

**Daniel Levinson**

**Son of Robert Levinson**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**

**“Americans Detained in Iran” 6/02/2015**

My name is Daniel Levinson, and I am the eldest son of Robert Levinson, who was taken hostage on the Iranian island of Kish on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Unlike the other three Americans currently imprisoned in Iran, the government has never acknowledged arresting him. The closest evidence of this appeared less than three weeks after he went missing, when the Iranian state-sanctioned media outlet PressTV reported that he was “in the hands of Iranian security forces” and could be “freed in a matter of days.” 3,007 days later, we are still waiting for him to be released and returned home to us.

My father is the longest-held hostage in American history. No U.S. citizen has been held overseas longer than he has, ever. Our family’s hearts break for the other families here, who have suffered the wrenching agony of having their loved ones away from them for so long all of these years. Yet my father has been held 4 ½ years longer than any of the others. No family should ever have to go through what we all are going through.

To say these past eight years and three months have been a nightmare would be an understatement. I am one of my parents’ seven children, and my mother just marked their 41<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary last month. My father has missed so many milestones: the births of three grandchildren, two weddings, numerous high school and college graduations. To put it simply, he has missed too much of our lives.

There is not a day that goes by when we don’t think of him, how much he must be suffering, and what we can do next to bring him home. In November 2010, we were emailed a one-minute video of my father from an anonymous email address where he looked gaunt, ill, and desperate. The last words we heard from him in that video were “33 years of service to the United States deserves something. Please help me.” Six months later, we received several pictures from another anonymous email address where he held various signs in broken English that appear to have been produced by his captors in order to taunt the United States government. We are extremely worried about his health. He is 67 years old, with several pressing health concerns including diabetes, hypertension, and gout.

My father had a long career serving the United States. He was still a contractor for the government at the time of his capture, and therefore the U.S. has a moral obligation to help bring him home.

We have sought help through numerous heads of state, presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers, NGOs, private citizens, and religious leaders here and around the world – to no avail. My mother, aunt, and I even traveled to Iran in 2007 to meet with officials there, but the trip ended with no progress made on his case. This has been a bipartisan effort spanning two U.S. presidencies, with lawmakers from both parties working to bring him home. We are eternally grateful for the efforts of members of this committee, including Congressman Ted Deutch, who represents our home district in Florida, and Congresswoman Ileana Rohs-Lehtinen, who have continued their efforts to highlight my father’s case on the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa. Senator Bill Nelson has been our staunch advocate and has given us voice to the powerful. However, my father is still not here with us.

We were encouraged by the election of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, and the appointment of Javad Zarif as foreign minister. They have sought active engagement with the United States on a number of issues, but to our knowledge, have not engaged on the topic of my father’s capture in their country. My family believes this engagement is by far our best opportunity to bring my father home safely, and

we need American officials to ramp up this engagement as they meet in the next few weeks over Iran's nuclear program. We need – in fact, we implore - negotiators to take a more aggressive approach than merely asking for Iran's help in locating him. It is true that those involved in the talks may not know where my father is, or what happened to him, but we are certain that there are people in Iran who do. We believe that, if the Iranian government had the will and motivation to locate my father and send him home, they most certainly could.

My family will never rest until our father is back home with us, and we can only hope the members of this committee, along with those involved in discussions with Iran, share that unwavering commitment. My father could be anyone's father, or grandfather, or brother, or husband. He is all of those things to my family. He is an American. And America should not rest until one of its own is returned home to the family that loves him more than life itself.

Thank you.