

## The Lydia Center for Women and Families

# The Heroic Abuser? Christian Media Headlines about Saeed and Naghmeh Abedini

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Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Pastor Saeed Abedini, at the prayer vigil in Washington marking the second anniversary of his imprisonment in Iran. Image via [The Gospel Herald \(http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/58119/20150925/american-pastor-saeed-abedini-tasered-and-abused-by-iranian-prison-guards-may-face-additional-charges.htm\)](http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/58119/20150925/american-pastor-saeed-abedini-tasered-and-abused-by-iranian-prison-guards-may-face-additional-charges.htm)

### **The Davidic Challenge in Heroic Storytelling**

There is power in presentation. The markedly different ways the narrators in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles deal with the dark drama of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah provide a famous example of meaning in selectivity. In 2 Samuel 11, David's rape of Bathsheba, presented carefully as an abuse of royal power rather than a case of infidelity, is depicted in unstinting and undeniably critical terms. In 1 Chronicles, however, while David is at times a clearly flawed figure, the Bathsheba-Uriah story goes unmentioned. The selectivity is deliberate, fitting in each case the overall purpose of the book. In Samuel, the narrator's purpose is at least in part to illustrate Israel's degeneration into a disorderly *mashal*-type (cf. Gen. 3:16) use of power, from husbands and fathers and brothers to tribal leaders and kings. The books of Samuel constitute a negative moral judgment, more particularly a covenantal indictment, even as they also point the way, by negative example, to the form

and shape of the only possible Redeemer. In Chronicles, that messianic-royal Redeemer figure is also the theme, yet in positive form: David (and Solomon) is thus idealized as a figure of the future Redeemer and King, with almost only his positive concerns for temple, ark, and clergy put on display. The Chronicler's David is not sinless but he does not sin greatly. Instead, the best of David's story is the message: Israel needs a king like *that*.

Importantly, like the selectivity at work in the Synoptic Gospels (and in fact in all biblical texts), neither 2 Samuel nor 1 Chronicles is true at the expense of the truthfulness of the other; both presentations are true, yet in ways that fit their authors' homiletical-theological goals. Chronicles especially reads like an extended sermon directing post-exilic Israel's reading of her story. She is now, to be sure, something like Virgil's 'fated wanderer': she is without temple, land, or tribal boundary markers, anxiously in search of her identity and a ground for her hope. The Chronicler preaches into that crisis, and his message — as with all messages — requires purposeful, crafted selectivity. In their different ways of handling David, both texts illustrate that there is power in presentation.

The David example touches on an existential difficulty, too. Is he praiseworthy or not? The biblical texts invite us regularly to praise his virtues and qualities, yet for that reason the blatant sins, especially the royal rape of Bathsheba, gnaw at us. To be sure, his repentance is a critical part of that story, yet the jagged edges of David's reported conduct remain unsettling at least. We face similar questions when our own glorified saints fall, or prove to be less than our favorite parts of their reputation. The storyteller has to decide: Is it better for the reader not to know? What does one lose by not knowing? The relationship of Samuel and Chronicles tells us there is meaning in the selectivity at work.

At the Lydia Center, one of our aims is to examine the Christian church's rhetoric regarding sexuality and gender, marriage, family, and children, including the Church's speech about and response to intimate partner violence. That rhetoric and response is, in the nature of the case, largely verbal or written, which pulls us regularly into consideration of the power of presentation.

Occasionally, opportunities arise to discuss these matters in the context of widely known families whose stories have been covered by the media. The case of Saeed and Naghmeh Abedini is one such opportunity. Discourse surrounding the Abedinis' case reveals how we as a community think and talk about spousal abuse, and the fact that Saeed was himself a victim of cruel imprisonment and torture allows us to consider the ethical significance of such discourse. What happens when a persecuted Christian is revealed to be a wife abuser? (N.B. The reader should note that our analysis in what follows reflects the fact that Pastor Abedini pled guilty (<http://www.idahostatesman.com/news/local/community/boise/article58590133.html>) to a charge of domestic assault, and that he did so before leaving for Iran.)

This is part one in a series examining media headlines about and reader response to Saeed Abedini's abuse of his wife Naghmeh. In this first part, we focus on the headlines of 15 Christian media outlets, asking such questions as:

1. What coverage do Christian media outlets give to Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh, relative to their reports of his imprisonment and release?
2. What language do Christian media outlets use to identify the abuse?

