

HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



April 16, 2001

Iranians at risk of Deportation from Greece

11 Iranian asylum seekers arrested on April 4, 2001 and sentenced to four months in prison for staging a sit-in at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Athens, Greece are at risk of being deported to Iran. The 11 were demanding resettlement to a safe third country and protection. While in prison, the asylum seekers have been tortured and given electric shocks. The eleven are: Saeed Shokrani, Noruz Sharifi, Khaled Moradi, Mahmoud Mahmoudi, Ismail Moniry, Daryoush Javadi Bara, Mohammad Hamrang,

Saeed Heydary, Mehdi Ramazani, Hassan Ranjbar and Hussein Moslemi.

IFIR condemns the Greek government's imprisonment and torture of asylum seekers who have fled one of the most brutal regimes to seek protection from torture and persecution. The IFIR holds the Greek government and the UNHCR accountable for their lives and safety. In order to prevent their deportation and defend their right to asylum, IFIR has initiated an international campaign. Many individuals and organisations have

sent protest letters to the Greek government and UNHCR officials. IFIR-Greece Representative, Suresh Naurasi, also met with the Greek Minister of Justice to request intervention in this matter. The Minister agreed to raise the matter in parliament. Moreover, IFIR branches in Germany (Frankfurt, Essen, Koln and Hanover), London, UK, Sydney, Australia and Stockholm, Sweden are organising demonstrations at Greek embassies and consulates on April 17 and 18 to demand their release and right to asylum.

Only a strong international campaign has prevented their deportation so far. The IFIR calls on all concerned individuals, progressive organisations and institutions to condemn the Greek government's action, demand their immediate release, and transfer to safe third country. Send protest letters to: Greek Prime Minister's Office: mail@primeminister.gr, The Greek Mission to the UN: mission.greece@itu.ch, The UNHCR Office in Greece: great@unhcr.ch, UNHCR Headquarters: HQAO00@unhcr.ch.

Alinejad's Deportation Prevented

On Tuesday, April 3 at 10am, Akbar Alinejad, an Iranian asylum seeker was taken from Villawood detention centre in Australia to the airport and put on the 2pm flight bound to Iran, despite conditions in Iran and his well-founded fear of persecution. Alinejad had spent 27 months in Villawood

detention centre. On the news of Alinejad's deportation order, the IFIR - Australia Branch embarked on an urgent campaign to stop the deportation. Kobra Bahrami and Arsalan Nazeri, IFIR officials, began an immediate campaign, contacting trade unions, Left and progressive

organisations. The organisations inundated the Australian authorities with phone calls, letters and faxes. The Australian Maritime Workers' Union called on the Australian Immigration Minister to stop the deportation and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union urged

the government to grant him asylum. As a result of extensive protests, in a stopover in Malaysia, Alinejad's deportation order was revoked and he was returned to Sydney. This victory further underlines the fact that when IFIR, progressive organisations and the labour movement join forces they can stop deportations in mid-air.

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ABC Lateline Interview with
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IFIR moves to Prevent Stoning Death

On April 10, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Lateline program interviewed Maryam Namazie, the executive director of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees, about its opposition to the planned stoning of Maryam Ayoobi and Iranian asylum seekers. The live broadcast received much support for Ayoobi's case. A summary of the interview is as follows.

TONY JONES: I'm joined now from our London studio by Maryam Namazie, the executive director of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees. You've been involved in campaigns like this before to apply pressure to the Iranian Government. Do they listen to them?

MARYAM NAMAZIE, INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES: Well, yes, we've been involved in many campaigns, given the nature of the Iranian Government. In fact, I think any government, including one as barbaric and brutal as the Islamic Republic of Iran, does listen to public pressure, and international public pressure has had an impact before, and we're hoping that we will be able to save Maryam Ayoobi's life.

TONY JONES: How hard will that be, do you think? How much pressure will there have to be on the Iranian

regime?

