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MOTHERS OF SHANE BAUER AND JOSH FATTAL START HUNGER STRIKE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THEIR SONS ON ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR ONLY VISIT

Families Fear that Imprisoned Americans May be in Grave Danger after Iran's Unexplained Failure to Bring Them to Court

The mothers of Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal, the two Americans imprisoned in Iran in almost complete isolation for more than 21 months, began a hunger strike in solidarity with their sons today after Iran failed to bring them to court for a scheduled trial hearing. The fast by Cindy Hickey, 50, and Laura Fattal, 58, coincides with the anniversary of their brief visit to Tehran one year ago, the only time they have seen their sons since their arrest on July 31, 2009. Supporters and other family members including Bauer's fiancée Sarah Shourd, who was released from detention last September, will take over the hunger strike on May 21, one year to the day since the Iranian authorities made the mothers leave Tehran without their children.

Bauer and Fattal, both 28, and Shourd, 32, were arrested by Iranian forces while they were hiking in Iraqi Kurdistan near the unmarked border with Iran. Shourd has confirmed the three held several hunger strikes to protest their conditions before her release. She said they had also vowed to refuse all food if any delays occurred in bringing them to court. Bauer and Fattal were scheduled to appear in court on May 11 to answer baseless charges of espionage but were not brought from Evin Prison to the hearing. Iran has given no reason for their absence.

Hickey said: "We have not had any news about Shane and Josh for many months and we are terrified that they have now gone on hunger strike to protest against this latest, devastating delay. We're worried that they are not getting proper medical care and that their lives may be in danger. We want Iran to show us that Shane and Josh are alive and well and send them home to us right now instead of playing cynical games with their lives."

Laura Fattal said; "One year ago, as we were about to fly to Tehran, we learned at the departure gate that Iran had cut the length of our visit from the seven days we were promised to just two. That's just one example of the heartless pain all of us have been made to suffer because Iran has a disagreement with the U.S. Whoever is to blame for preventing our sons' release is bringing shame on Iran. Shane and Josh have been denied justice and compassion for far too long. Today we begin a hunger strike and stand with our sons to urge Iran to stop punishing them — and our families — for no reason."



Bauer, a freelance journalist, and Fattal, an environmental advocate, have not been seen since February 6 at a prior session of their trial, when they appeared weak, pale and distressed. They have been allowed to make only two brief telephone calls to their families since their arrest 657 days ago and have not been allowed to receive a consular visit from Swiss diplomats, who represent U.S. interests in Iran, since October last year. Their lawyer, Mr. Masoud Shafii, has persistently been denied his right to meet with them.

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