

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*December 13, 2022*

Media Contact Gabriela Pedroza [pedroza@law.ucla.edu](mailto:pedroza@law.ucla.edu)

[The Promise Institute for Human Rights](#) at UCLA School of Law

**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

**FOUR BROTHERS WHO PROTESTED FOR IRANIAN DEMOCRACY AND WERE WRONGFULLY HELD AS ICE DETAINEES ARE BRINGING THEIR CASE TO THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

LOS ANGELES, CA — On Monday, December 12, 2022, UCLA School of Law’s Human Rights Litigation Clinic and Schonbrun Seplow Harris Hoffman and Zeldes LLP filed a hearing request with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of Iranian brothers Mostafa, Mohsen, Mojtaba and Mohammad Mirmehdi, who were detained for over 40 months based on falsified evidence and testimony that was later recanted.

In October 2001, the Mirmehdi brothers were working as real estate agents in the San Fernando Valley in Southern California when they were arrested based on their religious and national backgrounds. This coincided with mass arrests in Muslim communities in the weeks after 9/11.

At their bond revocation hearing, the FBI used a sign-in list from a rally the brothers attended in support of democratic reforms in Iran as evidence against them, falsely claiming the list was a list of terrorists which caused the Mirmehdis’ bonds to be revoked. The falsified evidence the FBI used was actually the sign-in list for a Colorado event years prior, attended by many people including members of the U.S. Congress, who peacefully protested in support of democratic reforms in Iran. Indeed, the brothers were forced to leave Iran because their pro-democracy beliefs had made them targets of persecution and violence there.

The false evidence set off a chain of events that led to all four brothers being detained until March 2005. Their eventual release took place after work hours on the eve of the Attorney General’s Office of the Inspector General’s scheduled interview of Mohammad Mirmehdi about the severe beating he endured in detention.

United States courts dismissed the brothers’ claims based on their immigration status, denying them the opportunity to seek remedy in domestic courts. The Inter-American Commission will thus serve as a venue for accountability and reconciliation that the brothers have, as of yet, been unable to pursue.

Mojtaba Mirmehdi said, “I was a political prisoner in Iran, and support democracy in Iran as well as here. We hope to make a change in U.S. government policy. No one should be held in custody based on false accusations.”

"The Mirmehdis are just one example of hundreds of Middle Eastern, Muslim people held in indefinite detention under baseless terrorism charges," said Steffi Colao, a former law student in the Human Rights Litigation Clinic.

In 2021, the Inter-American Commission determined that the brothers' petition was admissible to be heard by the Commission, although it has not set a hearing. The Commission decided that the petition presented plausible allegations of violations of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. As a member of the Organization of American States, the United States is required to abide by the human rights commitments in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the IACHR's foundational text.

If accepted, the case will be heard before the Commission in March 2023 during the body's 186<sup>th</sup> Period of Sessions in Los Angeles, California. The violations against the Mirmehdis constitute human rights abuses. They should be awarded just compensation and public recognition of the State's wrongdoing in this case. Additionally, the United States government should amend the laws that permit claims of abuse to be dismissed based on a claimant's immigration status.

"The Mirmehdi brothers deserve justice for the human rights violations they suffered as a result of the actions of the United States government. We hope the Inter-American Commission will finally afford them the opportunity to be heard in a public forum," said Tessa Baizer, attorney with UCLA School of Law's Human Rights Litigation Clinic.

Lawyers Catherine Sweetser and Tessa Baizer of the Human Rights Litigation Clinic at UCLA School of Law and Paul Hoffman and Michael Seplow of Schonbrun Seplow Harris & Hoffman LLP are representing the brothers. The Human Rights Litigation Clinic is part of the Promise Institute at UCLA School of Law.

For more detailed information, view the request submitted to the IACHR [here](#). Prior merits briefing is available [here](#).

###