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FREED HIKER SARAH SHOURD DISCLOSES PHYSICAL ASSAULT ON SHANE BAUER AND JOSH FATTAL BY IRANIAN PRISON GUARD; DETAINED HIKERS FEARED THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED

Families Say Incidents Heighten Their Concern for Welfare of Jailed Americans

A guard in Evin Prison pushed jailed American Josh Fattal down stairs because he was furious that he took extra food and then repeatedly threw his friend Shane Bauer against the wall of his cell until his head began to bleed, according to former detainee Sarah Shourd. She also said the three friends feared they would be executed a few days after their arrest more than 22 months ago when a soldier who was guarding them began cocking his weapon.

Shourd, who is Bauer's fiancée, told the [BBC Persian TV](#) show *Be Ebarate Digar*, that the beating occurred before she was released on humanitarian grounds and payment of \$500,000 bail last September. Shourd also recounted the assault in an interview with the BBC's [HARDTalk](#) which was broadcast on BBC World News TV on Thursday.

Shourd did not relate any other physical abuse but said she had no way of knowing what may have happened to Bauer and Fattal since her release. "My worst fear is that they're not safe – especially when we haven't seen them for so long," Shourd told BBC Persian TV's Enayat Fani. "There are months at a time where they don't see anyone from the outside world. They don't have consular access, they're not allowed to see their lawyer, and we fear the worst."

Shourd described another incident soon after their arrest when the three friends were forced into a car late at night and driven to a prison she could not identify. Shourd said she, Bauer and Fattal began "shaking with fear" when a soldier sitting in the front the vehicle started cocking his gun. "That was the most terrifying moment of my life," Shourd said. "I just prayed to God that I would survive –that that wouldn't be my last day on this earth. We just held hands and cried and begged them not to hurt us."

Bauer, 28, Fattal, 29, and Shourd, 32, were arrested by Iranian forces on July 31, 2009, while they were hiking behind a resort area of Kurdistan, a relatively safe region of Iraq where they were on vacation. The border area there is not marked. Iran's judiciary has indicted them on baseless charges of espionage but Bauer and Fattal were not brought to court for a scheduled trial hearing on May 11. Iranian authorities have failed to explain their absence.

"We are shocked and angry at the way Shane and Josh are being treated and the terrible incidents that Sarah has told us about only heighten our grave concern for their physical and mental welfare. The people who are holding Shane and Josh are breaking Iran's laws as well as



international law and behaving shamefully. This nightmare must end and Shane and Josh must be released,” the men’s families said in a statement.

Fattal’s mother Laura and Bauer’s mother Cindy Hickey launched a [rolling hunger strike](#) on May 19 in solidarity with their sons, who went on hunger strike for 17 days earlier this year after their guards stopped bringing them letters from their families.

“There were some guards that had sympathy for us and they were nice to us and there were other guards that were very cruel, and that hated us, just because we were there and they assumed we had done something wrong,” Shourd said.

Shourd told the BBC that Fattal regularly collected extra food to take back to the small cell he shares with Bauer after a daily meeting they had with her in an open-air room and had never had a problem. One day, however, a guard “went crazy” and tried to stop him. Fattal was pushed down stairs while Shourd and Bauer were torn away from their friend and forced back into their cells, where they both began pounding on their doors and screaming.

Shourd said she learned at their meeting the next day that Fattal had not been hurt but Bauer had been assaulted. “The same guard, he came back, the one that was angry, and he started to push Shane against the wall, just slam him against the wall and every time he slammed him against the wall, Shane would stand up and he would say ‘Where’s Josh?’ ‘Where’s my friend?’ and he would slam him against the wall again,” Shourd said. “He slammed him against the wall I don’t know how many times, 10, 15 times, until the back of his head had blood.”

Bauer, a freelance photojournalist and Shourd, a teacher of English, were living in Damascus, Syria at the time of their vacation in Kurdistan. Fattal, an environmental advocate, was visiting them. The two men have been allowed to make only three brief telephone calls to their families since their arrest, most recently on May 22. Fattal spent his second birthday in jail on June 4.

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