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**STATEMENT FROM THE FAMILIES OF SHANE BAUER, SARAH SHOURD AND
JOSH FATTAL ON THE SIX-MONTH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR DETENTION IN
IRAN**

The families of Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd and Josh Fattal – the three American hikers held in Iran – released the following statement today, marking the six-month anniversary of their detention.

“Six months ago today, on July 31, 2009, Shane, Sarah and Josh were detained by Iranian border guards while they were hiking near the Ahmed Awa waterfall in a safe area of Iraqi Kurdistan, where they were enjoying a brief vacation. When we learned of their detention, we hoped that Iran would quickly establish that they had strayed into the border area inadvertently and deport them. Shane, Sarah and Josh had no intention of entering Iran and we were confident that they would be able to explain that fact to their interrogators.

“Instead, our loved ones continue to be held in Evin Prison in Tehran and their fate is uncertain. In the six months since their arrest, Shane, Sarah and Josh have not been allowed to have any contact with us – not a single telephone call, not a single letter. We also understand that they spent several months in solitary confinement. Thankfully, this is no longer the case as far as we know. However, for three months we have had no independent confirmation that Shane, Sarah and Josh are still in good health and we are increasingly worried about their state of mind. They have received only two brief consular visits from Swiss diplomats, the most recent on October 29. On December 27, we asked a prominent independent Iranian lawyer, Masoud Shafii, to represent our loved ones, yet he has been denied access to them.

“Several times during these past six months, our hopes that our loved ones’ detention would end have soared with encouraging remarks from senior Iranian officials that the case of Shane, Sarah and Josh would be dealt with quickly and with maximum leniency. Time and again, those hopes have been painfully dashed by the harsh reality that their case has not moved towards a resolution. We have respectfully appealed to the most senior authorities in Iran to show compassion and release Shane, Sarah and Josh as a humanitarian gesture. Those appeals have gone unanswered, and we appeal again to the Iranian authorities to release our loved ones so that they may resume their lives. If the Iranian judiciary has concluded that Shane, Sarah and Josh entered Iran without proper documentation, then surely six months in prison is sufficient punishment for any violation of regulations that may have occurred.

“We do not understand why Iran, a country committed to the rule of law, continues to hold our loved ones without due process. In the time that Shane, Sarah and Josh have been detained, other young foreigners just like them have also been held in Iran. Five Britons whose yacht drifted into Iranian waters in November were released after a week. “Three young Belgians who were on vacation in Iran were detained for three months, released on bail into the care of the Belgian embassy and allowed to leave Iran in late



December. We join with the families of the Britons and Belgians in celebrating the return of their loved ones. Yet we also ask – why are Shane, Sarah and Josh still not free? Why can't we speak to them? Why haven't they been granted bail or allowed to meet with their lawyer? We do not understand what their continued detention has to do with the facts of the case or the people they are. Shane, Sarah and Josh are peace-loving young people who share a love of the world that has taken them to many countries. They respect different cultures and religions and we know they meant Iran no harm. We constantly ask ourselves what Iran hopes to gain in the eyes of the world by detaining them any longer.

“Our lives have been on hold for six months and our spirits have flagged many, many times. Our days pass like months and the months seem like years. Despite that, we are constantly encouraged to stay strong by the outpouring of help and support we continue to receive from many different quarters, in the United States and around the world. We are deeply grateful for that support and it sustains us as we continue to work for the day that Shane, Sarah and Josh are free. We love them and miss them more than words can express and we will leave no stone unturned until they are back in our arms.”

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