

Statement on the Return of United States Citizens Released From Detention in Iran
September 18, 2023

Today five innocent Americans who were imprisoned in Iran are finally coming home.

Siamak Namazi, Morad Tahbaz, Emad Sharghi, and two citizens who wish to remain private will soon be reunited with their loved ones—after enduring years of agony, uncertainty, and suffering. I am grateful to our partners at home and abroad for their tireless efforts to help us achieve this outcome, including the Governments of Qatar, Oman, Switzerland, and South Korea.

I give special thanks to the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad, and to the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tariq, both of whom helped facilitate this agreement over many months of difficult and principled American diplomacy.

As we celebrate the return of these Americans, we also remember those who did not return. I call on the Iranian regime to give a full account of what happened to Bob Levinson. The Levinson family deserves answers. Today we are sanctioning former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence under the Levinson Act for their involvement in wrongful detentions. And we will continue to impose costs on Iran for their provocative actions in the region.

And as we welcome home our fellow citizens, I once more remind all Americans of the serious risks of traveling to Iran. American passport holders should not travel there.

The U.S. State Department has a longstanding travel warning that states: "Do not travel to Iran due to the risk of kidnapping and the arbitrary arrest and detention of U.S. citizens." All Americans should heed those words and have no expectation that their release can be secured if they do not.

Reuniting wrongfully detained Americans with their loved ones has been a priority for my administration since day one. We have now brought home dozens of our fellow citizens, including from Afghanistan, Burma, Haiti, Russia, Rwanda, Venezuela, West Africa, and more locations globally. Still, too many remain unjustly held in Russia, Venezuela, Syria, and elsewhere around the world. We remain unflinching in our efforts to keep faith with them and their families, and we will not stop working until we bring home every American held hostage or wrongfully detained.

NOTE: The statement referred to former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Robert A. Levinson, who disappeared on Kish Island, Iran, in 2007.

Categories: Statements by the President : Iran, return of U.S. citizens from detention.

Names: Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud; Haytham bin Tariq Al Said, Sultan; Levinson, Robert A.; Namazi, Siamak; Sharghi, Emad; Tahbaz, Morad; Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir.

Subjects: Hostages and U.S. nationals detained overseas, repatriation efforts; Iran, international diplomatic efforts; Iran, return of detained U.S. citizens; Iran, U.S. sanctions; Oman, Sultan; Qatar, Amir.

DCPD Number: DCPD202300802.