



Sarhan al-Hasani/Associated Press
Sarah Shourd, right, embraces her mother Nora Shourd, left, after being detained for 13 months in Iran.

American woman released after deal

Hiker imprisoned in Iran since July 2009

By Brian Murphy
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

TEHRAN, Iran — In just a few dizzying hours, American Sarah Shourd exchanged a cell in Tehran's Evin Prison for a private jet crossing the Persian Gulf on Tuesday, after an apparent diplomatic deal to cover a \$500,000 bail and secure a release that seemed in jeopardy from the start.

Shourd was met by her mother and U.S. diplomats at a royal airfield in the capital of Oman, which U.S. officials say played a critical role in organizing the bail payment and assuring it did not violate American economic sanctions on Iran.

Shourd stepped off the private Omani jet and into the arms of her mother in their first embrace since a brief visit in May overseen by Iranian authorities — and her first day of freedom in more than 13 months. Shourd smiled broadly as they strolled arm-in-arm through the heat of the late summer night along the Gulf of Oman.

"I'm grateful and I'm very humbled by this moment," she said before boarding the plane in Tehran for the two-hour flight to Oman.

The whirlwind departure of the 32-year-old Shourd brought little change for two other Americans — her fiancé Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal — who remained behind bars while authorities moved toward possible trials on spy charges that could bring up to 10 years in prison if they are convicted.

The three were detained along the Iraq border in July 2009. Their families say they were innocent hikers in the scenic mountains of Iraq's Kurdish region and if they did stray across the border into Iran, they did so unwittingly.

"All of our families are relieved and overjoyed that Sarah has at last been released, but we're also heartbroken that Shane and Josh are still being denied their freedom for no just cause ... They deserve to come home, too," said a statement by the three families.

Iran, however, has shown no hints of clemency for the two 28-year-old men. Indictments on espionage-related charges have been filed and Tehran's chief prosecutor has suggested the cases could soon move into the courts, with Shourd tried in absentia.

Any other scenario could bring more unwanted attention to the growing rivalries inside Iran's Islamic leadership.

Amendment aims to aid immigrants

By Suzanne Gamboa
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said Tuesday he wants to attach an amendment to a defense policy bill that would help young people in the United States illegally become legal U.S. residents.

The Nevada Democrat said at a Capitol news conference that the legislation known as the DREAM Act is long overdue. He would not say whether he has the votes for the amendment. The act would allow young people who attend college or join the military to become legal U.S. residents.

The young people must have come to the country when they were under 16 years of age and have been in the country five years.

Democrats have also promised gay rights groups an end to the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy."

That is in the bill that Reid said he will try to take up next week.

Republicans oppose both measures.

Asked whether he had the votes for the DREAM Act, Reid responded: "I sure hope so."

President Barack Obama has been under fire in the immigrant and Hispanic communities because Congress has failed to move an immigration reform bill despite his promise to deal with the issue in his first year in the Oval Office.

Some critics say the Democrats' end-of-the-year push on immigration reform is a political move.

Reid is facing a tough re-election challenge from conservative candidate, Sharron Angle, who supports tougher immigration laws. Hispanics comprise one-fourth of Nevada's population.

Reid blamed Republicans for the inability to pass a sweeping immigration reform bill so far.

"I've tried to. I've tried so very, very hard, but those Republicans we've had in the last Congress [who backed immigration reform] have left us," he said.

French bill bans Islamic veils

By Elaine Ganley
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

PARIS — The French Senate on Tuesday overwhelmingly passed a bill banning the burqa-style Islamic veil on public streets and other places, a measure that affects less than 2,000 women but that has been widely seen as a symbolic defense of French values.

The Senate voted 246 to 1 in favor of the bill in a final step toward making the ban a law, though it now must pass muster with France's constitutional watchdog. The bill was overwhelmingly passed in July in the lower house, the National Assembly.

Many Muslims believe the legislation is one more blow to France's No. 2 religion, and risks raising the level of Islamophobia in a country where mosques, like synagogues, are sporadic targets of hate. However, the law's many proponents say it will preserve the nation's values, including its secular foundations and a notion of fraternity that is contrary to those who hide their faces.

