Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to thank you for your recent statement calling for the release of American citizen Saeed Abedini and we respectfully urge you to exhaust every possible option to secure Mr. Abedini's immediate release.

We support your assessment that Mr. Abedini's imprisonment represents a "violation of the universal right of freedom of religion." We were also heartened by the State Department's recent condemnation of the imprisonment and trial of Mr. Abedini.

While there are countless important issues that come before you, few are more sacred than defending the most fundamental human rights. It is even more incumbent upon us to stand against persecution when it is levied against our own citizens. As an American citizen, Mr. Abedini deserves nothing less than the exercising of every diplomatic tool of the U.S. government to defend his basic human rights.

Mr. Abedini was detained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard on July 28, 2012, during a lawful entry into Iran. Mr. Abedini's detention occurred during his ninth trip to Iran since 2009. His frequent travel to Iran was for the humanitarian purpose of opening an orphanage in Rasht, Iran – an endeavor the Iranian Regime encouraged and supported. During his most recent trip to Iran, Mr. Abedini's passports were confiscated and he was forced to remain in Iran and face charges relating to his Christian faith. On September 26, 2012, the Revolutionary Guard raided the home of Mr. Abedini's parents and took Mr. Abedini into custody. In the following months, Mr. Abedini experienced solitary confinement, beatings, and aggressive interrogations in Evin Prison.

On January 21, 2013, Mr. Abedini stood trial in front one of the most notorious judges in Iran: Judge Pir-Abassi of Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court. Judge Pir-Abassi is known as the "hanging judge" and has been designated by the European Union for numerous violations committed during trials of human rights activists related to the 2009 Iranian elections. It is deeply disturbing that the human rights of an American citizen were decided by an Iranian judge of this repute.

Every American citizen traveling or living abroad should have the assurance that the U.S. government will come vigorously to his or her defense if they are unjustly detained or imprisoned. We respectfully request that you continue to use every diplomatic avenue possible, in cooperation with our allies and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, to secure Mr. Abedini's unconditional release and personally and publically condemn his arbitrary detention in a statement.

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Sincerely,

TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress

HENRY WAXMAN
Member of Congress

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG
Senator

MARK KIRK
Senator

LINDSEY GRAHAM
Senator

RON WYDEN
Senator

ROY BLUNT
Senator

DEAN HELLER
Senator

PAT ROBERTS
Senator

BENJAMIN J. CARDIN
Senator

MIKE JOHANNS
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RICHARD BURR
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ROBERT B. ADERHOLT
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