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JULY 2013

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Luke 6:31

Dear Friends,

The right to follow one’s faith and practice one’s religion freely is enshrined in a variety of international treaties and the constitutions of most nations. It may, however, be one of the most violated rights today. The latest statistics demonstrate that 3 out of 4 people on earth today live in countries with high or very high restrictions on religious freedom.

Three of those persecuted for their religious beliefs in Iran are Saeed Abedini, Farshid Fathi and Youcef Nadarkhani (photos on back). Each of these three pastors was following his calling to share the Gospel and to make a difference in the lives of others in Jesus’ name. Each was arrested and charged with violating national security or other political offenses and is now incarcerated in Iran’s notorious Evin Prison. All three need our prayers and Iran’s recent national election may provide an answer to those prayers.

A rare number of national elections mark a dramatic change: Germany in 1933 and South Africa in 1994 are two examples. With most elections, however, the changes are minimal or the status quo remains. According to some experts, the Reformist party’s win in Iran’s national election last month provides “an enormous sign of hope” for internal politics. Yet internationally, not much is likely to change “without the west’s willingness to compromise.”

Our hope and prayer is that Iran’s new president will actually follow up on campaign promises to free political prisoners—including Pastor Saeed, Pastor Farshid and Pastor Youcef, and other Christians also detained in Evin Prison and elsewhere. Advocates is encouraging national fellowships to send letters to the Iranian ambassadors nearest to them, encouraging the release of these pastors. We also sent the enclosed Golden Rule letter to the new president, urging him to follow up on his campaign promises, and offering to meet with him to discuss the matter. We’ll keep you posted.

Thanks for your continued prayers and financial support, especially during the lean summer months. Also enclosed is the July/August Prayer calendar. Please continue to join with us each day as we pray for advocates region by region and for the upcoming 10th Advocates Africa Conference in Uganda from August 6-11.

May the Lord bless and keep you in His perfect. . .

Grace and Peace



Brent McBurney
President & CEO

Pray with us for these Pastors and their families



Pastor Saeed and Nagmeh Abedini & kids



Pastor Farshi & Leila Fathi and kids



Pastor Youcef & Fatemah "Tina" Nadarkhani and kids



PRAYER CALENDAR – JULY & AUGUST 2013

Mondays: Advocates Africa

- Please continue to pray for the 10th Advocates Africa Conference “*Bringing Forth Justice to the Nations: (Isaiah 42:1-4)*,” August 6-11 in Kampala, Uganda. “Please pray for the organizing committee as they continue their preparations. Pray too for all those planning to attend and for provision of finances. Pray too that God would bless the speakers in all their preparations and would challenge us through them. Above all, we want to pray that God would richly bless this gathering of His people, and through us would impact this marvelous continent of Africa.”
- **MALI:** the current State of Emergency is due to end on 7 July 2013 and Presidential elections are planned for 28 July. Please pray for Mali during this very important time for the nation.
- Please continue to pray for **Egypt**. AA’s North Africa coordinator, Emad Felix, writes:
“Egypt is experiencing the most difficult time because the Islamic government is trying to control all the institutions of the country. Christians in Egypt are suffering from oppression and marginalization.”

Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in Egypt, that they might remain strong in the face of persecution.

Tuesdays: Advocates Asia & Oceania

- Please continue to pray for the **CLEAR Project** in **Australia**. A team from Australia plans to travel to East Africa in **July** to work with legal aid clinics in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.
- Please continue to pray for advocate **Nguyen Van Dai** who remains under house arrest in Vietnam. Pray also for efforts of Advocates Asia who plan to offer a delegation of lawyers drawn from Asia and Africa to engage Vietnam on religious liberty reforms.
- Please continue to pray for advocates in Pakistan who are representing Christians who have been accused (falsely) of blasphemy and are now caught in the legal trap that is nearly impossible to escape from. Among those who are putting themselves in possible harm’s way include **Joseph Francis** and the **CLAAS** team, as well as **Ezra Shujat** and **Advocates Pakistan**, and numerous others.

