November 25, 2014

His Holiness
Pope Francis
Vatican City

Your Holiness:

As you may know, Pastor Saeed Abedini is an Iranian-American dual citizen who the Iranian Revolutionary Guard detained on July, 28, 2012, during his lawful entry into Iran. Charged with intentionally undermining the national security of Iran by practicing his Christian faith, Pastor Abedini was sentenced to eight years in the notoriously brutal Iranian prison system.

Throughout his detainment and court proceedings, Mr. Abedini has faced extreme conditions, human rights abuses, and the confiscation of his passport. The Government of Iran did not provide Pastor Abedini with an arrest warrant during his initial arrest; and, while an arrest warrant was issued before trial, Mr. Abedini's family did not have full access to the information and was unable to confirm under whose authority the order was issued. Additionally, the judge handed down the verdict after denying Mr. Abedini full access to his attorney, while barring both Pastor Abedini and his attorney from the court for much of the court proceedings.

During his imprisonment, Mr. Abedini has endured brutal conditions, and his health has been in significant decline. Furthermore, Pastor Abedini has not received medical treatment for infections and injuries resulting from several abusive beatings.

Despite the efforts of numerous organizations, including the United Nations, which issued a report conveying that Pastor Abedini is being held in prison while violating no Iranian laws, he has been imprisoned for over two years. His imprisonment is not only a violation of basic human rights but also of the Iranian Constitution, which states that the Government of Iran may not punish an individual for holding certain religious beliefs.

The Holy See has provided meaningful assistance to individuals suffering religious persecution in Iran in the past, and our hope is that you will consider engaging on behalf of Pastor Abedini to secure his release. As Members of Congress who value the freedom of religion and the faith traditions of all communities, we are dedicated to the release of Pastor Abedini and look forward to your thoughtful assistance.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter, we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Robert Pittenger
Member of Congress

Joe Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Bill Huizenga
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Raul R. Labrador
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Randy Hultgren
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Doug LaMalfa
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Duncan Hunter
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Doug Lamborn
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