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Release of US hikers in Iran a “long overdue” step

The release of the two US hikers imprisoned for more than two years in Iran is a long overdue development, Amnesty International said today.

“It is a welcome – if long overdue – step that the Iranian authorities have finally seen sense and released Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal.” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International Deputy Director for Middle East and North Africa. “They must now be allowed to leave Iran promptly to be reunited with their families.”

“All available evidence strongly suggests that the Iranian authorities have known all along that these men were not spies and should have been released. They should now release all prisoners of conscience held simply for peacefully expressing their views.”

The pair, who were arrested while hiking in the Iraq-Iran border area in July 2009, 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 release came on the same day a 17-year old convicted of killing an athlete was publicly hanged in the city of Karaj, near Tehran. Amnesty International had called on the authorities to halt the execution, which is a gross breach of international law.

Notes for editors

- Amnesty International Iran researcher Drewery Dyke is available for interview. Please contact the Amnesty International Press Office (+44 20 7413 5566. press@amnesty.org).
- [Video footage](#): Sarah Shourd, who was previously detained with the two hikers, in conversation with Drewery Dyke about her experience in custody.
- Amnesty International [statement on the hikers](#), 14 September