

What Christian Leaders Think Saeed Abedini's Release Signifies for Religious Freedom

When Iran released Saeed Abedini from four years in prison, Christians around the world rejoiced in the power of prayer.

Though Abedini is still in Europe, he is expected to be back on American soil soon. Saeed's wife Naghmeh posted her gratitude on Facebook. Here's what prominent Christian leaders are saying about his release:

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, NHCLC President

"I am overwhelmed with joy at the release of American Evangelical Pastor Saeed Abedini from prison in Iran.

"Pastor Saeed's imprisonment since 2012 for organizing home churches has brought to light the grave issue of global Christian persecution. Religious liberty is the civil rights issue of our day. We cannot be silent as Christians suffer oppression around the world. Do not forget, we are what we tolerate."

Tony Perkins, President of Family Research Council

"Thank God! We celebrate with Naghmeh Abedini on the release of her husband Pastor Saeed Abedini.

"For over three years, millions of Americans and people around the world have made Pastor Abedini a focal point of their prayers and petitions. The news of his release is made even more special because today is January 16th which is commemorated as Religious Freedom Day in the United States.

"We are grateful to the members of Congress on both sides of the aisle who tirelessly advocated for the release of Pastor Abedini. Congress and the American people clearly made the difference in engaging the Obama administration to step up pressure on the Iranian government.

"Iran and the nations of the world must understand that we will not leave behind any American who is in a foreign prison for simply standing up for a God given human right. Pastor Abedini's imprisonment and torture is a reminder of the vigilance required to preserve and promote not just our First Freedom as Americans, but the basic human right of the freedom of religion.

"Today is a day for rejoicing and we pray it will prompt the administration to make the promotion of religious freedom a greater priority, and do so by designating ISIS's attempts to exterminate minority religious groups – including Christians – as genocide.

"The reality is that there are Christians and religious minorities throughout the Middle East and around the world who look toward America, hoping they are not forgotten and that someone will speak out on their behalf."

Franklin Graham, President of Samaritan's Purse, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

"I talked with Saeed Abedini from Germany today, and I know he appreciates everyone's prayers. He and the other hostages that were released are at a U.S. military medical center there, and there is no specific word as to when he will be able to leave. Continue to keep him and his family, as well as the other former hostages, in your prayers."

Mike Huckabee, Republican Primary Candidate

"Praise God! Christian pastor Saeed Abedini has been freed from Iranian prison after 3.5 years behind bars for disrupting

national security by promoting underground churches. But why did it take the Obama Administration so long to secure his release? He never should have been locked-up and it's embarrassing that John Kerry and Obama negotiated with Iran as he sat in prison. Abedini's from Boise, Idaho and was arrested on his 9th trip to spread the Good News and establish small house churches in Iran. His wife Naghmeh is overjoyed today. Join me today in saying, 'Well done, Saeed! You are a faithful servant! And welcome home.'"

Jay Sekulow, ACLJ Chief Counsel

"Even though our lawyers worked really hard and teams around the globe worked really hard, there were millions of people praying.

"Probably as many languages as they are people groups and those prayers were answered.

"God supernaturally intervened and we have the release of the Americans."

Follow #SaeedIsFree on Twitter for more updates.