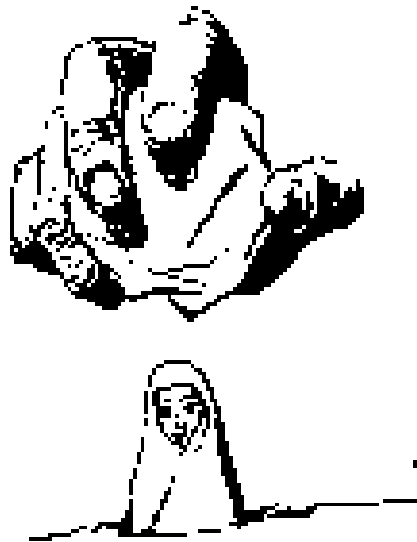
MARYAM NAMAZIE: Any human being living anywhere in the world, irrespective of what country they come from and where they live, I think they have a responsibility to oppose this stoning... If we can get human rights organisations, trade unions, progressive organisations and just regular people, writing petitions, writing letters to the Islamic Republic's embassies in their countries and talking about it to their neighbours, in their schools and communities, there is a way of galvanising just enough pressure to be able to stop her stoning, just as in 1997 we were able to stop the stoning of another woman.

TONY JONES: Is there any way of gauging the state of mind of Maryam Ayoobi? She is obviously behind bars. Is there any way of knowing how she's feeling leading up to this execution?

MARYAM NAMAZIE: I'm sure her feelings are indescribable. In the same way that for us, for any of us, whether we've ever been to Iran or not, hearing a situation such as this in the 21st century where people are buried in ditches and stoned to death, I

think the feelings we all get are indescribable.

She herself fainted when she heard the final verdict of her stoning. She's obviously in a state that's indescribable. She has children and is a human being who will be killed in a most tortuous method. I'm sure she's very pained and desperate. I'm sure, like so many others who have faced violations and have been saved by public opinion and pressure, she is hoping for our intervention. In fact, our intervention is her only hope and her last chance.



TONY JONES: What sort of conditions is she being held under at the moment?

MARYAM NAMAZIE: I think, you know, [the conditions of the] Islamic Republic of Iran's prisons are clear... There is no real justice in that country. Islamic justice, for example, even specifies ...

the size of the stone that has to be used in her stoning.

It specifies that the stones shouldn't be so large so as it would cause immediate death and should not be too small like pebbles that it won't cause enough pain. We're talking about a system that specifies the size of stone that should be used, that allows the stoning of women and men to death, that hangs people in public by cranes on a regular basis. So we can imagine her conditions right now, and the fact that she's basically in an incredibly desperate situation.

TONY JONES: We know there's a growing international protest movement about these forms of barbarity. Are women inside Iran able to make any form of protest?

MARYAM NAMAZIE: As you said, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a repressive regime. Political opposition, human rights groups are completely banned in that country. Anything that's not linked to the regime is not allowed to operate. But, despite the repression and despite a system, which interferes and intervenes in every aspect of people's lives, women and men protest on a regular basis. For example, if you look at the case of Zoleykhah Kadkhoda - the stoning case I mentioned earlier - she was a 20-plus woman who was ... being stoned and, in the process of her stoning, the residents of

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the city of Bukan in Iranian Kurdistan opposed her stoning, resisted it and managed to save [her life] - both because of international pressure as well because of protests of residents in that city. So it's something that's happening both outside the country as well as inside the country.

TONY JONES: We know that the largest number of asylum seekers in Europe are now coming from Iran. We're also seeing asylum seekers from Iran in Australia. Do you think those people by and large are running from these sort of conditions from this

kind of regime?

MARYAMNAMAZIE: Most definitely... Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranians have been one of the top nationalities applying for asylum worldwide. Currently they're one of the largest. The reasons they're fleeing are real. The reasons they're fleeing are extremely real. And Maryam Ayoubi's case is just one instance. We're talking about a Government that enforces women's veil. You don't even have the right to choose what you wear. People are flogged for attending a new year party, listening to music, dancing with the opposite sex. These are banned. Women don't have the right to travel or work without their

husband's permissions. Girls from the age of nine are considered old enough to be married. So we're talking about a system of complete sexual apartheid, where for example, women have separate entrances to go into Government buildings and public services. They have to sit at the back of the bus. And the absurdity of it - even the Caspian Sea is divided by a curtain so that men and women don't swim together. This is the situation people are fleeing from - conditions where if you oppose the Government, if you're a worker who's protesting because you haven't received wages for several months or you're trying to organise, [you face persecution]. There's an example of a man who is a leader of the

bakers' union. He's been in prison for the past eight months. His medical condition is extremely bad, given he's lost one kidney as a result of the torture he's seen and his other kidney is failing. This is the condition that people are fleeing from. They're not bogus. Of course, everybody's seeking a better life but, primarily, Iranians are seeking safety and protection from the persecution that they face every day in the Islamic regime.

