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## **Iran: Release US hikers following “grossly unfair” trial**

The Iranian authorities must release two US citizens following a deeply flawed trial, Amnesty International said today, after the men were sentenced to eight years in prison by a Tehran court on charges of “espionage” and “illegally entry”.

Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal, who were arrested while hiking in the Iraq-Iran border area in July 2009, were each given three years for allegedly entering Iran illegally and five years for spying, according to Iran’s state media.

“The conduct of this trial has quite simply made a mockery of justice. There does not appear to be any substance to the allegations that Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal are spies,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s Middle East Director.

“The way this case has been handled from the outset strongly suggests that they are being held as a bargaining chip to allow Iran to obtain unspecified concessions from the US government,” he added. No evidence to suggest Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal were conducting espionage is known to have been presented in court.

The two men, who deny the charges, are planning to appeal the sentence in 20 days, according to their lawyer, Massoud Shafi’i.

“Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal have already spent over two years waiting for justice. The Iranian authorities should take act now and release these two men now without further delay,” said Malcolm Smart.

During their two-year detention in Tehran’s Evin Prison, Bauer and Fattal have only been granted one brief family visit. Their mothers visited Iran in May 2010, in what appeared to be a stage-managed meeting.

They have been denied adequate access to their lawyer and have had very limited access to consular assistance.

A third US citizen arrested with the men, Sarah Shourd, was released in September 2010 on US\$500,000 bail.

Eyewitness testimony reported by US news magazine The Nation placed the three hikers inside Iraq, not Iran, at the time of their arrest by Iranian troops. The Iranian authorities maintain that they were arrested inside Iranian territory.