



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FROM: www.freethehikers.org

CONTACT: familiesofhikers@gmail.com

**FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF AMERICAN HIKERS DETAINED IN IRAN
HOLD VIGILS OF HOPE TO MARK 250 DAYS**

***Families of Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal Say Iran is Playing
With Their Emotions; Renew Call for Release***

Families, friends and supporters of Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal are holding "Vigils of Hope" on Sunday to mark more than 250 days of detention in Iran for the three American hikers and call again for their release.

Vigils will take place at 11 locations in the United States, including the hikers' hometown areas of Cheltenham/Philadelphia, PA, Shakopee and Pine City, MN, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, and in Seattle, WA, Cottage Grove, OR, Brooklyn, NY, Boston and Worcester, MA as well as Cape Town, South Africa and Vancouver, Canada. Full details are available on www.freethehikers.org

Held in Evin Prison, Bauer, Shourd and Fattal have been denied access to their lawyer and have had hardly any contact with the outside world. They have been allowed only a brief telephone call with their families in more than eight months.

"We were grateful to receive phone calls on March 9, however short, and continue to hope that more positive developments will follow soon, including that the mothers of Shane, Sarah and Josh will at last be granted visas to visit them in Tehran," the families said in a statement that was to be read at the vigils. "We ask Iran to stop playing with our emotions. The fear and uncertainty is taking a terrible toll on us and we can only imagine the terrible strain on our loved ones."

Bauer, 27, Shourd, 31, and Fattal, 27, were detained on July 31, 2009 during a brief hiking trip to Iraqi Kurdistan after news reports say they strayed across the unmarked border with Iran. The families of the hikers said they had also submitted a petition with more than 10,000 signatures to the Iranian Mission to the United Nations calling on the Iranian authorities to release their loved ones.

"Shane, Sarah and Josh have now been held for 254 days. The Iranian authorities seem to be trying to make it appear that they had some ridiculous motive for entering Iran when it is abundantly obvious that if they did cross onto Iranian territory, they had no intention of doing so," the families said. "Every night we go to bed hoping that Iran has finally accepted that our loved ones are innocent and decided to allow them to return to us, but we wake up and the nightmare continues."



The full message reads as follows:

“Shane, Sarah and Josh have now been held for 254 days. The Iranian authorities seem to be trying to make it appear that they had some ridiculous motive for entering Iran when it is abundantly obvious that if they did cross onto Iranian territory, they had no intention of doing so.

We were grateful to receive phone calls on March 9, however short, and continue to hope that more positive developments will follow soon, including that the mothers of Shane, Sarah and Josh will at last be granted visas to visit them in Tehran.

When Shane, Sarah and Josh finally were allowed to call home they all wanted to know why their case is taking so long to resolve. We had no good answers and Iran does not have a good answer either. Our loved ones are not the only ones asking this question. So are all of the supporters gathered here today and so are concerned people everywhere who keep Shane, Sarah and Josh in their thoughts and prayers.

We ask Iran to stop playing with our emotions. The fear and uncertainty is taking a terrible toll on us and we can only imagine the terrible strain on our loved ones. Every night we go to bed hoping that Iran has finally accepted that our loved ones are innocent and decided to allow them to return to us, but we wake up and the nightmare continues.

On behalf of Shane, Sarah and Josh, thank you for everything you are doing to support them and send them love and strength. You are among many people around the world whose concern and solidarity encourage us to press on until our loved ones are free.”

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