To listen to the interview with Namazie and Maryam Kousha, coordinator of the International Campaign in Defense of Women's Rights in Iran, go to www.abc.net.au/lateline.

Save Maryam Ayoobi from Death by Stoning

khatami@president.ir, info@iranembassy.r.am, iran@un.int, iranemb@salamiran.org

My organisation / I condemn(s) the Islamic Republic of Iran for its crimes against humanity; demand(s) the immediate freedom of Maryam Ayoobi and the annulment of her sentence of death by stoning and an immediate ban on stoning. My organisation / I support millions of women in Iran and abroad in their struggle for freedom and a secular state.

Signed, Name, Organisation, E-mail, Address, Date

CC: ifir@ukonline.co.uk

IFIR Organised or Supported Public Meetings / Demonstrations

- * April 17, demonstrations against the deportations of 11 Iranian asylum seekers from Greece in Frankfurt, Essen, Koln and Hanover.
- * April 18, demonstrations against the deportations of 11 Iranian asylum seekers from Greece in London, UK (1-2pm, Holland Park), Stockholm, Sweden and Sydney, Australia at Greek Embassies.
- * April 19, 7:30pm, Public Meeting: In defence of asylum seekers and against racism in the upcoming UK Elections. Speakers: Sam Azad, IFIR-UK; Mike Taylor, Bristol NUJ; Lee Jasper, Advisor to London Mayor and BRAMU union representative in Birmingham.
- * April 28, March in Birmingham for asylum rights. Assemble at 11:30am at Aston Library (corner of Witton/Albert Road). Maryam Namazie, IFIR Executive Director will be speaking at the rally.

Deportations from the UK

The IFIR- UK's intervention prevented the deportation of Yadaullah Jafari from Heathrow Airport in London to Iran on April 12, 2001. Jafari contacted the IFIR-UK Branch at 10am to inform us that he was to be deported at 8pm that day. Several hours before his deportation, IFIR-UK managed to rescue him.

The Branch is currently working to prevent the deportation of Ali Mohammad Jasir, an asylum seeker from Iran, who was detained after a visit to the UK Home Office on March 29, 2001. He is in danger of deportation to Germany and then to Iran.

Jasir is a political activist who took part in a sit-in by Iranian refugees in Turkey in 1995, and a year later sought asylum in Germany, which was refused after two years. Jasir recently sought asylum in the UK, together with his wife Behnaz Malaki and their

daughter - once in 1998 and then again in 1999. He is now in danger of being removed to Germany where he would certainly be deported to Iran.

As a political activist opposed to the Iranian regime, Jasir faces a threat to his life or liberty if returned to Iran. The International Federation of Iranian Refugees - UK Office calls on all humanitarian and labour organisations to join our campaign to stop the deportation to Iran or Germany of Ali Mohammad Jasir and his family. The deportation of Jasir is equivalent to his being condemned to imprisonment, torture and even execution by the Islamic regime in Iran. We call for the immediate release of Jasir from detention, the dropping of all the charges and a review of his asylum application on the basis of his well-founded fear of persecution.

Defend Mike Taylor

The IFIR is calling on its members and supporters to picket Uxbridge Magistrates Court at 9am on April 17 in defence of Bristol teacher Michael Taylor whose trial will set an important new precedent for civil rights and human rights in the UK. Taylor was arrested and charged with 'refusal to leave the airport' and 'organising a demonstration on airport property' at Heathrow last August in an attempt to save 34 year old, Kurdish asylum seeker

Amanj Gafor from deportation and subsequent execution in Iraq. After being rejected by 6 European countries because Iraq is considered a 'safe haven' (even though his father was executed there) Amanj has developed Schizophrenia and is now sectioned in a Nuremburg Mental Hospital in Germany and awaits removal to Iraq.

