

UN Urged to Call on Iran to Free American Pastor

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which focuses on constitutional and human rights law, announced Tuesday that its European affiliate—the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ)—is urging the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC) to call on Iran to immediately release American Pastor **Saeed Abedini**, who is serving a prison sentence because of his Christian faith.

In a document filed with the HRC in Geneva, the ECLJ—working closely with the ACLJ—specifically addresses Iran’s violations of international law and human rights abuses in the case of Abedini, a 32-year-old U.S. citizen who is serving an eight year sentence in one of Iran’s most deadly prisons, simply because of his religious beliefs.

“This filing with the United Nations represents a significant step forward in generating the international attention and pressure needed to secure the freedom of Pastor Saeed,” said Jordan Sekulow, senior counsel of the ECLJ and Executive Director of the ACLJ. “By bringing his story before a global audience, it’s our hope that member states and other organizations will become a strong voice for **Pastor Saeed**—raising the visibility of this troubling case and putting additional pressure on Iran to free him.”

The ECLJ—the ACLJ’s European affiliate based in Strasbourg, France—is able to engage the U.N. and its member states directly because it has special consultative status as a nongovernmental organization at the U.N.

Sekulow said the U.N. filing puts Pastor Saeed’s case in the global spotlight. Sekulow added: “The Human Rights Council, which represents 47 member states, identifies its own mission

as being ‘responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.’ There is no better case for the HRC to engage than that of Pastor Saeed—a U.S. citizen—imprisoned in a nation that not only rejects religious freedom and human rights laws but exhibits a hostile disdain for international law that protects the most basic rights of people around the world.”

Abedini remains imprisoned in Iran and continues to be tortured, beaten and psychologically abused. The ACLJ, which represents Abedini’s wife and children who live in the United States, has launched a global effort to generate support for the **persecuted pastor**.

In the U.N. filing, the ECLJ specifically cites how the Iranian government violated the U.N.’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The filing urges the HRC to call on Iran to immediately release Abedini and to condemn Iran’s practices “that prevent individuals from freely choosing and practicing their own religion, which includes religious expression and peaceful assembly.” It also urges the HRC to call on Iran to recognize its obligations under international law “to protect and respect dignity of all human beings.”

“Filing this written submission is a vital first step in our formal U.N. effort to free Pastor Saeed,” said Sekulow. “The ECLJ will now work to engage each of the 47 members of the HRC, in hopes that one or more of these states will raise Pastor Saeed’s case in oral comments at the Council’s next plenary session, which takes place next month.”

The ACLJ continues to work with the U.S. government, the United Nations, and the European Union to secure Pastor Saeed’s freedom. The ACLJ’s #SaveSaeed campaign continues to gather momentum—as thousands upon thousands of people all over

the world are tweeting, Facebooking, and signing the petition, which focuses on bringing additional international pressure on the Iranian government.

Led by ECLJ and ACLJ Chief Counsel Jay Sekulow, the American Center for Law and Justice is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and has affiliated offices in Israel, Russia, Kenya, France, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.