

Iran Removes Persecuted Pastor Saeed Abedini From Solitary Confinement

After more than a week—including his 33rd birthday—spent in the “small dark hole” of solitary confinement, American pastor Saeed Abedini has once again been returned to the main prison population in Ward 350 of Evin Prison.

Sources in Iran have confirmed that Iranian authorities returned Abedini to his cell in Ward 350 yesterday.

This is a critical development and raises hope after a very discouraging week. It was believed that Abedini may have faced 20 days or more in solitary confinement. He described the first time he spent in solitary confinement, some 200 days ago when he was first imprisoned for his Christian faith, as some of the worst days he has ever faced. Days felt like years, he said.

The severity of Abedini’s medical condition remains a concern, as he began complaining of symptoms of kidney issues before he was placed in solitary confinement.

Abedini, a U.S. citizen, had been confined to solitary since April 29, along with nine other prisoners, in a retaliatory response to fellow prisoners’ protest of Iran’s lack of medical care for Pastor Saeed and others.

It is unknown how many of the 10 prisoners who were placed in solitary confinement have been returned to the political prisoner ward of the prison.

We are hopeful that Abedini’s early return to the general population of Ward 350 is a sign that international pressure on Iran is beginning to have an effect.

Abedini's wife, Naghmeh, responds, "His release from solitary is a direct result of the multitudes praying. I am relieved my husband is out of solitary, but still am deeply concerned about Saeed's health. While this is a small victory, I am still demanding justice be done and that Saeed be released."

More than 575,000 people from all across the world have signed a petition for his release. International media, world leaders and governments, including the European Union and the United Nations, have raised his case. More than 50,000 people have written him letters at .

All of this has led to unparalleled pressure on the Iranian regime. As increased pressure is placed on Iran—the more Iran is put on notice that the world is watching its unconscionable human rights abuses—the regime is forced to take action.