

Tasered and Abused, Pastor Saeed Threatened With the Unthinkable

After a short family visitation today at Rajaei Shahr prison in Iran, Naghmeh Abedini, the wife of American Pastor Saeed Abedini, heard disturbing news about possible new charges being brought against Pastor Saeed. Over the years, the Iranian government continually promised that Pastor Saeed's eight-year-prison sentence could be arbitrarily extended, and recently they took their first steps to fulfill that promise.

Recently in Iran, Iranian intelligence officers summoned Pastor Saeed for an intense round of interrogation. Pastor Saeed reported to his family that the interrogators were abusive both verbally and physically. During the course of interrogation, the officers repeatedly used a taser gun on Pastor Saeed. This new assault is concerning as Pastor Saeed is still being denied needed medical care for injuries sustained as a result of beatings in the past.

The interrogators threatened that Pastor Saeed will face new criminal charges. They claimed Pastor Saeed has connections with anti-government groups and has made statements and taken actions against the government of Iran. Pastor Saeed denied all of these allegations, and once again asserted that he is apolitical and that he has never threatened the security of, made any statements against, or taken any action against the Government of Iran.

This troubling development comes as Iranian President Rouhani prepares to address the United Nations General Assembly in New York. It also coincides with new efforts by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) in the international arena as a growing number of global leaders urge Iran to release

Pastor Saeed.

Pastor Saeed has repeatedly expressed to the Iranian Government, both during his interrogations and at trial, that he poses no threat to the government and was only present in Iran to assist Iran's most vulnerable children by building a government-approved orphanage. Still, the Iranian Government continues to look for ways to keep this innocent U.S. citizen imprisoned.

In reaction to this news Naghmeh Abedini had this to say:

"When will this nightmare end? Saeed is not a criminal. Being a Christian and motivated by Christian values to help the poorest and most needy children in Iran should be seen as good for the Iranian society. Hearing that yet again, the hardliners in Iran are trying to fabricate evidence against my husband and that he was abused and tasered is almost too much to bear.

"It is time for governments all over the world shift their focus to the injustices of the Iranian Government and call on the Government of Iran to free my husband. It is time for businesses seeking to do business in Iran to look beyond their bottom dollar and see the instability of a government known to imprison innocent men and women who have exercised their fundamental freedoms. Whether we operate in the field of business, government, or simply are members of human society, we must expect and demand more of our leaders.

"I pray that as President Rouhani plans his travel to the United States next week, he will hear relentless voices crying out for Saeed's freedom."

Saturday marks the third year of Pastor Saeed's imprisonment. And there will be hundreds of prayer vigils that day around the globe—prayers for Pastor Saeed and his family.

The ACLJ joins Naghmeh in calling for world leaders to do more to free Pastor Saeed. We have heard from more than 265,000 people urging U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to intervene directly with the Iranian Government on Pastor Saeed's behalf.

We renew that call today.