

KERRY 'DEEPLY CONCERNED' BY CHRISTIAN PASTOR TORTURED IN IRAN

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<http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2013/03/23/Sec-State-Kerry-s-Statement-on-Christian-Pastor-Detained-in-Iran-Fails-to-Sufficiently-Elevate-the-Case>

Secretary of State John Kerry issued [a statement](#) Friday on Saeed Abedini, a Christian pastor and U.S. citizen detained in Iran eight months ago, tortured, and sentenced to eight years in prison. Kerry said he was "deeply concerned" about Abedini's fate and "disturbed by reports that Mr. Abedini has suffered physical and psychological abuse in prison."

Kerry added that he was "troubled by the lack of due process in Mr. Abedini's case," but the Secretary offered no specific proposals to address Iran's treatment of Abedin. He said that he expects "Iranian authorities to honor their commitment to allow Mr. Abedini to receive treatment" for his injuries. He closed by saying, "[t]he best outcome for Mr. Abedini is that he be immediately released."

On Saturday, Nina Shea, Director of the [Center for Religious Freedom](#) and a Fellow at the Hudson Institute, told Breitbart News, "The State Department and Secretary Kerry have not sufficiently elevated Pastor Abedini's case: the injustice of his detention eight months ago, the subsequent torture and [beatings he has been subject to](#), the denial of due process in his case and the sentencing two months ago."

Abedini is being punished by Iran, Shea said, "for peacefully exercising his basic human right of religious freedom." She noted that "the [Obama] administration's apparent indifference until two days ago is shocking because [Pastor Abedini] is an American

citizen and a victim of a numerous egregious human rights abuses, starting with the denial of religious freedom."

Earlier this year, as part of his confirmation hearings before the Senate, then-Secretary of State nominee Kerry [provided a more emphatic](#) and unequivocal statement calling for the release of Pastor Abedini to Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL).

In a letter dated January 15, 2013, Senator Rubio asked Mr. Kerry, "if confirmed, would you commit to echo as Secretary of State the National Security Council's call for Mr. Abedini's release?"

Kerry responded to Senator Rubio in writing on January 29, stating, "[w]e remain deeply concerned about the fairness and transparency of Mr. Abedini's trial. I, along with the U.S. government, condemn Iran's continued violation of the universal right of freedom of religion and call on the Iranian authorities to respect Mr. Abedini's human rights and release him."

Despite the encouraging news that the State Department has finally said something about Abedini, the Center for Religious Freedom's Shea stated that "[t]he State Department's press release still falls short. It fails to mention that Abedini is a Christian pastor and that he is imprisoned for his Christian faith. Religious freedom is a basic human right, set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and one that is of special importance to the United States both in the Constitution where it is enshrined as the first clause of the First Amendment, and as a pillar of foreign policy in the International Religious Freedom Act. "

Shea also noted the peculiar timing of Kerry's statement yesterday. "It is outrageous that when this statement finally was made, under mounting public pressure, it was included in

the Friday night 'document dump'– released at 6:01 pm, it appears that it was deliberately held until just after the close of the work week."