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Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:  
*Americans Detained in Iran*  
June 2, 2015

(As prepared for delivery)

This hearing will come to order. Today we consider the fate of four Americans who are either detained or have gone missing in Iran.

All four of our witnesses are close relatives of these Americans who have been away from their families for far too *long*. Ali Rezaian is the brother of *Washington Post* correspondent Jason Rezaian, whose so-called “trial” began last week, in secret. Nagameh Abedini is the wife of Pastor Saeed Abedini. Sarah Hekmati is the sister of former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati. And Daniel Levinson is the son of Robert Levinson.

We deeply appreciate all of you being with us today. This Committee stands in solidarity with each of your families. We can’t imagine the living hell that your families are going through. And we share your anger and frustration with the position you have been put in. Immediately after our hearing today, the Committee will be passing a resolution that calls for Iran to release all detained U.S. citizens *immediately* and provide information it possesses regarding any who have disappeared within its borders.

I’d like to recognize the work of Congressman Huffman of California, Congressman Labrador of Idaho, and Congressman Kildee of Michigan. And of course Mr. Deutch is a senior member of the Committee. I know that these Members have worked to represent the best interests of your families and thank them for joining us.

This morning, we will hear the stories of these four Americans:

- Jason Rezaian is a journalist who was born and raised in California and hoped to use his position at the *Washington Post* to present a greater understanding of the Iranian people. Arrested on trumped-up charges, he’s been held for *over*

300 days at the infamous Evin prison. Like every other aspect of his case, his trial opened last week shrouded in secrecy.

- In September 2012, Iran arrested and later sentenced pastor Saeed Abedini to eight years for gathering with others to study the Bible – as his wife notes, a lawful act even under Iranian law, but one which the regime deemed a threat to national security.
- In August 2011, Amir Hekmati, a former U.S. Marine, was sentenced to death for alleged espionage. Upon appeal, the sentence was reduced to 10 years. His sister will tell us how Amir has been beaten on his feet with cables and tasered repeatedly in the kidneys. His father is gravely ill.
- In 2007 Robert Levinson, went missing on Iran’s Kish Island. Eight years later, Iran continues to refuse to assist the United States in locating him. As Daniel notes, his father is the longest-held hostage in American history.

Each of these tragic cases is unique. But they each demonstrate Iran’s view of the United States -- *contempt*. *Washington Post* editor Martin Baron wrote last week, “There is no justice in this system, not an ounce of it... Iran is making a statement about its values in the disgraceful treatment of our colleague.” This is after all, a country that regularly holds “Death to America” rallies.

And while our focus this morning is the release of these Americans, these cases do call into question the integrity of the diplomacy surrounding Iran’s nuclear program. Is this another attempt to pressure the Administration into weakening its position at the talks? If a journalist can be suddenly imprisoned on bogus charges, what treatment can international inspectors for Iran’s nuclear program expect? But more fundamentally, if top Iranian officials can’t be counted on to assist these wrongfully jailed Americans, can they be counted on to honor the commitments they make at the negotiating table? Call me a skeptic.

The bottom-line this morning is that these four Americans should be allowed home. *Now*.

I will now recognize the Ranking Member for any opening comments he may have.