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Jason Puracal Family Hold Vigil on One-Year Anniversary of Conviction

By KING Staff

SEATTLE --Jason Puracal's family held a candlelight vigil at the University of Washington where he attended school Wednesday night.

It's been one year since the husband and father of a young son was convicted for alleged drug trafficking and money laundering in Nicaragua. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison.

Earlier Wednesday, supporters from The California Innocence Project and Change-Dot-Org delivered more than 110,000 petition signatures to the Nicaraguan Embassy in Los Angeles demanding Puracal's release from prison.

Jason is completely innocent. There is absolutely no credible evidence against him. Not an ounce of drugs or one dollar of evidence, declared Sarah Shourd outside the embassy.

Shourd is an American hiker who was detained in Iran from 2009-2011, was freed and then worked to free her fellow hikers, Josh Fattal and Shane Bauer.

I know what it feels like to be wrongfully imprisoned, to be sitting in uncertainty that feels eternal, she said.

In Seattle, Puracal's sister Janis credits efforts by media, organizations, as well as Congressman Adam Smith, with pressuring the Nicaraguan court to hold an appeals hearing last week in an attempt to free Jason, who's been held now for 22 months.

A combination of all that really worked to get Jason moved to a better cell so that he's able to get food that we deliver him, she said, but added he is still depressed by his life in

limbo.

The goal here is to essentially shame Nicaragua into doing the right thing, said Smith in an interview by phone. (We want to) bring as much international attention to this terrible miscarriage of justice.

A former Peace Corps volunteer who was selling real estate in Nicaragua, Puracal can only wait as the court considers his appeal. A decision could come down as soon as this week.

It's absolutely a case of factual innocence, said Justin Brooks, director of the California Innocence Project. I feel confident that the Nicaraguan government is going to recognize that over the next week and that Jason will be released and sent home.