

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 9, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We write you to express our deep concern regarding the ongoing human rights situation in Iran, including the growing number of American citizens who are unjustly imprisoned by the Iranian regime. It is unacceptable that as the United States engages with Iran, human rights violations at the hands of Iranian officials go unchecked and Americans languish in Iranian jail cells. We urge you to discuss these imprisoned Americans and demand their unconditional release as you engage in discussion with Iranian officials.

Most recently, Jason Rezaian, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, was arrested after security forces raided his home. On January 14, 2015, his case was referred to a Revolutionary Court, but the details of neither his charges nor his court date have been released. His mother has expressed concern for his health, which has reportedly deteriorated over the six months he has been imprisoned. Recent press reports indicate that Mr. Rezaian may be charged with espionage.

Pastor Saeed Abedini has been imprisoned in Iran since September 2012. In January 2013, Pastor Abedini was sentenced to eight years in prison for simply practicing his religion. He was charged with undermining the Iranian government by creating a network of Christian house churches and attempting to sway Iranian youth away from Islam. In August 2013, a Tehran court denied Pastor Abedini's appeal.

Amir Hekmati, a former U.S. Marine, was arrested in Iran while visiting his family in August 2011. The Iranian government convicted Mr. Hekmati of espionage and sentenced him to death. Fortunately, his death sentence was overturned by an appeals court in March 2012. However, he was convicted of aiding a hostile nation and received a 10-year sentence.

In addition to imprisoning Americans, the Iranian regime continues to refuse to provide information regarding former FBI Agent Robert Levinson. Mr. Levinson disappeared almost eight years ago in Iranian territory while on a business trip. He is one of the longest held American citizens in history.

The Iranian government, which is unjustly punishing Mr. Rezaian, Pastor Abedini, and Mr. Hekmati and refusing to assist the search for Mr. Levinson, must be held accountable for its actions. Once again, Iran's government is showing they will spare no means to stifle dissent and use innocent Americans as political pawns. As history has proven, countries that fail to respect the rights of their citizens seldom respect the rights of their neighbors. Freedom of the press, religion and association are rights that should be guaranteed to all individuals regardless of their

nationality. America's commitment to upholding basic universal human rights requires us to clearly speak out against violations, wherever they make occur. We urge you to bring up these cases during communications with Iran and demand the unconditional release of these Americans.

Respectfully,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



James Risch
United States Senator



David Vitter
United States Senator



Mike Lee
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Orrin Hatch
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, MD
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Pat Roberts
United States Senator



Chuck Grassley
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James Lankford
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
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Ben Sasse
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator