



PREPARED WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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Wife of Imprisoned American Saeed Abedini

Foreign Affairs Committee

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“Americans Detained in Iran”

I stand before you today not as a lawyer or politician, but as the wife of a husband who is imprisoned in Iran because of his Christian faith. My husband, Saeed Abedini, is a U.S. citizen who Iran sentenced to 8 years because he peacefully gathered with other Christians to study the Bible, a lawful act even under Iranian law but which the government of Iran deemed in his case to threaten the national security of Iran.

For the past 3 years I have been carrying with me a deep excruciating pain knowing that my husband continues to suffer yet another day in one of the worst prisons in the world. Most mornings like today, I wake up in a new hotel in a new city or country and am reminded of my new reality—a reality that includes lonely airports and empty hotel rooms. This pain of this journey without my husband has only increased as I have had to frequently leave my children to advocate for my husband’s release. The reality is, we are a family torn apart.

Over the last three years, I have had to watch my two children, Rebekka (who is 8 years old) and Jacob (who is 7 years old), suffer daily as they have grown up without a father or a mother. Many times I have contemplated staying at home and holding my babies at a time that they need me the most. Yet, I cannot imagine not fighting for my husband’s release for even one day while he suffers in the Iranian prison.

Every morning I get up thinking, “could this be the day that our family is released from this pain?” I am hoping that someone somewhere will see past the politics and get past the different lines that so easily separate us and instead see the human side of our story. That someone somewhere would be motivated to do something to end this unbearable pain. I am here to ask for your help.

Recently I returned from speaking to the human rights and foreign relations committees at the European Parliament and the German Parliament. After only a few days at home, I had to explain to my children why mommy had to leave again. There was so much hope and excitement in their eyes when I explained to them that this could be the trip that could bring their daddy home and back in their arms again.

I am here today as single mother who is trying to be strong for her children, and as a wife who humbly admits, I need your help. I cannot bear to look at my children's longing eyes one more time and explain to them why their daddy is still not home. I cannot bear to see their hopes crushed again. I cannot imagine my husband spending yet another day in an Iranian prison. I need your help. I cannot do this on my own.

When I entered this great nation almost 30 years ago as a young girl, I was given the freedom to choose Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I felt safe knowing that my rights to choose my own religion would be protected and defended in this great country of the United States of America. Today my husband is suffering in the Iranian prison for this very reason. It is because he also chose to believe in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. The Iranian government has repeatedly told Saeed he holds the key to his freedom – but this key would be to deny his faith and return to Islam. Yet, Saeed has refused to deny his faith in Jesus Christ in the face of torture and abuse. Saeed has been moved from prison to prison (Evin to Rajaei Shahr prison). He had been put in a murderers' ward where he was told that if other prisoners found out that he was a convert from Islam to Christianity, they would kill him. Saeed has been in and out of solitary confinement 3 times now (the last time was April of this month) and told that he would never be set free unless he returns to Islam.

Today, I ask you to stand with him as he stands for his faith in Jesus. This is the time that Saeed needs his country the most. Please do not abandon him.

The aim of the Iranian government is to break Saeed before they have to release him. Doctors have confirmed Saeed needs two surgeries. But my biggest concern right now is not Saeed's physical health, but rather his psychological health. I often think about the condition that Saeed will be in when he is released and how our family would have to cope with that—what father will return to my precious children? Time is of the essence in getting Saeed out of the Iranian prison before it is too late.

When you are living a nightmare no religion in the world can help you. The do's and don'ts of religion cannot bring much peace and comfort. Only an intimate relationship with our Maker can bring about the supernatural peace and strength that is covering our family today. And that relationship is only possible through the acceptance of the heavy price of sin that was paid on the cross by Jesus Christ. Today that salvation is available for all who believe.

Our family has relied on this personal relationship to endure the pains, and to overcome the daily worries and concerns. I want to conclude with a story in the Bible that describes

our current situation the best. It includes a fiery furnace, threats of death, and a Savior in the midst of it all.

Daniel 3:13-25

13 Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, 14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? 15 I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. 18 But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will NEVER serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

19 Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. 20 Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. 22 And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. 23 So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames.

24 But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied.

25 "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!"

Jesus was with them. He was the fourth man in the furnace. In the midst of the fiery furnace Jesus did not abandon His own. During the last 3 years Jesus has never abandoned Saeed and me. He has been with us during the fiery furnace even when the furnace had been heated seven times hotter than usual. He has dried every tear and has given us the strength to endure.

I know that God is with us in this journey, but I also know that God can use men and women to bring about freedom and justice. I hope today that someone here is motivated to be that man or woman.

Thank you.