

Pastor Saeed Faces Psychological Torment: Surrounded by Executions and Demands He Recant

American Pastor Saeed Abedini was permitted to have a visit with an Iranian family member today in the prison. It was the first visit in the last five weeks.

He continues to suffer for his faith, wrongfully imprisoned in Iran for being a Christian. The prison guards have become increasingly hostile. He faces a near constant demands that he recant his faith in Christ and become a Muslim.

Iranian officials are also psychologically tormenting him, telling him that he will face an extended sentence even after he completes his current eight-year sentence—a reality he has seen come true for other cellmates.

Pastor Saeed's wife, Naghmeh, explained the increasingly dangerous situation this way:

Last week had been quite difficult for Saeed. He has been under a lot of pressure and attack from the hardliners. The guards have also been threatening Saeed that he will never go free and additional charges (and years) will be added to his sentence (which they have done to other Christians and fellow inmates). They continually threaten Saeed that the only key to his freedom is denying Christ and returning to Islam. Saeed refuses to deny Christ and continues to be a light and witness in that dark prison. These threats coupled with the fact that there have been mass executions during the last week in Rajayee Shahr prison, have really taken their toll on Saeed. He asks for prayer for continued strength.

Yet in all his turmoil, Naghmeh shares this message from Pastor Saeed: “He wanted to thank you all for your continued prayers. Knowing that he is not forgotten and believers around the world continue to remember him in prayer and advocate for him has encouraged him to continue in this difficult journey and to hold on to hope.”

True to his faith, Pastor Saeed had an Easter celebration of his own within the walls of his prison cell. But as Naghmeh, explains, “Saeed desperately missed being with our family on Easter, but new Easter traditions were created in prison!”

In the face of overwhelming adversity, through the pain he suffers as a result of prison beatings, through the constant psychological torment, Pastor Saeed is staying strong in his faith through God’s strength.

But as he suffers, as fellow U.S. citizens, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we must not be silent.

In less than a week, April 21, the U.S. government will once again be seated across the table from Iran in ongoing nuclear negotiations. Our government must do everything in its power to bring Pastor Saeed home. It is absolutely critical that the Obama administration and the State Department continue to demand that our innocent citizens—especially Pastor Saeed who is suffering only because of his religious beliefs—be returned home.

He suffers from injuries. He is separated from his family. He is persecuted for his faith. He is surrounded by fellow inmates being dragged to the gallows. The thought is unbearable.

It’s time to bring him home.