Wednesdays: Advocates Europe

- Please pray for **ADVOCATES EUROPE** President Latcho Popov (*Bulgaria*) & other Country Leaders:
ALBANIA: Fatmir Lacey, Toni Gogu, Altin Naqe; **ARMENIA:** Armine Avagyan, Lusy Avagyan; **AUSTRIA:** Robert Kramer; **BELARUS:** Dina Shavtsova, Sergei Shavtsov; **BELGIUM:** Ninette Dodo; **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA:** Aleksander Vukovic; **BULGARIA:** Latcho Popov; **CZECH REPUBLIC:** Adam Russ, Martin Okac; **CROATIA:** Tihomir Kukulja; **DENMARK:** Ebbe Holm, Flemming Martinussen; **FINLAND:** Ville Hoikkala; **FRANCE:** Nicolas Duval; **GERMANY:** Armin Eckermann, Peter Gegenwart; **GREECE:** Pepie Pagoni, Vassilios Tsirbas; **HOLLAND:** Eline de Groot; **HUNGARY:** Terry Lingenhoel; **ITALY:** Gianfranco Amato; **KOSOVO:** Pal Bala; **MACEDONIA:** Laste Spasovski; **MOLDOVA:** Aliona Cara, Evghenii Sologubenco; **MONTENEGRO:** Sinisa Nadazdin; **NORWAY:** Henning Heitmann; **POLAND:** Ursula Pomorska; **PORTUGAL:** Fernando Loja; **ROMANIA:** Benjamin Lup; **RUSSIA:** Yuri Snisarenko; **SERBIA:** Dusan Kostic; **SPAIN:** Eliseo Gomez-Lor; **SWEDEN:** Mats Tunehag, Per Karlsson; **SWITZERLAND:** Benjamin Doberstein, Henri Minder; **TURKEY:** Mine Yildirim; **UNITED KINGDOM:** Michael Sookias, Paul Diamond; **UKRAINE:** Sergei Gula, Ivan Mykhalchuk, Andrei Somov

Thursdays: Advocates Latin America (FIAJC)

- Abortion has been legalized in Uruguay. We would like to work on a regional campaign to oppose all abortions, legal and illegal. The key is to prevent unwanted pregnancies and violence against women. We need wisdom to design a proposal that will be relevant.
- The level of violence and corruption in Honduras is extremely high but most big cities in Latin American are growing violent (mostly because of the ineffectiveness of measures against common crime). We pray that God raise qualified leaders to deal with this growing problem in the region.
- For unity and the development of a godly team spirit among all FIAJC leaders.

Fridays: Advocates North America & Caribbean

- **Christian Legal Fellowship (Canada)** – Please continue to pray for the planning of the **CLF** National Conference in September. Pray also for the outcome of a Prostitution Challenge heard by the Canadian Supreme Court in June.
- **Advocates Caribbean** – Please continue to pray for the fellowships throughout the region as they face battles for the sanctity of life and marriage, both of which are under attack. Please continue to pray for the **Watchmen on the Walls** effort that was launched at the Barbados conference last September.
- **Christian Legal Society (USA)** – Pray for the work of the Center for Law & Religious Freedom and Senior Counsel, Kim Colby in their ongoing efforts to protect religious freedom on university campuses, Christian employers facing the HHS mandate, and representing Christian non-profit's targeted by the IRS.

Saturdays: Advocates Global Council & Board Members

- **Global Council: Exec. Committee:** Chairman, Min Choon Lee* (Malaysia); Vice Chair, Teresa Conradie* (South Africa); Secretary, Gregory Vijayendran (Singapore); Treasurer, Ruth Ross* (Canada); **Members** – **Africa:** Justice Rose Mbah Acha (Cameroon); Judge Mike Chibita (Uganda); **Asia:** Robin David (India); Dongsu Sim (Korea); **Europe:** Latchezar Popov (Bulgaria); Nicolas Duval (France); Mats Tunehag (Sweden); **Latin America:** Gerardo Amarilla (Uruguay); Nina Balmaceda* (Peru), Daniel Varela (Paraguay) - New member of Council ; **Middle East:** Botrus Mansour (Israel); **North America/Caribbean:** Justice Alice Soo Hon (Trinidad & Tobago); **Oceania:** Mark Mudri (Australia). *Also AI board members.
- **AI Board:** Chairwoman, Ruth Ross; Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, Sam Logan; Secretary, Chip Zimmer; Nina Balmaceda, Matt Bristol, Teresa Conradie, Timothy Klenk, Min Choon Lee, Roger Sherrard, and Ken Starr. Pray too for potential new board members.

Sundays: Advocates Staff & Family

- Please pray for Romi Kobayashi; Brent McBurney, his wife Elizabeth, son Ian and daughter Sarah Louise.
- Please pray for the McBurney family as we will be ministering to street kids through Outreach 360 in the Dominican Republic from July 6-13. It is the first mission trip for the kids.

