

January 16, 2023  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

**AMERICAN HOSTAGE IN IRAN SIAMAK NAMAZI  
LAUNCHES SEVEN-DAY HUNGER STRIKE  
TO MARK SEVEN YEARS SINCE HE WAS LEFT BEHIND**

*In appeal to President Biden, Siamak urges him to bring all the American hostages in Iran home and to spend one minute a day for seven days thinking about their plight.*

Washington, D.C. – Siamak Namazi announced from Evin Prison that he has started a hunger strike to protest the failure of the United States and Iran to reach a deal to free himself and the other American hostages. Today marks seven long years since the Obama Administration fatefully excluded Siamak from a prisoner swap conducted on January 16, 2016 – implementation day of the 2015 nuclear deal.

At the time of the 2016 prisoner swap, Siamak Namazi had been held *incommunicado* by the Iranian government since his arrest in October 2015. Instead of securing the release of all the American hostages, President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry decided to leave one behind, accepting assurances from Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif that Siamak would be released within weeks. Instead, Iranian authorities lured Siamak's then 79-year-old father back to Tehran under the guise of finally being able to see his imprisoned son and arrested him at the airport. Both were eventually sentenced to ten years in prison for “collaboration with a hostile foreign government” – the United States. In 2017, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention condemned their detention as arbitrary and in violation of international law.

Iranian authorities finally permitted Baquer, now 86, to leave the country and seek life-saving medical treatment abroad this past October, over two-and-a-half years after closing his case and commuting his sentence. However, Siamak remains behind bars in Iran's notorious Evin Prison, where he has endured prolonged solitary confinement, denial of access to medical care, and physical and psychological torture. He has been left behind two additional times during hostage deals negotiated by the Trump Administration and now, over two years into the Biden Administration, there remains no observable progress in bringing him home.

Siamak has requested that his letter to President Biden be shared with the international community:

*Dear President Biden,*

*When the Obama Administration unconscionably left me in peril and freed the other American citizens Iran held hostage on January 16, 2016, the U.S. Government promised my family to have me safely home within weeks. Yet seven years and two presidents later, I remain caged in Tehran's notorious Evin prison, holding that long overdue IOU along with the unenviable title of the longest held Iranian-American hostage in history.*

*My captors enjoy taunting me about that fact by saying things like: “How can your beloved*

*America be so heartless? Not one but two U.S. presidents freed others but left you behind!” Yet my frank reply deprives them of any satisfaction. I tell them while I remain highly indignant about the invidious distinction the U.S. Government can make among its citizens at risk, I never forget that it was not Obama or Trump who imprisoned me on made up charges. That it is clear whose vile hostage diplomacy has blighted the lives of so many innocent men and women and their families.*

*Sadly, I have a far harder time replying honestly to a genuine question, “How are you, really?” I know of no words that do justice to the ineffable pain I’ve endured since Iran took me hostage in October 2015. Nothing I say could possibly convey the agony of having to harden myself to this soul crushing callousness and lawlessness. How does one describe what it feels like to be stripped of your humanity and treated as some sort of extortionately priced item instead? How do I explain the devastation my family and I are left with after so many half-hearted prisoner deals crumbled last minute, turning freedom into a chimera? How do I convey the excruciating terror that comes with not knowing when or how this nightmare will end or even what comes next?*

*Day after day I ignore the intense pain that I always carry with me and do my best to fight this grave injustice. You certainly won’t be surprised to hear that my tenacity has wrought no positive results and that my repeated calls for the rule of law and show of humanity have fallen on deaf ears here. Perhaps I’m lucky that is so. After all, today the whole world is witnessing how atrociously this regime can respond to those who dare demand their basic rights.*

*The extent of my captors’ ruthlessness is not the only thing I’ve learned far more about during these insufferable years. I now know that I shouldn’t get my hopes up when senior U.S. officials say that rescuing the hostages in Iran is their highest priority. Such well-intentioned statements can be repeated year after year without tangible results. Only the President of the United States has the power to bring us home, should he set his mind to do so. That is why, Mr. Biden, on the 7th anniversary of being left behind by the Obama Administration, I’m once again risking a direct appeal to you.*

*In the past I implored you to reach for your moral compass and find the resolve to bring the US hostages in Iran home. To no avail. Not only do we remain Iran’s prisoners, but you have not so much as granted our families a meeting.*

*So today I feel compelled to adjust my ask. All I want sir, is one minute of your days’ time for the next seven days devoted to thinking about the tribulations of the U.S. hostages in Iran. Just a single minute of your time for each year of my life that I lost in Evin prison after the USG could have saved me but didn’t. That is all. Alas, given I am in this cage all I have to offer you in return is my additional suffering. Therefore, I will deny myself food for the same seven days, in the hope that by doing so you won’t deny me this small request.*

*Sincerely,*

*Siamak Namazi*

*Evin Prison*  
*January 16, 2023*

Commenting on his brother's decision to begin a hunger strike, Babak Namazi stated the following: "My family is of course gravely concerned for Siamak's health and distraught that he has resorted to such desperate measures. However, we also understand his frustration with the seemingly unending horror he has faced and support his call on both Iran and the U.S. to finally reach a deal to secure the release of all the American hostages. I am begging President Biden to hear my brother's pleas and finally demonstrate the courage to do whatever necessary to bring Siamak and the other American hostages in Iran – Emad Shargi and Morad Tahbaz – home."

Daily updates on Siamak's status as the strike goes on will be posted on Twitter by Jared Genser ([@JaredGenser](https://twitter.com/JaredGenser)), who serves as pro bono international counsel to the Namazi family. With assistance, Siamak Namazi will also be providing his own updates on his newly launched Twitter account, [@sianamazi](https://twitter.com/sianamazi).

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