In an attempt to head off any legal challenges over arguments it tramples on religious and other freedoms, the leaders of both parliamentary houses said they had asked a special body to ensure it passes constitutional muster. The Constitutional Council has one month to rule.

The bill is worded to trip safely through legal minefields. For instance, the words "women," "Muslim" and "veil" are not even mentioned in any of its seven articles.

"This law was the object of long and



Claude Paris/Associated Press

Kenza Drider wears a niqab as she reads a magazine in a shop, in Avignon, southern France. Niqabs will no longer be allowed to be worn in public under the new bill the French Senate passed on Tuesday.

complex debates," the Senate president, Gerard Larcher, and National Assembly head Bernard Accoyer said in a joint statement announcing their move. They said they want to be certain there is "no uncertainty" about its conforming to the constitution.

France would be the first European country to pass such a law, though others, notably neighboring Belgium, are considering laws against face-covering veils, seen as conflicting with the local culture.

"Our duty concerning such fundamental principles of our society is to speak with one voice," said Justice Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, opening a less than 5-hour-long debate ahead of the vote.

The measure, carried by President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative party, was passed by the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, on July 13.

It would outlaw face-covering veils, including those worn by tourists from the Middle East, on public streets and elsewhere. The bill set fines of 150 euros (\$185) or citizenship classes for any woman caught covering her face, or both. It also carries stiff penalties for anyone, such as husbands or brothers, convicted of forcing the veil on a woman. The 30,000-euro (\$38,400) fine and year in prison are doubled if the victim is a minor.

The bill is aimed at ensuring gender equality, women's dignity and security, as well as upholding France's secular values — and its way of life.

Some women, like Kenza Drider, have vowed to wear a full-face veil despite a law. Drider says she prefers to flirt with arrest rather than bow to what she says is an injustice.

"It is a law that is unlawful," said Drider, a mother of four from Avignon.

Doctor sentenced after patient death

By Denise Lavole
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BARNSTABLE, Mass. — A doctor was sentenced Tuesday to six months in jail after pleading guilty to involuntary manslaughter in the case of a woman who died after he performed an abortion on her.

Dr. Rapin Osathanondh was sentenced in the 2007 death of 22-year-old Laura Hope Smith. He pleaded guilty in a Massachusetts court Monday, just as his trial was about to begin.

Smith was 13 weeks pregnant when she went to see Osathanondh for an abortion in his Cape Cod office. She was pronounced dead later that day.

Prosecutors charged Osathanondh with manslaughter, alleging that he failed to monitor her while she was under anesthesia, delayed calling 911 when her heart stopped, and later lied to try to cover up his actions.

Osathanondh, who was also a research associate at the Harvard School of Public Health, resigned his medical license the same day the state Board of Registration in Medicine issued a scathing list of charges against him, alleging that he had "engaged in conduct that calls into question his competence to practice medicine."

The board said Osathanondh did not have any means of monitoring Smith's heart, and did not have oxy-



Paul Blackmore/Associated Press

Eileen Smith, right, remembers her adopted daughter Laura Hope Smith, pictured at left, who died after an abortion procedure.

gen or a functioning blood pressure cuff in the room during Smith's abortion. The board also alleged that he "failed to adhere to basic cardiac life support protocol" and did not call 911 in a timely manner.

Under a sentencing recommendation that prosecutors and Osathanondh's attorneys agreed to, he was sentenced to six months, but will be eligible for parole after serving three months. His jail term will be followed by nine months of home confinement with electronic monitoring. He had faced a maximum of 20 years. He is also banned from working as a

doctor or teaching medicine ever again.

Smith's father, Tom Smith, described how he and his wife, Eileen, adopted Laura after she was left in an orphanage in her native Honduras and later abused by an American couple. He said she studied cosmetology in high school, sang in a choral group and was in demand to sing the national anthem at school ball games.

"You, sir, destroyed a precious flower that grew and ... blossomed in our lives, not accidentally, but purposely," he said, looking directly at Osathanondh.

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