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June 24, 2013

President Dr. Hassan Rouhani
The Islamic Republic of Iran
2209 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Subject: Cases of Saeed Abedini, Farshid Fathi and Youcef Nadarkhani

Dear Mr. President:

Congratulations on your election. We hope that you will follow up on your campaign promises to truly bring reform to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Advocates International is a global network informally linking 30,000 lawyers, judges and scholars in over 150 nations on six continents committed to justice by promoting universal values. Central to its mission since its founding in 1991, Advocates International has been aiding legislators, the courts, diplomats and government officials, as well as religious leaders, to consider the practical application of the universal Golden Rule in life, law and public policy. We believe that the Golden Rule, as embraced by the world's major religious traditions, can help Iran find common ground and resolve the cases of pastors Saeed Abedini, Farshid Fathi, and Youcef Nadarkhani, in a way that people in Iran and around the globe will consider just, fair and right.

These three pastors are currently being held in Evin Prison. We believe that their human rights have been violated and that they should be released, along with numerous others.

Common Roots: All three major traditions that embrace Abraham as a central spiritual leader – Islam, Christianity and Judaism – promote the Golden Rule as an affirmative duty, not just a restraint on harmful conduct. Thus, in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: “In everything, do to others what you would have them to do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Quoting Moses, Jesus also taught that all the Law and the Prophets hang on the two Great Commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-40). Likewise, in the Sunnah, Muslims are taught the affirmative duty: “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” For the physical and spiritual children of Abraham, the Golden Rule is a nonnegotiable truth on life's journey. It should impact public policy. The fact that nations may violate the Golden Rule from time to time does not undermine its universal authority.

The Origin of the Golden Rule: The seed of the Golden Rule may be found in the story of Cain and Abel taught by Muslims, Christians and Jews. Cain tricked Abel into a field and murdered him because he was intolerant of Abel's mode of worship. Thus, the first crime in the Bible was, in fact, an act of

religious intolerance. When God asked Cain the whereabouts of his brother, Cain denied knowing anything. He then asked man's first question recorded in the Bible: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain's question is pregnant with the answer. Rephrasing his question, Cain, in effect, asked: How should I treat my brother? Do I have any responsibility to those who worship differently than I do? It is the Golden Rule question. One lesson from this well-known story is that we should treat those of other faiths with the same care and respect with which we hope those of other faiths will treat us.

The Golden Rule in Action: The Golden Rule requires that the actor places himself in the shoes of those on the receiving end of his actions. In these three cases, a helpful practical illustration by comparison might be the country of Nepal where the Constitution declares Hinduism to be the official religion. Under Nepal's Constitution, conversion from Hinduism to any other religion – including Islam – is a serious crime. What might the reaction of global Islam be if Nepal convicted and sentenced to death a Nepali who left Hinduism to embrace Islam?

At a 1996 conference on the rights of religious minorities in Bulgaria, attended by over 100 leaders from Christian, Muslim and other traditions, a government official argued that since the Eastern Orthodox Church had an 87% majority that the law should give them preferential treatment over other faiths. However, when the official was asked whether it would be right for non-Orthodox nations to treat the Orthodox as second-class citizens if they are in the minority, everyone at the conference, including the official, agreed that the Golden Rule should govern.

Every faith tradition, including Islam, is a minority somewhere on Planet Earth. Followers of Islam deserve equal protection under the law where they are in the minority and should likewise grant equal protection by applying the Golden Rule to other faiths where Islam is a majority.

Conclusion: Advocates International respectfully requests that Iran consider the application of Golden Rule principles in rendering a decision in the cases of Saeed Abedini, Farshid Fathi and Youcef Nadarkhani, by setting them free. The continued imprisonment of these and others will most certainly continue to result in negative press for Iran, while their release would demonstrate to the world that Iran is a nation which desires to follow its adherence to principles that are good for its own citizens and all peoples.

The members of the Global Council of Advocates International, or a representative delegation, would be pleased to meet with you to further discuss this matter.

Sincerely,



Brent M. McBurney, Esq.
President & CEO

CC: AI Global Council Executive Board:

- Lee Min Choon (Malaysia), Chairman
- Gregory Vijayendran (Singapore), Secretary
- Ruth A.M. Ross (Canada), Treasurer
- Latchezar Popov (Bulgaria), At-Large
- Mats Tunehag (Sweden), At-Large
- Prof. Dr. Vilma Balmaceda (Peru), At-Large