At the last hearing on April 6, the trial was moved to the largest courtroom when pub-

Golbaghi Koukia must Stay in Canada

The IFIR - Canada has initiated several actions in defence of Iranian asylum seekers to be deported to Iran, including on behalf of Padram Golbaghi Koukia and his partner Rozita Ziaee who have a serious and well-founded fear of persecution based on their political activities against the Islamic regime and because of their present activities against the Iranian government in Canada. The family were to have been deported in December but instead went into hiding. Their child was prohibited from attending school. As a result of IFIR-Canada's campaign, numerous trade

unions and organisations have demanded that the family be granted asylum. According to Homa Arjomand, Spokesperson for the IFIR- Canada Branch, the IFIR-Toronto Branch and the Parkdale Community Legal Services reactivated Educational Act section 21(1)(a) which states 'a school board may not refuse admission of any child under the age of eighteen to an elementary or high school,' though it had been frozen. To support the family send letters of protest to Elinor Caplan, Minister of Citizenship and immigration demanding that they be granted asylum and that their deportation be stopped.

**STOP
DEPORTATIONS AND
DETENTION
NOW**

lic galleries overflowed as refugees, human rights campaigners, including from IFIR-UK Branch and trade union delegations packed in to hear the case. Magistrates ruled that airport by-laws forbid demonstrations stating that 'Heathrow is the world's largest and busiest airport' and that 'there are issues of public safety and anti-terrorist measures involved'. The prohibition could have serious consequences for industrial action on property owned by the British Airports Authority.

Civil rights solicitor Jim Nichol is using Article 2 'the Right to Life', Article 10 'the Right to Assemble' and Article 11 'the Right to Freedom of Expression' of the new Human Rights Act to defend the rights of the deported refugee. More information on the case is available online at both the Bristol Defend Asylum Seekers Campaign website: <http://www.geocities.com/bdasc/> and at the website of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns: <http://www.ndadc.org.uk/>

International Refugee News

* Arrests

Police arrested nine Ukrainians at a bus terminal for trying to enter Portugal 'illegally.' Portugal is currently documenting thousands of 'illegal' immigrants, mainly from Africa and Eastern Europe, who are needed to meet the demand for workers, especially in the booming construction industry. The government estimates there are up to 40,000 'illegal' immigrants in Portugal. (The Associated Press, April 5, 2001)

Thirteen Asians were arrested 5 April at Osaka port on suspicion of illegal entry into Japan. Police discovered the 13 hiding in two containers on a wharf of the port and arrested them as they were not carrying passports, in violation of the Immigration Control and Refugee-Recognition Law. (Kyodo News Service, April 5, 2001)

Police detained 40 'illegal immigrants' who were hidden in a cellar in Slovakia. The refugees, 39 from Afghanistan and one from Iraq, failed to produce identification papers when they were picked up. Slovakia and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe often serve as transit countries for 'illegal immigrants' who hope to make it to Western Europe. (The Associated Press, April 4, 2001)

* Deaths

An 'illegal immigrant' was electrocuted by a cable near the Channel Tunnel's

freight shuttle terminal. The man, who was not identified, had apparently been trying to make his way to Britain before dawn via the Channel Tunnel when he was accidentally electrocuted. Thousands try to reach Britain via the tunnel. More than 1,000 people are caught each month, according to officials. Two months ago, an 'illegal immigrant' was killed after apparently being hit by a train near the underwater tunnel's loading terminal for trucks. (The Associated Press, April 12, 2001)

(The Mirror (U.K.), April 2, 2001) The lump on the beach in Spain could have been a piece of driftwood but the lifeless flotsam on the white sands is the debris of desperation. It is the body of a young woman washed up on a Spanish beach - the latest victim of a voyage of hope which so often ends in tragedy. No one will ever know her name, or where she came from. Her family, in all probability, will never know what became of her. The nameless woman was one of four bodies washed ashore on the Andalucian coast as hundreds cross the Straits of Gibraltar in a vain attempt to escape the misery of their homelands. Three weeks ago, 10 bodies were washed ashore onto the coast at Tarifa.

