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## **DETAINED AMERICAN HIKERS GET ENGAGED IN EVIN PRISON; THIRD HIKER WILL BE BEST MAN AT WEDDING**

### *Mothers Learn of Engagement during Emotional Visit with Children in Tehran*

Shane Bauer and Sarah Shourd, two of the three American hikers detained in Iran for almost 10 months, have become engaged in Evin Prison and plan to marry as soon as possible after their release, their mothers said on Monday. The third detained hiker, Josh Fattal, will be the best man at the ceremony.

The mothers learned the news when they visited Bauer, 27, Shourd, 31, and Fattal, 27, in Tehran on May 20 and 21. The emotional reunion at a Tehran hotel was the first time they had seen each other since the three U.S. citizens were detained by Iranian forces on July 31, 2009, when news reports say they accidentally strayed across the unmarked border during a hiking vacation in Iraqi Kurdistan.

“Shane told me that he proposed to Sarah in the yard of Evin Prison on January 6, the very same day that we applied for our visas to go visit them,” said Cindy Hickey, Bauer’s mother. “We’re all so overjoyed at the news but it’s obviously impossible to know when the wedding will take place. We just hope and pray that Iran will do the right thing and release them so they can get on with their lives,” Hickey said.

Shourd and Bauer wear engagement rings which Bauer made from threads he pulled from his shirt. “Sarah couldn’t wait to show me her ring. It’s one of the things that keeps her going – knowing that she and Shane have this unbreakable bond and a friend in Josh who will always be there for them,” said Nora Shourd, Sarah Shourd’s mother.

Shourd, a teacher of English, and Bauer, a freelance journalist, had been living together in Damascus, Syria, when Fattal, an environmentalist, came to visit them last July and they went on their trip to Kurdistan. All three are graduates of the University of California at Berkeley, where Bauer and Fattal were room-mates. Bauer and Fattal share a cell. Shourd is being held alone but is able to see the others twice a day for 30 minutes.

“Josh and Shane have gone from being housemates to being cellmates and rely on each other to get through each day, one day at a time. The relationship they have forged is indestructible,” Fattal’s mother, Laura Fattal, said. “On the day Shane proposed to Sarah, he asked Josh to stay back from their daily meeting with Sarah so he could pop the question. Knowing Josh, he’s already working on his speech and thinking of when he can give it.”

Iranian authorities allowed the mothers visas to visit their children for 48 hours last week. Until then, their only direct contact with their children had been a single telephone call home to each family lasting just a few minutes on March 9.

“We’re sure our visit will help Shane, Sarah and Josh stay strong, now that they know how much support they are getting from people throughout the world. But seeing the elevator doors close on them when they left our hotel to return to jail was too painful for words. The



fact that we had to go home and they had to return to their cells was one of the worst moments of our lives. We want this to end and we want them to come home. Our children have done nothing to deserve being held this long," the mothers said.