



UNITED STATES SENATE

January 30, 2013

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500-0005

Dear President Obama:

I am deeply dismayed and disturbed by the news from Iran that Pastor and American citizen Mr. Saeed Abedini has been sentenced by the Iranian government to eight years in prison for practicing the Christian faith.

Pastor Abedini, who was born in Iran, stands accused by the ruling mullahs of subverting Islam, and in a sham trial he was denied an opportunity to fairly, freely, and fully refute these claims. Instead, at the likely direction of senior Iranian leadership, Pastor Abedini languishes in a prison in Tehran.

Such treatment of an American citizen by Iranian fanatics is nothing less than outrageous.

Pastor Abedini's case is symbolic of the gross injustice against all Christians in Iran today. It is no state secret that Iran's theocracy is intolerant of religious freedom and the rule of law. However, to compassionate people of all faiths it appears that a second crime has been committed by the mullahs against the innocents Pastor Abedini sought to care for and comfort, namely Iranian orphans.

I appreciate that spokesmen at the White House and the Department of State have recently called upon the Iranian government to release Pastor Abedini. This is to be expected, and a growing chorus of voices is undoubtedly essential in highlighting the injustice committed against a man condemned to prison simply because of his faith.

While I fully recognize the myriad national security issues posed by the fanatical theocracy in Tehran, I believe the case of Pastor Abedini deserves your full attention and engagement. To this end, it is imperative that you personally add your voice to those calling for Pastor Abedini's immediate and unconditional release. There is no better symbol of American values, specifically freedom of religion, or demonstration of loyalty to the welfare of our citizens abroad than vocal and sustained support directly from the President of the United States.

I believe that anything less than your personal attention will only guarantee that the injustice committed by the ruling mullahs against Pastor Abedini prevails, the separation from his loving family endures, and his good works remain in abeyance while imprisoned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. O. Graham", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator