

Radical Islam Tortures, Beats American Pastor Beyond Recognition

We have just obtained a new letter from imprisoned American Pastor Saeed Abedini written to his wife, Naghmeh, and his family in Iran. In it, as in his previous two letters written inside the brutal Evin Prison, he documents the results of the continued abuse and **torture** he endures.

This letter, likely written weeks ago, was received by his family just yesterday. Written on the margins of scraps of newspaper, it is only the third letter Abedini has been able to get to his family in the past nearly 180 days of imprisonment and underscores the difficulty of getting any information from Iran about his condition.

Abedini writes that he cannot even recognize himself after all the beatings and torture he has endured: "My hair was shaven, under my eyes were swollen three times what they should have been, my face was swollen, and my beard had grown."

After multiple beatings in interrogations at the hands of the **radical Islamic** regime, Abedini wrote that the nurse who was supposed to treat injured inmates told him "'in our religion we are not suppose to touch you, you are unclean ... Christians are unclean!'" He explained, "they would not give me the pain medication that they would give other prisoners because I was unclean."

This further confirms the fact that until this week, Abedini had not received any medical treatment. Because of the immense pressure from the international outcry of hundreds of thousands who have demanded his release, Iranian officials have promised him medical treatment, but this new letter sheds light on how difficult it will be to ensure that Iran keeps

its word.

In his letter, Abedini also shares how he has personally witnessed the toll his imprisonment has taken on his parents and how he longs to once again be with his wife and children. He wrote, "You, my wife, on the other side of the world, alone with the kids. Alone and worried. My family here in Iran, being interrogated, tired and under so much pressure."

Even through all the persecution, Abedini remains resilient in his faith. He writes of the importance of forgiveness, even to the point of forgiving the interrogators who beat him and the doctors who refused to treat him. He says that we must all forgive, "So that we don't become like the person we despised and who persecuted and tortured us."

He told of the power he has witnessed through forgiveness when after telling one of his persecutors to his face that he forgave him, the interrogator came to "respect" him. "Love is as strong as death," Pastor Saeed explained. He concluded, "The Joy of the Lord is my strength."

This is another powerful testament of his Christian faith and his eternal hope that one day he will again be free to return to his wife and kids in America.

It is critical that we redouble our efforts and do all we can as a nation for this imprisoned pastor, one of our own, a U.S. citizen.

Please continue to sign and share the petition to #SaveSaeed today.

You can read Pastor Saeed's letter below:

Hello to my dear love and wife,

When I saw my family for the first time behind the glass walls, I could see my mom four meters away. As she approached me and saw my face, she broke down and could not get closer.

She was crying. I understood what she felt because after weeks of being in solitary confinement in Evin Prison, I also got to see my face in the mirror of an elevator that was taking me to the prison hospital. I said hi to the person staring back at me because I did not recognize myself. My hair was shaven, under my eyes were swollen three times what they should have been, my face was swollen, and my beard had grown.

It was a few days ago when one of my family members, with weary eyes and after running around for 15 weeks in trying to get me out of prison, said that my dad says every single day that "this week I will get my son out of prison." But this does not happen and he is not able to get me out of prison. In that instant I looked into the wrinkled and tired eyes of my dad. I could clearly see that he had ran around for months and he had no more strength left in him. It was very hard seeing my family in such a situation.

You, my wife, on the other side of the world, alone with the kids. Alone and worried. My family here in Iran, being interrogated, tired and under so much pressure.

With the loud voice of the prison guard, our visitation had ended and they put covers over our eyes and we returned to the dark room void of any natural sunlight.

I started praying for my family. My dear Naghmeh. You are the love of my life. I am always in love with you.

Dear Naghmeh, I have been stung so many times that I have become full of poison. This is an Iranian saying. A lot of people say that they have been stung by so many people that their whole being is full of poison like a poisonous snake. It means that we have been bitten by the snakes of this world so many times that, that all of the poison has collected in us and that we are like the poisonous snake. But if we sting anyone, we will die. This Iranian saying is full of spirit of

revenge and unforgiveness and every time I would hear this in Iran, I would get very sick hearing it.

A few days ago they brought a young war veteran who was disabled in 80% of his body in my cell. He had been put in solitary confinement with his horrific condition. And this had made him very mad and he kept saying "why did they do this to me? I gave my whole life for their sake. See what they have done to me!!!" And when he would get very mad he would say "I will take my revenge!"

I spoke to this young man until 4 in the morning. I spent time with him and spoke to him to forgive. When we don't forgive, we drink the poison ourselves and then wait for the other person to die. And we take the knife that has hurt us and we stab ourselves with it again! And this is the will of the evil one who wants to destroy us.

But when we forgive, we pour out the poison of the enemy and of the devil and we don't let the poison stay in us and we don't let the poison make us into poisonous snakes! So that we don't become like the person we despised and who persecuted and tortured us.

Maybe you ask, what is the secret of being so happy in such a hard situation?

Forgiveness and a change of attitude. When we forgive, we become free and we become messengers of peace and reconciliation and goodness. And whoever stings us, we can take into our embrace and love them. And in this dark and evil time, we can live full of love and full of peace and full of joy and shine like the stars! Glory be to His Name.

I forgave the prison doctor who did not listen to me and did not give me the medication that I needed. I forgave the interrogator who beat me. Every day when I would see the interrogator and for the last time when I saw him, I forgave him. I smiled at him and with respect shook his hand and I

said my goodbye. The minute I forgave them and loved them, that second I was filled with unspeakable joy. I saw in the eyes of the interrogator that he had come to respect me and as he was leaving, he could not look behind him. Love is as strong as death.

We have to get rid of the poison in our body because if we don't, we will die. We have to get rid of both poisons; first the poison of the snake that bit us and also the poison in us that was created by that bite. We can get rid of the first poison by forgiveness and we can get rid of the second poison by humility, by dying to ourselves, and allowing the band-aid of love and goodness to replace the empty place of the wound. So that we are not a tool of darkness and revenge, but that we can be light and love and a vessel of forgiveness and we can be transformed in the process.

Surely you have someone in your family, city, work or environment that have become like poisonous snake who have bitten you and tried to make you poisonous. So, forgive them and use the antidote of love and be Victorious!

One of the chances of forgiveness came when I was blindfolded and a guard was holding my hand guiding me. He asked "what are you here for? What is your crime?" I said "I am Christian Pastor." All of the sudden he let go of my hand and said "so you are unclean! I will tell others not to defile themselves by touching you!" He would tell others not to get close to me. It really broke my heart. The nurse would also come to take care of us and provide us with treatment, but she said in front of others "in our religion we are not suppose to touch you, you are unclean. Baha'i (religion) and Christians are unclean!" She did not treat me and that night I could not sleep from the intense pain I had. According to the doctor's instructions, they would not give me the pain medication that they would give other prisoners because I was unclean.

I could not fall sleep one night due to the pain when all of

a sudden I could hear the sound of dirty sewer rats with their loud noises and screeches. It was around 4 in the morning. It sounded like laughter in a way.

Even though many would call me unclean and filthy and would not even want to pass by me and they had abandoned me and they were disgusted to touch me because they were afraid that they would also become unclean, but I knew that in the eyes of Jesus Christ, and in the eyes of my brothers and sisters, I am like the sewer rat, beautiful and loveable – not disgusting and unclean – and like the rats I can scream with joy within those prison walls and worship my Lord in joy and strength.

The Joy of the Lord is my strength. Amen.