

RELEASE IN
PART B6

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, August 8, 2011 12:00 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Iran's Salehi 'hopes' court will free Americans

Fyi

----- Original Message -----

From: Magsamen, Kelly E. [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, August 07, 2011 07:35 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Fw: Iran's Salehi 'hopes' court will free Americans

B6

----- Original Message -----

From: Alert Desk [redacted]
Sent: Sat Aug 06 10:36:43 2011
Subject: Iran's Salehi 'hopes' court will free Americans

Iran's Salehi 'hopes' court will free Americans

Media: AFP
Byline: N/A
Date: 06 August 2011

TEHRAN, Aug 6, 2011 (AFP) - Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi hopes the trial of two US citizens detained in the Islamic republic on espionage charges will lead to their freedom, reports said on Saturday.

"We hope that the trial of these two (US) nationals will proceed in a manner that will result in their freedom," Salehi said, quoted by Fars news agency.

The trial of the Americans, Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal, who were detained two years ago on the border with Iran, ended on July 31.

A spokesman of their families in New York said they had no comment on the apparent optimism from Salehi.

The last hearing in the case was held behind closed doors without the presence of a third accused, Sarah Shourd, who is in the United States after being granted bail.

Salehi said the judiciary would announce the verdict in due course for the case which he added "is being pursued with justice and fairness".

His comments came nearly a week after Iran's general prosecutor Gholam Hossein Mohseni said a verdict in the case would be issued "soon."

Shourd, who got engaged to Bauer in prison in Tehran, was tried in absentia after returning to the United States following her release on humanitarian and medical grounds in September 2010, after bail of about \$500,000 was paid.

Bauer and Fattal, both 29, were arrested along with Shourd, 32, on the unmarked border between Iran and Iraq on July 31, 2009 with Tehran accusing them of "spying and illegally entering the country."

They have pleaded not guilty to spying charges, saying they were hiking in the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq when they innocently walked into Iran across an unmarked border.

Washington has vehemently denied Tehran's charge that the three are spies and has pressed for their release.

At the end of their trial last Sunday, the lawyer acting for the Americans, Masoud Shafii, said that the verdict for the trio should be issued within a week.

On Saturday, Shafii told AFP that he still has "not received any news from the court" regarding the timing of the verdict.

"I believe in my clients' innocence, but even if the verdicts find them guilty, I hope that it is not more than the time they spent in detention and they are freed immediately," he added.

He welcomed Salehi's comments, saying: "This is certainly a positive sign that they will be treated with Islamic compassion."

After the final hearing in the trial, the families of the detained Americans called for clemency.

"We are pleased that today's hearing was the final session in the case," the families said in a statement released in New York.

"We pray that the Iranian authorities will show compassion to Shane and Josh and we ask everyone who supports them and cares for them to join us in beseeching the grace of God at this important time."

The case of the three garnered high-profile support in the United States.

On May 24, legendary Muslim boxing champion Muhammad Ali publicly backed a call for Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to free Bauer and Fattal.

Amnesty International has also renewed calls for Tehran to release the pair.

Their detention has added to the animosity between arch-foes Tehran and Washington, which has grown over Iran's disputed nuclear drive and outspoken remarks by hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Shourd, a teacher, writer and women's rights activist, grew up in Los Angeles and later moved to Damascus, where she met Bauer, a fluent Arabic-speaking freelance journalist.

He met Shourd while helping organise anti-US demonstrations in Syria over the war in Iraq.

Fattal, who grew up in Pennsylvania, is an environmentalist and teacher. He travelled in 2009 to Damascus, where he met Shourd and Bauer.

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