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CONTACT: familiesofhikers@gmail.com

FAMILIES OF AMERICAN HIKERS HELD IN IRAN RELEASE VIDEO CLIPS SHOWING THEM ON VACATION TWO DAYS BEFORE THEIR DETENTION

Videos Show Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal Relaxing and Playacting during Hiking Trip to Iraqi Kurdistan

The families of Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal today released previously unpublished video clips of the three young Americans relaxing and playacting on vacation in Iraqi Kurdistan just two days before they were detained by Iranian forces. The two clips were filmed by “fourth hiker” Shon Meckfessel, the last person to speak with Bauer, Shourd and Fattal before they were detained on July 31 for reportedly straying across the border.

Meckfessel had stayed behind at their hotel in the Kurdish town of Suleimaniya with a cold when his friends hiked to the Ahmed Awa waterfall, a natural attraction close to the border with Iran. Meckfessel, from Seattle, WA, got a cell-phone call from Bauer the next day saying they were being taken into custody.

The video was taken in the Kurdish city of Irbil on July 29 and can be viewed at http://freethehikers.org/?page_id=1100.

One 45-second clip shows Bauer, Shourd and Fattal dancing and laughing in an unfinished cinder block building. The other 21-second clip shows Fattal singing an improvised “Iraq rap” with Irbil in the background.

The families said they would provide a CD of the video clips to the Iranian Mission to the United Nations asking that they be forwarded to Tehran to support the case for freeing the hikers.

“It’s bittersweet to see Josh singing and goofing around with his friends,” said Fattal’s mother Laura, from Elkins Park, PA. “It reminds me that his spirit is strong but also that his detention has gone on too long. I want him home.”

Shourd’s mother, Nora, from Oakland, CA, said: “Sarah is so full of life in the video that I often find it too painful to watch. I shouldn’t have to picture her sitting in a cell just because she may have crossed a border by accident.”

Bauer’s mother Cindy Hickey, from Pine City, MN, said: “We’ll always be grateful to Shon for raising the alarm about our kids and then for showing us the video clips. It’s something to hold on to, but it isn’t the same as holding Shane.”



Bauer, 27, Shourd, 31, and Fattal 27, have been granted only one consular visit from Swiss diplomats since they were detained on suspicion of illegally entering Iran and have had no contact with their families. On October 15, their mothers delivered a petition to the Iranian Mission to the United Nations signed by 2,500 friends and supporters appealing for their release.

The families decided to make the video clips public after Meckfessel showed them to them. "If ever there was even the slightest doubt that we were in Iraqi Kurdistan to relax and have fun, this should surely remove it. Shane, Sarah and Josh shouldn't still be in jail in Iran three months later. I hope the Iranian authorities see these clips, realize my friends are harmless young people who may have made a simple mistake and let them come home," said Meckfessel.