



From: www.freethehikers.org

Contact: familiesofhikers@gmail.com

MOTHERS OF AMERICAN HIKERS DETAINED IN IRAN ASK TO MEET PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD IN TEHRAN

Open Letter to Iranian Leader Issued on Day 200 of Detention of Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal

The mothers of Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal – the three American hikers held in Iran – released the following open letter to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad today, on Day 200 of their children's detention.

February 15, 2010

Dear President Ahmadinejad,

On January 6, we applied for visas to visit the Islamic Republic of Iran in the hope of seeing our children in Evin Prison. We respectfully ask to meet with you when we visit Tehran and appeal to you to intervene to expedite the approval of our visa request. We would be honored to tell you in person who our children are and why they do not deserve to continue to be held in detention without any contact with the outside world.

Shane, Sarah and Josh have now been detained for 200 days. During that time, they have not been allowed to make a single telephone call to us or write us one letter. For more than three months we have had no independent information about our children's physical health or their state of mind. Their most recent consular visit from Swiss diplomats was on October 29. We asked an Iranian lawyer, Mr. Masoud Shafii, to represent our children out of respect for the Iranian judicial process, but he has been refused access to them.

We struggle to understand why our children have been denied any contact with us. We cannot explain why for more than six months Iran has not found it in its heart to demonstrate magnanimity towards our children – young travelers whose only mistake appears to have been to lose their way on a hiking vacation. So we quote here the words of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who earlier this month urged the Iranian authorities to release our children:

[I]t is difficult to escape the conclusion that [Shane, Sarah and Josh] continue to be held because they are Americans and not for any legal reason. I urge the Iranian authorities not to deny them their freedom in order to express their discontent with the United States. Nations have a right to disagree but their citizens should not be made to pay the price of their differences.

You too are a parent, Mr. President. Surely you understand the depth of our distress, and the hopelessness we feel after appealing to you time and again to show our children the compassion they deserve, irrespective of the land of their birth. We hope you will look favorably on our request this time and restore our faith in human kindness.

Sincerely – Cindy Hickey, Norah Shourd and Laura Fattal