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MOTHERS OF AMERICAN HIKERS DETAINED IN IRAN TO VISIT THEIR CHILDREN IN EVIN PRISON THIS WEEK

Families Hope to Meet Iranian Leaders to Appeal for Their Release

The mothers of the three American hikers detained in Iran – Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal – announced today that they will leave for Tehran on May 18 to visit their children in Evin Prison and said they are asking to meet with Iranian leaders to appeal for their release.

The mothers – Cindy Hickey, Nora Shourd and Laura Fattal– applied for visas on January 6 and received them from the Interests Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Washington DC on May 12.

Swiss diplomats last saw Bauer, 27, Shourd, 31 and Fattal, 27, on April 22, only the third time they have received consular access in more than nine months. They reported that Shourd has serious health issues and that Bauer has a stomach ailment. All three were despondent at the lack of movement in their case and had spoken about going on hunger strike, increasing family concerns for their wellbeing. The three have not been allowed access to their Iranian lawyer, Masoud Shafii, and have spoken to relatives only once by telephone for a few minutes on March 9.

“We are grateful to Iran for issuing our visas. This is an encouraging development. We are overjoyed that we will soon be able to hug our children but our joy is naturally clouded by the fear of returning home without Shane, Sarah and Josh. That is more than any mother, anywhere in the world, should have to bear and we would be absolutely devastated,” the mothers said in a joint statement.

The three Americans were detained on July 31, 2009 when news reports say they accidentally strayed across an unmarked border with Iran while on a one-week hiking trip in Iraqi Kurdistan. In September, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said he would ask the judiciary to show maximum leniency and repeated in an interview during his recent visit to New York that he would ask the judge handling the case to “render maximum cooperation” to their families.

“We hope Iran’s leaders will agree to meet with us so that we can respectfully ask them to release our children as an act of human kindness to our families. We trust they will act with compassion, end our heartache, and let us all be together again as families,” the mothers said. “More than nine months in prison is sufficient punishment for any transgression our children may have committed and we urge the authorities to allow them to come home with us. This nightmare has lasted too long.”