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At least 80 Christian leaders attending the general conference of the Iranian Assemblies of God, being held near Tehran, were arrested and questioned following a police raid three days ago. Ten pastors taken into custody are still being held, and their families are not being allowed to communicate with them.

According to Compass Direct News Service, authorities surrounded the denomination's headquarters in Karaj, 20 miles from the capital, on the conference's first day and burst in suddenly, arresting all those present.

"The police came from everywhere," one Iranian Christian told Compass Direct, "and there were a lot of them."

According to the U.S. State Department's 2003 International Religious Freedom Report, "Christian groups have reported instances of government harassment of churchgoers in Tehran, in particular against worshippers at the Assembly of God congregation in the capitol. Harassment has included conspicuous monitoring outside Christian premises by Revolutionary Guards to discourage Muslims or converts from entering church premises and demands for the presentation of the identity papers of worshippers inside."

Indeed, according to a Compass Iranian source, "Every single person present was put under arrest, blindfolded and taken in for interrogation." They were reportedly driven around for several hours with their eyes shielded in order to disorient them before they were questioned. According to reports, the questioning was conducted separately for each of the detainees, and the interrogators revealed extensive personal knowledge of the individuals and their families.