

4 hostage families make a plea: Bring home Austin Tice

An essay by Diane and John Foley, parents of James Foley; Ed and Paula Kassig, parents of Abdul-Rahman Peter Kassig; Carl, Marsha and Eric Mueller, parents and brother of Kayla Mueller; Shirley and Arthur Sotloff, parents of Steven Sotloff.

One year ago this week, following the torture and killing of two of our American journalists, James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and two of our American humanitarian aid workers, Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller, President Barack Obama made a commitment to improve our government's dismal record on the return of American hostages.

The president ordered a new government hostage policy, accompanied by a presidential policy directive, representing a much-needed effort to clarify and coordinate the government's response to hostage-taking. The directive outlines the processes by which "the United States Government will work in a coordinated effort to leverage all instruments of national power to recover U.S. nationals held hostage abroad, unharmed."

We are four families bonded together by tragedy and terror. We will never fully recover from the horrific outcome of our own hostage crises. But there is something that still can be done: Bring Austin Tice safely home.

Austin, a freelance journalist, Marine veteran and Georgetown law student, has been held hostage in Syria since August 2012. His safe return will satisfy a significant and necessary measure of the success of the new policy. Austin is the only American reporter being held hostage anywhere in the world, according to [Reporters Without Borders](#). At the recent White House correspondents' dinner, President Obama committed "to fight for the release of American journalists held against their will." We were stunned and disheartened when the president chose not to refer by name to Austin, the only American news journalist being held against his will.

We, the family of Kayla Mueller, are haunted every day by the fact that we didn't secure Kayla's release, by the extraordinary hope she held during her terrifying captivity, by the horrific torture we now know she endured, by the missed opportunities and by the deadly silence that cost all the hostages their lives. Our hearts are broken and our hope is that our government will do all it is able to bring Austin and all hostages home safely. No additional U.S. citizens should have to endure the silence of our country, with that silence filled only by the terrorists holding them.

We, the family of the late journalist Steven Sotloff, remind President Obama of the following: You told us in person that if it were your daughters, you would do anything in your power to bring them home. We implore you: Bring Austin Tice home.

We, the parents of James Foley, say: Mr. President, after the horrific executions of our son James Foley and the other courageous Americans, you agreed with us that America could do better! We are counting on you to keep your promise by bringing Austin Tice home before you leave office!

We, the parents of Abdul-Rahman Peter Kassig, are devastated by the loss of our son, but the pain will be slightly lessened if his death helps bring Austin and others home. Jim, Steven, Peter and Kayla sacrificed all in their efforts to better the lives of others. As President Obama himself noted, they stood for the greatest of American ideals. One of the lessons we have learned is that the pain of the family and friends of the hostage increases tremendously as time passes without resolution. It requires mountain-moving faith to maintain hope as the crisis continues. With unwavering hope, Austin's parents do not give up. The United States government must not give up.

The Syrian conflict is horrific and tragic, its resolution complex and uncertain. Every diplomatic effort to address the conflict is fraught with uncertainty. Nevertheless, this uncertainty is not a reason to hesitate in leveraging all appropriate means to secure Austin's safe release and return.

We are not asking the White House to put anyone in harm's way, nor compromise national security. We are asking the president, fully within the responsibilities and obligations of his office, to put aside any personal or election year concern, to engage boldly and to use all appropriate means to bring Austin Tice safely home as soon as possible.

Editors note

Austin Tice, now 34, was working as a freelance journalist for McClatchy and The Washington Post when he was taken captive in Syria in August 2012.

Four American hostage families have joined with Austin's parents, Marc and Debra Tice of Houston, on the anniversary of President Barack Obama's hostage policy directive to make an appeal to the president. Obama's directive clarified that the government "may itself communicate with hostage-takers, their intermediaries, interested governments and local communities to attempt to secure the safe recovery of the hostage."