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MOTHERS OF SHANE BAUER AND JOSH FATTAL REJOIN HUNGER STRIKE ON THEIR BIRTHDAYS TO PROTEST SONS' DETENTION

Families Call on Iran to Release the Two Americans into the Care of the Swiss Embassy Pending Final Trial Hearing on July 31

The mothers of Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal are rejoining a rolling hunger strike being held in solidarity with their sons, who have been unjustly detained in Iran for almost two years. Laura Fattal, who will be 59 on Saturday, and Bauer's mother Cindy Hickey, who turns 51 on June 29, will fast between June 25 and 30.

It will be the second birthday for both mothers without their sons, who were arrested with Bauer's fiancée Sarah Shourd on July 31, 2009 while they were hiking in the unmarked border area between Iran and Kurdistan, a relatively safe area of Iraq where they were on vacation.

Other mothers will also fast over the coming week. They include the former Colombian hostage, Ingrid Betancourt; the anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in the Iraq War; the South African peace activist Ela Gandhi; and Sarah Shourd's mother Nora.

The mothers' fast will continue until a news conference on June 30 organized by the U.N. Correspondents Association in New York with Mrs. Fattal, Mrs. Hickey and Ms. Shourd, who is expected to talk about the psychological torture and abuse she, Bauer and Fattal have suffered in detention.

"The only thing we want for our birthdays is for justice to be served," said Mrs. Fattal. "Iran knows that Josh and Shane are innocent, just as the whole world knows. I ask whoever is doing this to them – and inflicting such pain on us and our families – to have a heart and release them immediately."

Mrs. Fattal and Mrs. Hickey launched a rolling hunger strike in solidarity with their sons on May 19 after Iran's judicial authorities failed to present them for a planned hearing to face fabricated charges of espionage. Other family members and supporters have kept the fast going.

The lawyer for Bauer and Fattal, Mr. Masoud Shafii, was informed this week that a new trial date has been set for July 31 – the second anniversary of their arrest. Tehran's prosecutor-general, Abbas Jafari-Dolatabadi, said earlier this month that he hoped that a final decision in the case would be made at the next session.

Mrs. Hickey said: "We are outraged that Shane and Josh continue to be arbitrarily detained and have been physically mistreated. It now seems that after nearly two years of denying our sons due process, the Iranian judicial authorities want to conclude a trial. The least those authorities can do in the meantime is release Shane and Josh into the care of the Swiss Embassy. They've



done that in many cases involving foreign nationals and there is no reason they cannot do it again.”

Switzerland represents U.S. interests in Iran in the absence of diplomatic relations between Washington and Tehran.

Bauer, 28, and Fattal, 29, are confined for more than 23 hours a day in a small cell they share in Evin Prison, Tehran. Their lawyer has been denied access to them and Swiss diplomats have been granted only four consular visits, most recently last October, in contravention of international conventions.

Bauer, a freelance photojournalist, and Fattal, an environmental advocate, have been allowed only three brief telephone calls with their families, in violation of Iranian law.

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