

Fox News

By Perry Chiaramonte



An American pastor who has been imprisoned in his native Iran because of his Christian faith has been threatened with death, according to his family.

Saeed Abedini has been imprisoned since September, when he returned to Iran to visit family. In a letter written to his wife just days ago, Abedini said his captors have given him mixed signals about his fate.

“This is the process in my life today: one day I am told I will be freed and allowed to see my kids on Christmas (which was a lie) and the next day I am told I will hang for my faith in Jesus,” Abedini said in the letter. “One day there are intense pains after beatings in interrogations, the next day they are nice to you and offer you candy.”

Abedini, 32, became a U.S. citizen in 2010 when he married his American wife, Naghmeh Abedini. Two years earlier he had become an ordained minister.

The Iranian government does not recognize his American citizenship, though it had enabled him to travel freely between both countries until this past summer. That's when he was pulled off a bus and placed under house arrest, according to his supporters. Abedini was then imprisoned and charged with several crimes that have not been made public, but it is widely believed that it is because of his Christian faith.

“The life of Pastor Saeed is in grave danger,” said Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice. “When you read Pastor Saeed’s own words, you understand that Iran has absolutely no regard for human rights and religious freedom.”

Sekulow added that the pastor is facing one of Iran’s notorious “hanging judges,” Pir-Abassi, who is known for issuing death sentences.

“And now facing one of Iran’s most notorious judges, Pastor Saeed is in a real sense an American abandoned in Iran. The U.S. State Department has done very little to help this U.S. citizen.”

The case is similar to that of Youcef Nadarkhani, an Iranian Christian pastor who was recently freed after serving three years in prison and then being re-arrested on Christmas Day, all for converting to Christianity.

Nadarkhani, 35, initially faced possible execution, but was freed after Fox News and other media outlets drew attention to his plight. His attorney, Mohammed Ali Dadkhah, has been imprisoned and remains in Iran's notoriously brutal Evin Prison, where his health is rapidly deteriorating and he is being denied proper dental care, according to his family. He has been jailed for advocating Nadarkhani's case and other human rights cases.