found Jesus and He saved me, and I have been free ever since. But he became angry and turned off the camera. He said, 'I asked you to tell about your crime, not evangelize us.'"

After months of trying to get him to write statements confessing a crime, authorities inexplicably released him. Forootan said his first month out of prison was one of the worst of his life. He couldn't speak to anyone of his prison experience for fear that authorities were watching and would re-arrest him. His parents had given the deed of their house to authorities as bail.

He and his fiancée decided it was best for him to leave Iran and go to Turkey as a refugee. For Forootan, this meant an illegal escape through the mountains, because authorities had confiscated his passport.

"I came out of Iran with 70 Afghans," Forootan said. "I went to the mountains and walked in the mountains for eight hours, and after eight hours I came to Turkey... That was really hard, because I really love Iran, and I'm really sad about this land. Maybe I can't see my country again."

Many who follow Jesus in other lands make great sacrifices for the sake of the gospel. Despite harsh treatment—even prison with interrogations—they still love their home country. But during those interrogations, the Holy Spirit gives the right words to be spoken.

RESPONSE

Today I will rest in the Lord realizing that when pressures come, He is with me and His Spirit will give me the right words to speak.

PRAYER

Pray for those who like Forootan above are forced to leave the home land they love because of their witness to the gospel of Christ.

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