

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2015*

**Statement on United States Citizens Detained or Missing in Iran**  
*March 20, 2015*

The spirit of family is deeply woven into all of the rich cultural traditions of the Nowruz holiday. It is a time for reuniting and rejoicing with loved ones and sharing hopes for the new year. Today, as families across the world gather to mark this holiday, we remember those American families who are enduring painful separations from their loved ones who are imprisoned or went missing in Iran.

Saeed Abedini of Boise, Idaho, has spent 2½ years detained in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs. He must be returned to his wife and two young children, who needlessly continue to grow up without their father.

Amir Hekmati of Flint, Michigan, has been imprisoned in Iran on false espionage charges for over 3½ years. His family, including his father who is gravely ill, has borne the pain of Amir's absence for far too long.

Jason Rezaian of Marin County, California, an Iranian Government-credentialed reporter for the Washington Post, has been unjustly held in Iran for nearly 8 months on vague charges. It is especially painful that on a holiday centered on ridding one's self of the difficulties of the past year, Jason's mother and family will continue to carry the heavy burden of concern regarding Jason's health and well-being into the new year.

And finally, we recently marked yet another anniversary since Robert Levinson went missing on Kish Island. His family has now endured the hardship of his disappearance for over 8 years.

At this time of renewal, compassion, and understanding, I reiterate my commitment to bringing our citizens home and call on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately release Saeed Abedini, Amir Hekmati, and Jason Rezaian and to work cooperatively with us to find Robert Levinson so that they all can be safely reunited with their families as soon as possible.

In honor of the familial spirit so strongly enshrined within this holiday and for the Abedini, Hekmati, Rezaian, and Levinson families, I hope this new spring is filled with joyous moments for us all with all of our loved ones by our sides.

NOTE: The statement referred to Naghmeh Abedini, wife, and Jacob and Rebekka, children, of Saeed Abedini; Ali Hekmati, father of Amir M. Hekmati; and Mary Rezaian, mother of Jason Rezaian.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : Iran, detained or missing U.S. citizens.

*Names:* Abedini, Jacob; Abedini, Naghmeh; Abedini, Rebekka; Abedini, Saeed; Hekmati, Ali; Hekmati, Amir M.; Levinson, Robert A.; Rezaian, Jason; Rezaian, Mary.

*Subjects:* Civil rights : Freedom of religion; Civil rights : Freedom of the press; Holidays and special observances : Nowruz; Iran : Diplomatic relations with U.S.; Iran : Human rights issues; Iran : U.S. citizens, detained or missing.

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