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## Relatives of American Prisoners in Iran Ask: What Now?

By Rick Gladstone

Relatives of Americans imprisoned in Iran implored the Trump administration on Wednesday not to forget their loved ones, whose fates may have just become murkier now that the United States has quit the nuclear accord.

Their angst was further complicated by word that three Americans incarcerated by North Korea had been freed. While happy over that news, some worried that President Trump's decision to abandon the nuclear agreement would antagonize the Iranian authorities, dimming any prospects of prisoner releases in Iran anytime soon.

Mr. Trump's success at securing the freedom of North Korea's prisoners, and failure so far to do the same in Iran, underscored the complexities of the estranged American relations with the two countries, which have vexed successive White House administrations for decades.

At least five American citizens — four of them dual citizens of the United States and Iran — are known to be incarcerated in Iranian prisons.

Babak Namazi, whose father and brother, both American citizens, have been serving 10-year prison sentences in Iran on vaguely defined espionage charges since October 2016, said in a telephone news conference that he had met with two high-level White House officials to emphasize the family's concern.

"I was assured that the administration continues to treat my family and other hostage cases with high priority," Mr. Namazi said. "All that matters to me is the safe and immediate return of my family."

The Namazi family's lawyer, Jared Genser, who accompanied Mr. Namazi to the White

House meeting, said he had been reminded of Mr. Trump's Twitter posting as a presidential candidate in October 2016, days after the Namazis were sentenced in Iran. "This doesn't happen if I'm president!" Mr. Trump wrote.

Mr. Genser said that "what the Namazis want is that Mr. Trump keeps to his word, nothing more, nothing less."

Both Mr. Genser and Mr. Namazi said they were gratified that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was visiting North Korea to help complete details of Mr. Trump's planned meeting with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, had been able to bring the three Americans home with him on Wednesday.

Mr. Genser said, "We emphasized to the administration that we are very aware of what happened today in North Korea."

Neither Mr. Genser nor Mr. Namazi would comment on whether Mr. Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement would have an effect on efforts to free the American prisoners. But Mr. Genser said that the prisoner issue should be separate, and that an exchange of American and Iranian prisoners was possible.

"Regardless of how the president's decision may play out in weeks and months to come, at various times both sides have been publicly outspoken about nationals imprisoned in each other's country," he said.

Both countries released prisoners in January 2016 when the nuclear agreement took effect. Iran has since accused the United States of holding a number of Iranian officials unjustly.

Iran is known to be holding Baquer Namazi, 81, a former Unicef diplomat; his son Siamak, 46, a business consultant; Karan Vafadari, 56, an art dealer; Morad Tahbaz, 62, an environmental activist; and Xiyue Wang, 37, a Princeton University graduate student.

A sixth American, Robert A. Levinson, a former F.B.I. agent, has been missing in Iran since 2007. Members of his family, who hold out hope that he is alive, say he would be 70.

Mr. Wang's wife, Hua Qu, said in a telephone interview that she was thankful that Mr. Trump had mentioned Iran's imprisonment of American citizens in his announcement on Tuesday abandoning the nuclear agreement. She also said that when she heard the news that Mr. Pompeo was bringing home the Americans from North Korea, she cried with happiness.

“I put a lot of hope in Secretary Pompeo,” she said. “I hope he can do the same for my husband.”

Cyrus Vafadari, Mr. Vafadari’s son, said in an email message that if the Iranian authorities let Mr. Trump’s repudiation of the nuclear accord affect their judicial decisions on the prisoners, “they’d be undermining their own sovereignty, and letting down their own citizens in an already uncertain time.”