3. In what ways is abuse emphasized and/or minimized via discursive strategies?

### The Power of Presentation: Telling the Abedini Story

The media are a mighty and recognized influence on minds, actions, and words. Indeed, 'The entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects' (McQuail, 1994: 327 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118541555.wbiepc155/full>)). The choices that journalists make when writing headlines reveals their inescapable ideology and prejudice towards an event (see Edelman, 1993 (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962981#.Vr-L69Bu1OU>)). In turn, these choices systematically influence how readers view these events (Price et al., 1995 (<http://crx.sagepub.com/content/24/5/481.short>); Scheufele, 1999 (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02784.x/abstract>)).

Headlines especially act as snapshots of media bias. MacRitichie and Seedat (2008 (<http://sap.sagepub.com/content/38/2/337.abstract>): 339-34) explain it this way, referencing their study on headlines about traffic accidents:

*Headlines are the newspapers' tools to attract prospective buyers and imprint their individuality on what is otherwise a mass-produced product... Headlines, which provide an indication of how an article may portray an accident, are used to convey the first and sometimes the most significant message to the news reading public...Headlines also draw part of their influence and meaning from what is assumed to be the readers' shared cultural, political and general knowledge. So, although headlines may sometimes seem deeply ambiguous, the surface differences may be a disguise for articulating deeper meanings and associations.*

Of course, media headlines do not occur in a vacuum; media discourse both produces and perpetuates an already-present ideology. Through the production and reproduction of such discourse, communities work together to decide how events should be viewed and how social actors should be regarded. By examining these messages, which often are unconsciously absorbed, Christians can evaluate the extent to which the ideas we encounter are faithful to Christian identity and commitments, and resist the ones which are not.

### Our Mode, Methods, and Materials

In order to answer our questions about Christian media headlines, we deploy a variety of tools and materials, including the often illuminating tool of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (see Fairclough, 2012 (<http://scholarism.net/FullText/2012071.pdf>)), which is

a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context (Van Dijk, 2001: 352 (<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=xJV1f4zvn1MC&pg=PA95&lpg=PA95&dq=Multidisciplinary+CDA:+A+Plea+for+Diversity&source=bl&ots=YnCSHQrFk0&sig=eut3j-GOvnOcYiXW2doULrC8tys&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwit2PuQxfXKAhVHbxQKHZ23BzkQ6AEIzAA#v=onepage&q=Multidisciplinary%20CDA%3A%20A%20Plea%20for%20Diversity&f=false>))

In short, CDA aims to identify ideology in discourse, focusing on how certain social actors are represented, whether they are marginalized, viewed

apathetically, or held up as social models. To be sure, CDA is as vulnerable as any other tool to misusing and distorting materials, and conclusions ought ordinarily to be reached with conspicuous modesty. Nevertheless, looking at a text through the lens of CDA effectively sensitizes the reader to the inevitable moral-assessment and evaluative aspects of human speech about anyone and anything. CDA is capable of such usefulness as it involves examination simultaneously at the text level (language forms, cohesion, and text structure and their meaning potential) and at the broader levels of text production and distribution, as well as the social context in which these texts are produced. So when we examine headlines, we consider not only their grammatical-lexical-discursive features but also look for evidence regarding the theology and ideology at work in them. It is, as it were, to ask a version of the great transcendental question: what view of the world and of reality must be seen as true by the author to account for this or that way of speaking? What kind of world does this language presuppose, does it fit? And how does that world match up against the real world disclosed by Scripture and in terms of the Christian confession? How does it square with complex yet real Christian commitments regarding speech?

Using Google SiteSearch, we accessed 129 Christian News Headlines from 15 news outlets between 12 November, 2015 and 2 February, 2016, using the combined search terms 'wife' and 'Saeed Abedini'. After several searches using various related search terms, this combination yielded the most fruit. For comparison, we identified 322 US Newspaper and Wire headlines via the same search phrase, using [Nexis](http://www.nexis.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/) (<http://www.nexis.com.eresources.shef.ac.uk/>), a database of UK and international news sources. In 322 headlines, there were five mentions of the Abedinis' 'separation,' the rest spread fairly evenly between coverage of Saeed's imprisonment and release and that of the other prisoners.

