

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Iran must immediately free two US hikers jailed for 'espionage'**

The authorities in Iran must release two US nationals without delay, Amnesty International said today, amid conflicting messages on the fate of the pair after more than two years in detention.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Tuesday that imprisoned US nationals Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal would be released within two days. However, this statement was contradicted today by the Iranian judicial authorities, who say that no decision has been made, and that any release would take "a bit longer" than the President suggested.

The pair were arrested while hiking in the Iraq-Iran border area in July 2009. They were detained in a Tehran prison for more than two years before a court recently sentenced them to eight years in prison for "illegal entry" and "espionage".

"The Iranian authorities must stop treating Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal as pawns – both in their dealings with the US government and in domestic political rivalries," said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The two men must be released immediately and unconditionally, and be promptly allowed to leave Iran to be reunited with their families."

The conflicting messages from Iran on the pair's release come ahead of President Ahmadinejad's planned attendance at the annual UN General Assembly session in New York.

"All available evidence and the authorities' conduct throughout the trial strongly suggests that the Iranian authorities have known all along that these men were not spies. Rather, it appears they were probably held in order to try to gain political concessions from the USA," said Philip Luther.

"The circumstances of their arrest remain murky, and their lengthy pre-trial detention and flawed trial are glaring signs of the government's political motivations."

During more than two years in detention at Tehran's Evin Prison, Bauer and Fattal have been granted only one brief family visit in May 2010.

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

Bauer, Fattal and Shourd have maintained their innocence throughout their detentions.