

Iranian Officials Throw American Pastor Saeed Abedini Into Solitary Confinement

Already badly weakened by months of beatings and torture that have resulted in internal bleeding, American pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen, is facing perhaps his most grave situation since his imprisonment last fall.

Family members in Iran confirm that Abedini, along with nine other prisoners, has been placed in solitary confinement with new reports indicating that in addition to the severe internal bleeding he is experiencing—which has gone untreated—he is now facing issues with his kidneys.

The American Center for Law and Justice has been able to confirm that the horrible conditions in Evin Prison led Abedini and a number of prisoners in Ward 350 to sign a letter expressing to prison officials their concern about the lack of medical care received and the threats and harsh treatment facing family members who come to visit. The prisoners expressed their dissatisfaction in a peaceful, silent protest in an outside courtyard at the prison.

That apparently prompted prison officials to retaliate, selecting 10 of the prisoners and placing them in solitary confinement. Sources indicate that Abedini is likely to be beaten again—in private, away from other witnesses and prisoners.

At the same time, there's concern that his kidneys are no longer operating properly, the result of the internal injuries he has received over many months. Abedini has been told not to expect medical treatment or care for many months. When family members showed up at prison on Tuesday to visit Abedini, they were turned away and told he is no longer permitted to have

visitors.

This latest very troubling development has Abedini's wife, Naghmeh, extremely concerned.

"Saeed has internal bleeding and now issues with his kidneys because of the beatings," Naghmeh says. "We believe that he is being beaten in solitary confinement. We have no way of finding out about his health. There will be no more visitations allowed and we will have no way of knowing how Saeed is doing.

"Saeed had previously told his family that when he was in solitary confinement in the past, that was the hardest time in his life. That every hour was like one year and that he was losing his memory and his health was deteriorating quickly. Please pray for his health and healing. Pray for his release. Pray that the Lord would use this for His Glory and salvation of many."

The ACLJ spoke with a former Iranian political prisoner, who spent 15 years in an Iranian prison—including some time at Evin—about Pastor Saeed's solitary confinement. He said, "Saeed was most likely on a list of prisoners the prison wants to break." He explained that the prison officials keep a list of prisoners who have stood their ground refusing to repent of their faith or confess to their crimes.

"Prison officers use any prison resistance, regardless of whether the prisoner was involved in the resistance, to target and break those prisoners on their list," he explained. "They took Saeed to solitary confinement to put pressure on his belief and faith. This shows that Saeed has stood strong for his faith."

The latest developments underscore the brutality of Iran's continued violation of human rights—imprisoning, torturing and refusing medical care for Abedini merely because of his faith. This treatment not only violates international law, but is

abhorrent.

We know that a tactic used by the Iranians is to place prisoners in solitary confinement in an effort to get them to give into the demands of prison officials—in Abedini's case, to recant his Christian faith. He continues to refuse to do so, and the only thing sustaining Abedini at this time is his Christian faith. We know that continues to provide him with strength and comfort during this most challenging time.

All of this is unfolding just days ahead. Abedini Saeed turns 33 on May 7. More than 42,000 people have already sent Abedini a birthday greeting—letters that we are personally delivering to Evin Prison. These are letters of prayer, support and encouragement. They are needed now more than ever. Please take a moment, if you haven't done so already, and send a letter to Pastor Saeed today, his 216th day of imprisonment.

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