Christian headlines were grouped into three stages, which arose inductively from the data:

1. Abuse goes public: 12 November – 8 December, 2015  
(after which all outlets ceased referring to the abuse)
2. Interim period: 9 December, 2015 – 15 January, 2016  
(during which 6 outlets reported on statements Naghmeh Abedini made about the Christian life)
3. Saeed is released: 16 January – present
4. Abuse back in the spotlight: 18 January – present

Stages 3 and 4 overlapped as various media outlets moved back and forth between reporting on Saeed's release and the Abedinis' spousal abuse case. For instance, *Charisma News* reported on Saeed's release four times, documented Naghmeh's hope for 'a miracle with marriage', returned to Saeed's release (two articles), and then published four articles on Naghmeh's charges and public statements, Franklin Graham's statement, and Saeed's response.

## Our Findings

### 1. What kind of coverage do Christian media outlets give to Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh, relative to their reports of his imprisonment and release?

The table below provides details of the number and timing of articles each outlet devoted to the Abedinis during the period in question. We note that all but four reported on the abuse pre-release, and the abstaining outlets reported only on Saeed's release and did not make explicit or implicit mention of abuse in their headlines. A total of 51 headlines made some

reference to the abuse, compared with 67 which reported on Saeed's release with no mention of abuse.

News Outlet	Number of articles	Stage 1: Abuse goes public	Stage 2: Interim	Stage 3: Release	Stage 4: Abuse and charges filed
1. Charisma News	17	3	3	6	5
2. Christian Post	15	2	3	6	4
3. CBN	15	1	1	10	3
4. Black Christian News	14	2	0	8	4
5. Breaking Christian News	13	1	1	8	3
6. Christian Headlines	12	2	1	5	4
7. Gospel Herald	11	1	1	7	2
8. WORLD	8	2	0	4	2
9. Baptist press	7	1	0	3	3
10. Christianity Today	6	2	0	2	2
11. Religion News Service	6	1	0	3	2
12. Christian Examiner	3	0	0	3	0
13. Worthy News	1	0	0	1	0
14. Relevant Magazine	1	0	0	1	0
15. Christian Press	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>33</b>

## 2. What language do Christian media outlets use to identify the abuse?

Christian journalists used a wide variety of words and phrases to refer to Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh, from the more direct 'abuse,' 'marital abuse,' and 'spousal abuse' to the more ambiguous 'marital woes,' 'marriage problems,' and 'marital issues'. *Breaking Christian News* was among those using the softest language, referring only to Naghmeh's 'stress' in pre-release coverage headlines and omitting any direct reference to the abuse post-release, instead making an oblique reference to Naghmeh's 'surprise move.' *Charisma News*, on the other hand, used 'abuse' fairly frequently, though we will explore later how such language was countered with discursive strategies.

What we found most surprising was the fact that pre-release, Christian news outlets used more direct language to refer to the abuse,

## Word Cloud of Language Referring to Saeed's Abuse of Naghmeh Pre-Release

thinking, be endangered by such reports. As seen in the first word cloud here, capturing pre-release references to abuse, the word 'abuse' appears prominently. Seven out of eleven outlets used the word 'abuse' in their headlines.

However, post-release, many of the outlets changed tactics. Aside from using a much wider range of language to reference the abuse, the most



## Word Cloud of Language Referring to Saeed's Abuse of Naghmeh Post-Release

common approach was to omit any explicit reference to the abuse (see second word cloud), as in such headlines as:

- [Baptist Press interviews Naghmeh Abedini \(http://www.bpnews.net/46191/baptist-press-interviews-naghmeh-abedini\)](http://www.bpnews.net/46191/baptist-press-interviews-naghmeh-abedini)
- [Nagmeh Abedini Believing for a Miracle for Marriage with Pastor Saeed \(http://www.charismanews.com/culture/54622-nagmeh-abedini-believing-for-a-miracle-for-marriage-with-pastor-saeed\)](http://www.charismanews.com/culture/54622-nagmeh-abedini-believing-for-a-miracle-for-marriage-with-pastor-saeed)

We will explore what we believe this may mean later, but it certainly appears that the *returning persecuted hero* is, at least on the surface, a powerful image in the Christian community, and powerful enough to displace the widely recognized image — for the same individual — of the abusive spouse.

