

# We Can't Give Up on Freeing Persecuted Pastor Saeed Abedini

The news this week that Iran defiantly denied the appeal of American **Pastor Saeed Abedini** was devastating, but it is not demoralizing. There is still hope.

The fight for this U.S. citizen's freedom continues. Iran's actions are unsurprising.

We have seen it time and again from the Iranian regime: the stonewalling, the denials, the attempts to deflect attention away from their own atrocities.

The latest example is the Iranian judiciary's violation of its own law by refusing to hand down a written order.

Iran is willfully abusing the human rights of a U.S. citizen. The regime is blatantly violating international law and even its own constitution, both of which protect the rights of Christians in Iran to peacefully assemble and practice their faith.

Yet, at the same time, Iran is listening. Over 618,000 people have signed the petition for Pastor Saeed's freedom at and world leaders including the U.S. Secretary of State have demanded his release. People speaking out and overwhelming international media attention have led to Iran providing some medical care for Pastor Saeed's internal bleeding—the result of beatings suffered in prison.

Now is not the time to let up. It is time to increase the pressure.

We have seen this same scenario play out before. Last year, another Christian Pastor, **Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani**, was facing

execution in Iran for his **Christian faith**. Iran's supreme court had denied his appeal and it was feared that the execution order had been given. He had been convicted of apostasy (converting to Christianity) and sentenced to death by hanging for his faith.

The world spoke out in one voice. What started as a few blog posts on the ACLJ's website grew to hundreds of thousands of voices around the world. Like for Saeed, hundreds of thousands signed petitions, many more took to Twitter in one of the largest coordinated Twitter campaigns in history, and world leaders including the White House demanded his freedom. Then on September 8, 2012, after nearly three excruciating years on what was essentially death row, Pastor Youcef was released.

He was free, in his own words, thanks to "those who obeyed their conscience and fought for the promotion of the justice and the rights of all human beings. Thanks to these efforts, I have now the enormous joy to be by my wonderful wife and my children."

This is the same fight we continue for Pastor Saeed. We are prayerful and hopeful to achieve a similar result. But it will take a renewed commitment from those around the world who are standing up for **human rights**, for dignity, for freedom.

We know from Pastor Youcef's case that the decision for his freedom lay squarely at the top, the leadership of Iran.

It is wholly unsurprising that the Iranian judiciary affirmed Pastor Saeed's conviction and 8-year sentence.

In the next few days and weeks we will be launching a new effort for Pastor Saeed, a way for you to take direct action, to urge the leaders of Iran to release this innocent man.

Pastor Saeed's wife Naghmeh is also working to coordinate worldwide **prayer vigils** Pastor Saeed on September 26th, the

one-year anniversary of his illegal imprisonment in Iran. Vigils are being held in nearly every state in American and in numerous locations worldwide. **Learn more and find a location near you at .**

Continue to pray and never give up hope.