

On a Rescue Mission to Free Persecuted Pastor, Christian Leader Heads to Iran

The Rev. Patrick J. Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition in Washington, D.C., will leave for Turkey on Sunday in an attempt to secure the release of persecuted American pastor Saeed Abedini, who is serving an eight-year prison sentence in Iran because of his Christian beliefs.

While in Turkey, Mahoney will meet with Iranian officials in attempt to secure a meeting in Tehran with President Rouhani and Iranian government leaders to discuss Pastor Saeed.

Mahoney has a long history of building bridges to the Islamic community in America and around the world. Some of his work includes: flying to Florida and talking Pastor Terry Jones out of burning 230 Qurans; being invited by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki as he led a Christian prayer delegation to Baghdad; being invited to Morocco to meet with government leaders to discuss building better relationships between Christians and Muslims; helping ensure the rights of Muslims were not violated when they wanted to have an event on the lawn of the Capitol; and recently praying with Syrian leaders for peace at their Washington, D.C., embassy.

“Around the world, every person should be afforded the right to express their faith traditions free from government persecution, harassment and intimidation,” Mahoney says. “No one should have to suffer violence or brutality because of what they believe.

“I will be appealing to the new Iranian leadership, which has expressed a desire to have a more open and moderate attitude toward human rights and personal freedoms and work toward building better relationships with their global neighbors.”

“On this historic mission, I will not be going as a representative of the United States government, but rather as a faith leader sharing the heart of Christ and calling upon Iran’s leaders to show compassion and mercy and allow Saeed to return to his family in America.

“The power of faith transcends governments and leaders and can transform nations and societies. If I have the opportunity to meet with President Rouhani, I will not be speaking to him on a political level but rather as one faith leader to another.”

The Christian Defense Coalition is also working with the American Center for Law and Justice and Naghmeh Abedini, Pastor Saeed’s wife, on a prayer vigil and public witness in front of the White House on Thursday, the one-year anniversary of his imprisonment, at 2 p.m. EST. The prayer vigil will be on the closed portion of Pennsylvania Ave. NW in front of the White House across from Lafayette Park.

More than 75 prayer vigils are being held in America and around the world calling for Pastor Saeed’s release and praying for religious freedom.