### 3. In what ways is abuse emphasized and/or minimized via discursive strategies?

We observed in our headlines corpus a wide variety of discursive strategies that Christian media outlets used to minimize Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh and maximize Saeed's imprisonment, suffering, and denial of the abuse. We will focus on two of the most prominent of these, including the Christian media's emphasis on Saeed's victimization and its placement of reference to abuse in an insignificant place in the headline.

#### a. Who's the *real* victim?

The most conspicuous way in which the headlines minimized abuse and emphasized Saeed's freedom was in the sheer number of headlines (52%) devoted to Saeed's release from Iran. At first sight, the fact of his release would seem to account for the headlines. However, upon examination, this focus on release alongside a displacement of abuse was accomplished in subtler ways as well. We see this first in the way readers are reminded, even in headlines mentioning 'abuse' directly, that Saeed is a victim, persecuted and separated from his family for many years. Consider this headline from *Christian Post*, wherein Naghmeh's filing of a 'domestic relations case' is set alongside Saeed's reunion with his children.

- [Saeed Abedini Reunites With Children as Wife Naghmeh Files Domestic Relations Case \(http://www.christianpost.com/news/saeed-abedini-reunites-children-idaho-wife-naghmeh-files-domestic-relations-case-156048/\)](http://www.christianpost.com/news/saeed-abedini-reunites-children-idaho-wife-naghmeh-files-domestic-relations-case-156048/)

Mention of Saeed's suffering is not always in prominent position, as in one headline from *Christianity Today* (see table below). However, with few exceptions, the reader is regularly reminded of Saeed's imprisonment, *which acts as a point of comparison when considering his abuse of his wife*.

In sum, the image of a persecuted, suffering hero is bolstered by reference to Saeed's 'years of demonic abuse', 'details of torture', and 'human rights abuses,' language which stands in stark contrast to Naghmeh's 'abuse claims' and 'accusations'. To be sure, identifying Saeed as 'imprisoned' or as 'prisoner' may function as little more than an identifying mark, since this his imprisonment is why he is known to the public at all in the first place. Yet the regular pairing of his imprisonment with the abuse element of his story has the effect of qualifying the abuse element from the outset, in some cases even potentially mitigating it. This discourse gives the impression that Saeed is the sole real, or at least most important, victim here. Some examples can be seen below.

*Christian Post*

Pastor Saeed, Globally-Known Iranian Prisoner, Is Accused of Spousal Abuse – Five Ways We Can Respond (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/november/globally-known-pastor-saeed-is-accused-of-spousal-abuse-fiv.html>)

*Christianity Today*

Naghmeh Abedini Claims Abuse, Halts Public Support for Imprisoned Husband Saeed (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/november/globally-known-pastor-saeed-is-accused-of-spousal-abuse-fiv.html>)

*Christian Headlines*

Why Imprisoned Pastor's Wife Kept Her Marital Abuse a Secret – Until Now (<http://www.christianheadlines.com/news/why-imprisoned-pastor-s-wife-kept-her-marital-abuse-a-secret-until-now.html>)  
Iranian Pastor's Wife Files Court Papers against Recently Freed Husband (<http://www.christianheadlines.com/news/iranian-pastor-s-wife-files-court-papers-against-recently-freed-husband.html>)

*Black Christian News*

Ed Stetzer On How Christians Should Respond to Accusations That Imprisoned Pastor Saeed Abedini Has Abused his Wife (<http://blackchristiannews.com/2015/11/ed-stetzer-on-how-christians-should-respond-to-accusations-that-imprisoned-pastor-saeed-abedini-has-abused-his-wife/>)

*Gospel Herald*

Pastor Saeed Abedini's Wife Naghmeh Advocates for Imprisoned Husband: 'I Cannot Deny His Love, Passion for Jesus,' despite Marital Abuse (<http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/60500/20151209/naghmeh-abedini-advocates-for-imprisoned-pastor-husband-i-cannot-deny-saeeds-love-passion-for-jesus-despite-marital-abuse.htm>)

