July 2

Haik Hovsepian Mehr, Tateos Michaelian and Mehdi Dibaj (d. 1994) martyrs

Today several Protestant churches commemorate three pastors who died as martyrs of the religious intolerance that began to spread through Iran with extreme virulence in the 1980s.
On July 2, 1994 the body of Tateos Michaelian was found. A pastor of the Armenian Evangelical Church, he had been shot by an unknown assassin. Three days later, the pastor Mehdi Dibaj of the church of the Assemblies of God met the same fate. This was the third time that year that one of Iran's Christian churches had lost a leader: in January, the bishop Haik Hovsepian Mehr of the Assemblies of God had met his own untimely death, struck by assassins who had been sent by extremist members of Iran's Islamic leadership.
All three of the evangelical pastors were Iranians and had received multiple death threats because of their Christian faith. Mehdi Dibaj, accused from adolescence onward of having abandoned his family's religion, spent more than ten years in prison. His story seemed to be on the verge of ending when he was sentenced to death in December 1993, but the sentence was suspended under pressure from the international community.
The joyous and firm commitment of all three men to faith in Christ, and their refusal to abandon their flock at the time of trial, made them symbols of the meaning that the peaceful presence of Christians can have in parts of the world that, humanly speaking, seem to offer them no future.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (25 ba'unah/sane):
Jude (1st cent.), one of the 70 disciples (Coptic Church)
Opening of the Keramt (raining season; Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:
Visitation of Mary
Georg Daniel Teutsch (d. 1893), bishop in Transilvania

MARONITES:
Visitation of the Virgin to Elisabeth

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Deposition of the precious robe of the most holy Mother of God in the church of Blacherne (5th cent.)
Job (d. 1607), patriarch of Moscow (Russian Church)
Stephen the Great and Saint (d. 1504), confessor (Romanian Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Visitation of Mary