

Persecuted Pastor's Wife Pleads With Iranian President for His Release

Pastor Saeed Abedini's wife, Naghmeh, hand-delivered a letter to Iran's new president urging her husband's freedom Monday.

The encounter occurred as Naghmeh was participating in an interview in the lobby of a New York hotel where she is staying. As it turns out, the Iranian delegation is also staying at the same hotel.

As Naghmeh was talking with a reporter, the Iranian delegation—with President Hasan Rouhani—walked through the lobby toward the elevators.

Naghmeh approached the delegation and respectfully introduced herself to Rouhani and, speaking in Farsi, asked him to release her husband who is imprisoned in Evin Prison because of his faith. She told the Iranian president's delegation she wanted to deliver a letter that Pastor Saeed had written to the president pleading for his release.

As the elevator doors closed, a member of Rouhani's detail accepted Pastor Saeed's letter from Naghmeh and said he would deliver it to Rouhani.

We are hopeful that President Rouhani will quickly act for Pastor Saeed's release as he has done for other prisoners of conscience in Iran in recent days.

There are new reports that Iran announced the release of 80 prisoners of conscience as he departed Iran for the United States ahead of an appearance at the United Nations.

Unfortunately, it appears Pastor Saeed was not among those reportedly released. We can confirm that Pastor Saeed's family

in Tehran saw him Monday during regular visitation hours, and as of noon Tehran time, he was still imprisoned and the family has not been notified that his status had changed.

While the release of these prisoners of conscience is a welcomed humanitarian gesture from the new Iranian regime, Iran must release pastor Saeed Abedini—a U.S. citizen wrongly imprisoned for his faith. This Thursday is the one-year mark of the imprisonment of Pastor Saeed, who recently wrote his daughter a letter for her birthday.

If Iran's new president wants the American people and the international community to believe he is a true reformer, he must release Pastor Saeed. As long as prisoners of conscience, including a U.S. citizen, suffer torment in Iranian prisons, President Rouhani's claims of change will remain unsubstantiated.

President Rouhani is clearly seeking international approval. He is listening. And now he has Pastor Saeed's letter.

Now is the time to speak with one voice. Already, more than 80,000 letters have been written to Iran's new president through the American Center of Law and Justice's #BeHeard Project website. Join one of the largest letter-writing campaigns in history and urge Pastor Saeed's freedom today.

Jordan Sekulow is the executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which represents U.S. pastor Saeed Abedini's wife and children, who live in the United States.