*Religion News Service*

Wife of Iran-held pastor hopes to rebuild marriage (<http://www.religionnews.com/2016/01/23/wife-of-u-s-pastor-imprisoned-in-iran-hopes-to-rebuild-marriage-saeed-naghmeh-abedini/>)

Some might argue that this is evenhanded treatment; after all, both Naghmeh and Saeed suffered persecution. Notably, however, though Saeed had pled guilty to abuse before ever leaving for Iran, several outlets headlined Saeed's persecution and abuse without mentioning Naghmeh at all, as in the following headlines:

- Saeed Abedini Describes Prison Torture, Praying 20 Hours a Day in First Interview (<http://www.christianpost.com/news/saeed-abedini-iran-prison-torture-praying-20-hours-a-day-post-release-interview-155940/>)
- Congressman: Saeed in 'Good Shape' after Years of 'Demonic' Abuse (<http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2016/January/Congressman-tells-CBN-News-Freed-Americans-Have-Been-in-a-Very-Demonic>)
- Pastor Saeed Describes Details of Torture He Endured in Iran Prison (<http://www.charismanews.com/world/54535-what-christian-leaders-think-saeed-abedini-s-release-signifies-for-religious-freedom>)
- Saeed Abedini Opens Up about Torture in Iranian Prison (<http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/saeed-abedini-opens-up-about-torture-in-iranian-prison.html>)

The noteworthy feature of these headlines is not simply in their capturing Saeed's prison torture without mention of his wife. What we ask readers to notice is the relationship these headlines bear to those headlines which mention Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh, which are typically 'combination' headlines, pairing the abuse element with the tacit reminder of Saeed's own torture and imprisonment. In other words, mention of Saeed's abuse can and does stand alone, whereas Naghmeh's abuse is regularly discussed in combination with Saeed's imprisonment. Further, in the examples where Naghmeh's abuse is mentioned but Saeed's imprisonment is not mentioned, her abuse is still regularly undermined using other discursive strategies, as we shall see.

### **b. Abuse as an afterthought**

In English, the first position in a clause signals the topic of that clause, the theme, that which has informational prominence. The information coming after the first participant, process, or circumstance is the rheme (see Fairclough, 2003 (<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=5-gXEMPINsEC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=theme+systemic+functional+grammar+fairclough&ots=LgRNmfWwnq&sig=3XZTLiYFlkQwUeWgLRIeO-gGU0#v=onepage&q=theme%20systemic%20functional%20grammar%20fairclough&f=false>)). In headlines, the theme is the interpretive lens through which the rheme is intended to be viewed. For example, the headline below from *Charisma News* leads with 'persecuted Pastor Saeed Abedini,' placing his imprisonment in thematic position in the clause, situating Naghmeh's actions in the more minor position of rheme (end). Beyond identifying Saeed as the one who the public knows as the imprisoned Christian Pastor, this headline also tacitly encourages the reader to think first of Saeed's persecution, considering Naghmeh's actions *in light of* his imprisonment.

- [Persecuted Pastor Saeed Abedini's Wife Files Domestic Relations Case](http://www.charismanews.com/us/54757-persecuted-pastor-saeed-abedini-s-wife-files-domestic-abuse-case)(<http://www.charismanews.com/us/54757-persecuted-pastor-saeed-abedini-s-wife-files-domestic-abuse-case>)

This is a pattern that Christian media outlets relied on again and again in our corpus. The table below focuses on examples of headlines which mention 'abuse' directly. Note the language that comes before the word 'abuse', setting the reader up to frame or theme the abuse in a particular way.

*Christian Post*

Naghmeh Abedini Halts Public Advocacy, Citing Marital abuse, Stress  
 (<http://www.christianpost.com/news/naghmeh-abedini-saeed-abedini-marital-sexual-abuse-stress-iran-persecution-149995/>)

*Baptist Press*

Abedini praises wife, denies 'much' of abuse claim  
 (<http://www.bpnews.net/46247>)

*Christian Headlines*

Saeed Abedini Disagrees with Wife's Allegations of Marital abuse  
 (<http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/saeed-abedini-disagrees-with-wife-s-allegations-of-marital-abuse.html>)

