

International affairs

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/03/01/roxana-saberi-us-journalist_n_170915.html. Your request is being processed... Roxana Saberi, Former Miss North Dakota, Journalist, Arrested In Iran For Buying Bottle Of Wine, Says Her Father

FARGO, N. D. — A U. S. journalist has been arrested in Iran, and her father said Sunday she told him in a brief phone call she was detained after buying a bottle of wine.

Roxana Saberi, 31, has not been heard from since her last call on Feb. 10, her father, Reza, told The Associated Press on Sunday.

"We haven't heard anything," he said. The family decided to go public, he said, "because we wanted to get some information."

Officials in Iran have not publicly confirmed the arrest. A duty officer at the U. S. State Department said Sunday officials were looking into an AP request for information on the case.

Human rights groups have repeatedly criticized Iran for arresting journalists and suppressing freedom of speech. The government has arrested several Iranian-Americans in the past few years, citing alleged attempts to overthrow its Islamic regime. The most high-profile case came in 2007, when Iran arrested four Iranian-Americans, including the academic Haleh Esfandiari. The four were imprisoned or had their passports confiscated for several months until they were released and allowed to return to the U. S.

Roxana Saberi is a freelance journalist who has reported for National Public Radio and other media and has lived in Iran for six years.

Her father said that in her last phone call, she told him she was arrested after buying a bottle of wine.

" We asked others and they said, `Theres no detention for that. So thats kind of an excuse," he told the AP.

Buying and selling alcohol is illegal in the Islamic republic.

A few minutes after that call, she phoned her parents again and asked " Please dont do anything because theyll release me in two days," Reza Saberi said.

He told reporters she had already been detained 10 days by that point. He said he does not know where his daughter is or what charges she faces.

" Its been very tough," he told the AP on Sunday.

NPR said Iran revoked Saberis press credentials more than a year ago but apparently let her report short news stories.

An NPR spokeswoman said Sunday the latest information they had on Saberi was in the stories on its Web site.

Saberis father said his daughter was finishing a book on Iran and had planned to return to the United States this year.

The book is about the culture and the people of Iran, he said. She was hoping to finish it in the next couple of months and come home to have it published.

Roxana Saberi was Miss North Dakota in 1997 and was among 10 finalists in the Miss America pageant that year. She graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., with degrees in mass communication and French and with dreams of being an international correspondent. She said that her goal as Miss North Dakota was to encourage people to appreciate cultural differences.

Saberis mother, Akiko, is from Japan and her father is from Iran. Roxana was

born in the United States and grew up in Fargo. Her father said she was determined to go to Iran.

" I was very worried and I was reluctant for her to go," Reza Saberi said Sunday. " She was very persistent about it."

Filed by Marcus Baram

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8000522.stm.

Profile: Roxana Saberi

When the journalist Roxana Saberi was first arrested in Iran, her family was told it was for buying a bottle of wine - an act banned under the countrys Islamic law.

That was in January 2009. Iranian prosecutors then accused her of working as a journalist without a valid press card, before on 8 April she was finally accused of spying for the US.

Between January and March, Ms Saberi was only able to contact her family in the US twice, according to the human rights group Amnesty International. She told them she was not being physically harmed but was finding life difficult in Evin prison, near Tehran.

Diverse heritage

Ms Saberi, 31, was born in the US and grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, the daughter of Reza Saberi, who was born in Iran, and his wife Akiko, who is from Japan.

In 1997 she was chosen as Miss North Dakota and was among the top 10 finalists in Miss America 1998.

When she received her Miss North Dakota title, Ms Saberi said that her aim was to encourage other people to appreciate cultural differences - an

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ambition that eventually led her into a career in journalism.

She graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, with degrees in mass communication and French.

Ms Saberi also holds a masters degree in broadcast journalism from Northwestern University in Chicago and another masters degree in international relations from Cambridge University in the UK.

She is currently working on yet another masters degree in Iranian studies.

Ms Saberi moved to Iran six years ago and worked as a freelance journalist for various news organisations, including the BBC, before her press credentials were revoked.

Her father said she had been determined to go to Iran, although he had expressed his concerns.

Mr Saberi said that despite losing her press status, his daughter had stayed on to finish a book on Iran and to study. He said she had planned to return to the US later this year.

Shock arrest

But then came her arrest.

The development surprised former BBC Tehran correspondent Frances Harrison, who remembers her as a very careful person.

" She was a very cautious person and the kind of person who wore a headscarf even in diplomatic functions where there were no restrictions," she said.

" She was careful about her reputation being a young, single woman living in Iran."

She added: " She would know as a journalist that she would be under a lot of

scrutiny - her phone would be listened to and she would be watched."

<http://freedomeden.blogspot.com/2009/04/roxana-saberi.html>.

Saturday, April 18, 2009

Roxana Saberi

UPDATE, April 27, 2009: Roxana Saberi: In "Bad Condition"

Iran keeps testing the Obama administration, and it keeps failing.

When Obama learned that Roxana Saberi, an American journalist, was sentenced to eight years in prison on spying charges, he said he was "deeply disappointed."

That's inadequate.

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Iran convicted an American journalist of spying for the United States and sentenced her to eight years in prison, her lawyer said Saturday, complicating the Obama administration's efforts to break a 30-year-old diplomatic deadlock with Tehran.

The White House said President Barack Obama was "deeply disappointed" by the conviction, while the journalist's father told a radio station his daughter was tricked into making incriminating statements by officials who told her they would free her if she did.

It was the first time Iran has found an American journalist guilty of espionage—a crime that can carry the death penalty.

Roxana Saberi, a 31-year-old dual American-Iranian citizen, was arrested in late January and initially accused of working without press credentials. But earlier this month, an Iranian judge leveled a far more serious allegation, charging her with spying for the United States.

The Fargo, North Dakota native had been living in Iran for six years and had

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worked as a freelance reporter for several news organizations including National Public Radio and the British Broadcasting Corp.

The journalist's Iranian-born father, Reza Saberi, told NPR that his daughter was convicted Wednesday, two days after she appeared before an Iranian court in an unusually swift one-day closed-door trial. The court waited until Saturday to announce its decision to the lawyers, he said.

Saberis father is in Iran but was not allowed into the courtroom to see his daughter, who he described as "quite depressed." He said she denied the incriminating statements she made when she realized she had been tricked but "apparently in the case they didn't consider her denial."

Saberis lawyer, Abdolsamad Khorramshahi, told The Associated Press he would "definitely appeal the verdict."

U. S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States was working with Swiss diplomats in Iran to get details about the court's decision and to ensure Saberis well-being. She said in a statement the United States will "vigorously raise our concerns" with the Iranian government.

The United States has called the charges against Saberi baseless, and the State Department said Thursday that Iran would gain U. S. good will if it "responded in a positive way" to the case.

In effect, Saberi is being held hostage. Obama is being tested.

... Some conservative Iranian lawmakers played down Saberis conviction, saying the verdict would not affect any ongoing efforts to build trust between the United States and Iran.

"Although there is a wall of mistrust between Iran and the United States, the judicial verdict won't affect possible future talks between the two countries.

The verdict is based on evidence," said lawmaker Hosseini Sobhaninia.

Saberis father disagreed, telling NPR, " I dont think they have any evidence and I havent heard any evidence that they have made public."

It would be crazy if the U. S. responds positively to Iran given Saberis conviction.

The Obama administration needs to grow a spine.

This young woman must be released.