

Persecuted Pastor's Wife 'Encouraged' About US Call to Iranian Govt

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has issued a public statement expressing concern for American pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen imprisoned in Iran because of his Christian faith. The statement, issued late Friday while Kerry was traveling in the Middle East, calls on Iran to release Abedini immediately and comes after American Center for Law & Justice Executive Director Jordan Sekulow called for him to issue a public statement by today.

"We're very pleased that Secretary of State Kerry made this bold and public statement calling on Iran to release Pastor Saeed," says Sekulow. "By speaking out directly on behalf of Pastor Saeed, Secretary Kerry is taking our government's most aggressive action yet in working to secure the freedom of this U.S. citizen.

"We also appreciate Secretary Kerry calling attention to Pastor Saeed's worsening health," he added. "By becoming directly involved in this case, the U.S. sends a powerful message to Iran and our allies: Our government will not stand by and abandon one of our own. By engaging the Pastor Saeed case at the highest level, we're hopeful that the State Department will now do everything in its power to secure the release of this U.S. citizen."

Naghmeh Abedini, the persecuted pastor's wife, said: "I am very encouraged by Secretary Kerry's statement demanding Saeed's immediate release. I am very happy to read that although Secretary Kerry has asked for medical treatment for Saeed, he does not stop there, and states that the best outcome is Saeed's immediate release. I hope to see more

proactive actions from our government. Saeed and I are both proud to be Americans. I am hopeful that this will put more pressure on the Iranian government to act and free Saeed so he can return to our family in the United States.”

Secretary Kerry’s statement, posted here, comes just one day after the U.S. Ambassador Eileen C. Donahoe specifically cited Pastor Saeed’s case at the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva and called for his release. It comes one week after the State Department refused to participate in a hearing by the Congressional panel on Pastor Saeed’s case.

The statement also comes as a new letter from Pastor Saeed describes the toll of the torture and beatings on his health.

Abedini, 32, has been imprisoned since last fall, and is serving an eight-year sentence in Evin Prison, one of Iran’s most deadly prisons. The ACLJ has been working in this country and abroad to secure his freedom and has heard from nearly 550,000 people demanding his release.

The ACLJ represents Pastor Saeed’s wife, Naghmeh, and their two young children in the United States.