*World Magazine*

Naghmeh Abedini regrets emails alleging abuse  
 ([http://www.worldmag.com/2015/11/naghmeh\\_abedini\\_regrets\\_emails\\_alleging\\_abuse/](http://www.worldmag.com/2015/11/naghmeh_abedini_regrets_emails_alleging_abuse/))

*Black Christian News*

Naghmeh Abedini Regrets Sending Email Accusing Husband Saeed of Spousal abuse  
 (<http://blackchristiannews.com/2015/11/naghmeh-abedini-regrets-sending-email-accusing-husband-saeed-of-spousal-abuse/>)

*CBN*

Pastor Abedini Disputes Wife's Marital Abuse Allegations  
 (<http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2016/February/Pastor-Abedini-Disputes-Wifes-Marital-Abuse-Allegations>)

*Gospel Herald*

Pastor Saeed Abedini's Wife Naghmeh Advocates for Imprisoned Husband: 'I Cannot Deny His Love, Passion for Jesus,' despite marital abuse  
 (<http://www.gospelherald.com/articles/60500/20151209/naghmeh-abedini-advocates-for-imprisoned-pastor-husband-i-cannot-deny-saeeds-love-passion-for-jesus-despite-marital-abuse.htm>)

For example, a headline we saw in various forms was that of *Christianity Today* (see *Christian Post* example above as well), where emphasis is placed on Naghmeh's halting of public advocacy, the abuse mentioned in the less important end position.

- Pastor Saeed Abedini's Wife Halts Public Advocacy, Citing Marital Woes and abuse  
 (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/november-web-only/pastor-saeed-abedini-wife-naghmeh-halts-public-advocacy.html>)

Witness *Baptist Press'* emphasis on Abedini's 'praise' and denial of the abuse, and *Black Christian News'* thematization of Naghmeh's regret:

- Abedini praises wife, denies 'much' of abuse claim  
 (<http://www.bpnews.net/46247>)
- Naghmeh Abedini Regrets Sending Email Accusing Husband Saeed of Spousal abuse  
 (<http://blackchristiannews.com/2015/11/naghmeh-abedini-regrets-sending-email-accusing-husband-saeed-of-spousal-abuse/>)

Then compare these with the *Charisma News* headline thematising Saeed's 'years of demonic abuse,' a preferential treatment of Saeed's suffering — including the ironically loaded vocabulary of 'abuse' for that suffering — that Christian media seldom afforded Naghmeh.

- [After Years of Demonic abuse, Pastor Saeed's True Condition Revealed](http://www.charismanews.com/world/54586-after-years-of-demonic-abuse-pastor-saeed-s-true-condition-revealed)(<http://www.charismanews.com/world/54586-after-years-of-demonic-abuse-pastor-saeed-s-true-condition-revealed>)

In short, even where Christian media chose the stronger term 'abuse', Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh was frequently minimized via relegation to secondary position in the headlines.

Two potential exceptions we noted were from *Charisma News*.

- [Naghmeh Abedini Claims Abuse, Halts Public Support for Imprisoned Husband Saeed](http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/53196-naghmeh-abedini-claims-abuse-halts-public-support-for-imprisoned-husband-saeed) (<http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/53196-naghmeh-abedini-claims-abuse-halts-public-support-for-imprisoned-husband-saeed>)
- [Despite Calls for Prayer Over Abuse, Pastor Saeed's Wife Can't Deny This](http://www.charismanews.com/culture/53685-despite-calls-for-prayer-over-abuse-pastor-saeed-s-wife-can-t-deny-this) (<http://www.charismanews.com/culture/53685-despite-calls-for-prayer-over-abuse-pastor-saeed-s-wife-can-t-deny-this>)

In both, 'abuse' appears closer to thematic position, suggesting a bolder approach to coverage by this outlet than by others. However, we encourage readers to consider the extent to which 'claims' and 'despite' introduce doubt.

### Summary of Part One

We have presented evidence that suggests that the Christian media have downplayed Saeed's abuse of Naghmeh in their coverage of the abuse, not only in the terminology they have used to refer to (or ignore) the abuse, and in the constant reminders of Saeed's imprisonment, but also in the way they relegated Saeed's abuse of his wife to a less significant place within the headlines. In part two of our study, we will turn our attention to the significance of these examples in the larger context of Christian commitments regarding speech, ethics, and the nature of abuse.

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