

Franklin Graham: US Must Do More to Save Jailed Pastor

Religious intolerance continues to threaten the lives of Christians in Iran even when those Christians are Americans. For more than 300 days now, pastor Saeed Abedini has been in prison.

But not just any prison; Pastor Saeed was sentenced to eight years in Iran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison. The Iranian government claims he was convicted of endangering national security. But Pastor Saeed's family and attorneys say that in reality, he was sent to prison for one simple reason—because he is a Christian.

I recently spoke with Pastor Saeed's wife, Naghmeh. She shared how frightening it is to hear reports from family in Iran that her husband is being beaten and tortured. Naghmeh worries that she and her two young children may never see Saeed again. She's also discouraged by the fact that our own government seems to have abandoned them. President Obama has been silent on the issue as an American Christian endures the horrors of Evin Prison.

I'm thankful that Secretary of State John Kerry finally called for Pastor Saeed's release six months after his arrest. Sadly, since then our government appears to have done little to pressure Iran to release a fellow American citizen.

Pastor Saeed was in Iran trying to help children. With the permission of Iran's government, he was working to build an orphanage. But his humanitarian mission led to an arrest on bogus charges and nearly a year of inhumane treatment simply because he loves Jesus Christ.

Many in the international community are expressing outrage over this blatant example of religious intolerance. I ask that

our government do the same and demand that Pastor Saeed Abedini be released and allowed to return home to his wife and family in the United States.

Sept. 26 marks the one-year anniversary of Pastor Saeed's imprisonment. Please join me in praying for Pastor Saeed and his family. I also encourage churches and people everywhere to join the hundreds of thousands of others who are showing solidarity with this courageous man of faith at .