

April 20, 2023
MEDIA RELEASE

PRESIDENT BIDEN IGNORES FORMER AMERICAN HOSTAGE IN IRAN BAQUER NAMAZI'S EMOTIONAL PLEA FOR A MEETING

In a special broadcast, Voice of America revived the long-refuted allegation from 2009 that Siamak Namazi is a lobbyist for the Iranian regime, not just in the past but bizarrely over the time he has been an American hostage in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison since October 2015.

Washington, D.C. – On March 2, 2023, Baquer Namazi, who was held hostage in Iran for nearly seven years prior to his release last October, sent President Biden an emotional letter requesting an in-person meeting for himself and the families of Morad Tahbaz and Emad Shargi, the other two American hostages in Iran. In the [letter](#), Baquer expressed a desire to discuss his own experiences at the hands of Iranian authorities and the ongoing plight of his son, Siamak Namazi, who also remains a hostage in Iran's notorious Evin Prison. Over six weeks later, the Biden Administration has still not responded to the letter.

In asking for the meeting, Baquer conveyed his gratitude to the Biden Administration for helping facilitate his own release and described the happiness of reuniting with his grandchildren and other son, Babak Namazi. However, he also detailed the pain of leaving Iran without Siamak:

I hope that you, as a devoted father and grandfather yourself, can begin to understand the pure joy I felt during those reunions – reunions I often feared would never come. However, for that same reason, I hope you are also able to grasp the constant torture I feel as I hopelessly watch my child suffer from afar. It broke me to leave Iran without Siamak by my side. And though I would do everything in my power to bring him home, I recognize that his fate is now primarily dependent on your discretion. Therefore, I respectfully ask that you grant this suffering 86-year-old man the opportunity to meet with you in person, so that I may speak to you not just as a U.S. citizen in dire need of assistance from his country's leadership, but also as one father to another.

Speaking from his own experience, Baquer emphasized that the safety and lives of Siamak and the other American hostages remain in danger as long as they are within Iran's borders.

Siamak also expressed his disappointment with the Biden Administration. In an unprecedented [interview](#) from Evin Prison with CNN's Christiane Amanpour last month, Siamak called the President's failure to meet with his family "very hurtful and upsetting." Risking serious retaliation, Siamak ended the interview with a direct plea to President Biden, imploring him "to put the lives and liberty of innocent Americans above all the politics involved and to just do what's necessary to end this nightmare and bring us home."

Earlier this week in a call from Evin Prison, Siamak asked that the following statement from him be published:

The silence I have received from President Biden in response to my despairing plea to him last month on CNN from an Evin Prison cell hardly gives the impression that rescuing the U.S.

hostages in Iran is a Biden Administration priority. Meanwhile, the plodding pace of negotiations for our release is seriously dispiriting and unnerving to us. Tehran and Washington both know from experience that if they continue to drag out hostage talks, some unexpected event or the other will eventually scuttle them. Enough already!

It is inexplicable that President Biden will not grant meeting requests to the families whose loved ones are hostages in Iran. You can see pictures in the Attachment, but consider who he has met in his first 27 months in office: parents of Trevor Reed (Imprisoned in Russia), parents of Austin Tice (Imprisoned in Syria), family of Paul Whelan (Imprisoned in Russia), Cherelle Griner, the wife of Brittney Griner (Imprisoned in Russia, two meetings and a call, plus call to Brittney too), Belarussian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Kelly Clarkson, the cast of Ted Lasso, the Jonas Brothers, Jay Leno, Billie Eilish, Matthew McConaughey, and 20 top social media influencers, among others. In addition, he held calls with the parents of Evan Gershkovich (Russia) within weeks of his arrest, the sister of Paul Whelan (Russia), and with Juan Guaido, the Venezuelan opposition leader.

While the President is entitled to meet whoever he wants, this sampling of meetings demonstrates he has previously met or had calls with the families of many hostages, let alone countless rock stars, actors, and other celebrities.

The Namazi family's pain and frustration over the Biden Administration's silence regarding Baquer's request was exacerbated by false and defamatory allegations against Siamak recently published by Voice of America (VOA) – a U.S.-owned news network funded by American taxpayers. On April 6, 2023, VOA's Persian Language Division broadcasted an hour-long special entitled the "Islamic Republic's Lobby in the United States." VOA revived the long-refuted allegation from 2009 that Siamak Namazi is a lobbyist for the Iranian regime, not just in the past but bizarrely over the time he has been an American hostage in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison since October 2015. Beyond these baseless claims, the special accused *Washington Post* columnist Jason Rezaian and the *New York Times* of also being Iranian regime activists.

Although the special has since been removed from the network's platform, at least for now, the Namazi family has demanded that VOA issue a public apology and correction to the information. Iranian authorities have interrogated and tortured Siamak over these false allegations before and by resurrecting these fabricated claims, VOA has once again placed Siamak's life, health, and safety at risk.

In his detailed [written complaint](#) to six people at the U.S. Agency for Global Media and Voice of America sent April 12, 2023, Jared Genser, pro bono international counsel to the Namazi family, concluded:

The callous and utter disregard for the impact of this story, which purports to represent the official views of the United States, on Mr. Namazi's life, safety, and welfare shocks the conscience and is beyond the pale. The broadcast could literally lead to Mr. Namazi being tortured or it could disrupt ongoing hostage negotiations between the U.S. and Iran. The only appropriate and effective corrective measure is for VOA to act immediately to publicly to withdraw and disavow the story in its entirety and announce that all those who have been involved will be

subjected to the most serious of consequences. Anything short of that will reaffirm the clear message from the VOA special for the Iranian regime – that the United States isn't really concerned about Siamak Namazi and that it can treat him with impunity. If anything now happens to Mr. Namazi, the blood is literally on your hands.

Yet more than a week later, no one from the U.S. Agency for Global Media or Voice of America have even acknowledged receipt of the letter, let alone replied. If Voice of America believes it is acceptable to publish a hit piece on an American citizen and to attack American journalists and news organizations then the only remedy left is for the U.S. Congress to severely cut its \$250 million budget during the FY24 appropriations process.

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Contact:

Jared Genser
+1 202 320 413
jgenser@perseus-strategies.com

Examples of President Biden's Meetings in Person



Parents of Trevor Reed
(Russia)
3/30/22 (No Photo)



Parents of Austin Tice
(Syria)
3/2/22 (No Photo)



Separate Meetings
Families of Brittney Griner and Paul Whelan
(Both Russia), 9/17/22



Cherelle Griner (Wife)
(Russia) and Call With
Brittney Griner
12/8/22



Elizabeth Whelan
Sister of Paul (Russia)
December 2022



Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya
Belarus Opposition Leader
7/28/21



Kelly Clarkson
Rock Star
2/20/21



Jonas Brothers
Rock Stars
12/17/21



Billie Eilish
Rock Star
2/9/22



Selena Gomez
Rock Star / Actress
2/26/22 (No Photo w/
POTUS)



BTS
Rock Stars
6/1/22



Matthew McConaughey
Actor
6/7/22



Jay Leno
TV Host
8/26/22



20 Social Media Influencers
From TikTok, Instagram, & YouTube
9/13/22



Cast of Ted Lasso
Actors
3/20/23

President Biden's Phone Calls

- Call with Parents of Evan Gershkovich (Russia), 4/11/23
- Call with Sister of Paul Whelan (Russia), 7/8/22
- Call with Wife of Brittney Griner (Russia), 7/6/22
- Call with Juan Guaido, Venezuelan Opposition Leader, 6/8/22