

# Pastor's Imprisonment in Iran Opens Door to Gospel Witness

In Ward 350, Saeed Abedini is kept with 30 to 40 other prisoners—twice the legal limit. When he sleeps at night, the arms and legs of his fellow inmates are draped around him.

On several occasions, Saeed has been beaten by guards, resulting in internal bleeding. The psychological harassment is unending. Twice—once last fall and again in May—Saeed was moved into solitary confinement. The first confinement lasted four weeks, the second for 10 days.

His offense, according to the Iranian government and court system that arrested him and sentenced him to eight years, was “endangering national security.”

But the real reason Saeed approaches his first anniversary of imprisonment is because of his faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior who found him in his Tehran bedroom more than a decade ago.

Saeed's wife, Naghmeh, sits politely in her home in Boise, Idaho. Her two children, Rebekka, 6, and Jacob, 5, have just awakened.

Their grandmother, born in Iran, takes them into her care as Naghmeh settles into her living room, which is adorned with a Persian rug.

Quietly and relentlessly, Naghmeh has labored on behalf of her husband over the course of the past year to bring his plight to the attention of the world.

A website, [www.freeiran.org](http://www.freeiran.org), was started last December in conjunction with the American Center for Law and Justice. The site has garnered more than 600,000 signatures from people around the world

demanding his release from illegal incarceration.

Naghmeh's pleas for Saeed's freedom have also been carried directly into Iran through BBC Farsi and Voice of America Persia.

This past spring, she spoke before the United Nations.

On Sept. 26—the one-year anniversary of Saeed's imprisonment—Naghmeh is hoping believers will congregate at all 50 U.S. state Capitol buildings to conduct a prayer vigil for her husband.

"My husband is in jail simply because he loves Jesus Christ," she says. "He was arrested as he worked on an orphanage we are building on property we own and for which we had received all the proper permits. He was also gathering peacefully with other fellow Christians in their private homes, expressing his faith."

When the call came in the middle of the night to inform her Saeed had been arrested, Naghmeh was surprised but ready. Her husband had been arrested and detained several years earlier, when the couple had visited with churches they had planted in Iran.

The detention lasted only two months before he was released and encouraged to begin humanitarian work, which led them to start an orphanage in Tehran.

"God is a gentleman," Naghmeh says. "He knew that I was not ready two years ago to deal with the situation I am now facing with Saeed. He was gracious to me and was preparing my heart even then. He doesn't cut too deep when you are not ready."

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Read Franklin Graham's statement to pray for Saeed.

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