* Deportation

Immigration officials have arrested seven Iraqis

who entered Mexico 'illegally.' They were detained near the Caribbean border with Belize, were turned over to Immigration officials in Mexico City and were likely to be deported back to Iraq. (The Associated Press, April 10, 2001)

(The Daily Telegraph (U.K.), April 11, 2001) Immigration officials are drawing up plans to lease aircraft to speed up the deportation of 'failed' asylum seekers from Britain. The immigration service has been set a 12-month target to remove 30,000 people who have been refused asylum in Britain. Planes are now being chartered on a regular basis with four trips in the past month. A Home Office spokesman said immigration officials were considering leasing aircraft.

Police arrested three Pakistani men allegedly holding nine 'illegal immigrants' and demanding payment from their relatives for smuggling them into Greece. The five Indian and four Pakistani men, all aged between 23 and 32 had been held for four days after being transported to Athens overland from Turkey. They were found in the basement of a house in a northern Athens suburb. They had suffered some bruises. The nine immigrants are expected to be deported for entering the country illegally. (The Associated Press, April 10, 2001)

Special snatch

squads are to be established by the UK Home Office to round up 'immigration offenders.' A confidential Home Office document details plans by Jack Straw, the home secretary, to establish arrest teams of 16 immigration officers each to track down 'illegal immigrants' and those whose asylum applications have been turned down. At least 10 teams will be set up with powers to arrest and deport individuals once any judicial process is complete. (The Times (U.K.), April 8, 2001)

Asylum seekers in South Africa face arrest and deportation if they fail to meet the "unrealistic deadline" of acquiring new permits by April 30. Between 19,000 and 20,000 refugees were seeking asylum in South Africa. The Department of Home Affairs has ordered all asylum-seekers to obtain, by the end of the month, Section 22 permits under the 1998 Refugee Act, which replaces the 1991 Aliens Control Act. If asylum-seekers do not change their permits they face fines, arrest or deportation unless they can prove "just cause" for their failure to do so. (Agence France Presse, April 9, 2001)

Turkish security forces have captured some 300 'illegal immigrants' as one of the ships carrying them to Greece ran into trouble off Turkey's Aegean coast. Those aboard included 120 Turkish nationals as well as Iraqis, Moroccans and

Nigerians. A number of them were children. (Agence France Presse, April 8, 2001)

Immigrants who face deportation from the US because they have pleaded guilty to a felony may withdraw that plea if they can show that their lawyers misrepresented their likelihood of being expelled from the country, the California Supreme Court ruled. Four of the state high court's seven justices decided that immigrants are not adequately protected simply because California judges are required to tell them that a guilty plea could result in their deportation if they are not United States citizens. (Los Angeles Times, April 3, 2001)

The 'illegal immigrants' who created a 'commotion' before escaping into the jungle while being led out of the Lenggeng detention centre for deportation in Malaysia will be charged with rioting. The 12 'illegals' (seven Indian nationals and five Bangladeshis) had been re-arrested. A manhunt for the remaining 19 escapees, all males, have been intensified with the deployment of tracker dogs. (New Straits Times (Malaysia), April 2, 2001)

* Detention

A report prepared for the United Nations criticizes Canada's treatment of migrants and the conditions of their detention. The UN's special investigator on the rights of migrants, Gabriela Rodriguez Pizarro, submitted the report for the consideration of the 53-member UN High

Commission for Human Rights. The commission is holding its annual six-week meeting in Geneva. Ms Rodriguez complains that Canada often keeps migrants in detention for long periods of time, pending decisions about their fate. She says this causes them to suffer from feelings of uncertainty, depression, loss of freedom and the shame of having to wear handcuffs. (Radio Canada International (via BBC), April 12, 2001)

Australia defended its handling of 'illegal immigrants' seeking asylum despite a growing number of riots at its remote detention centres and protests from human rights groups. Australia locks away asylum seekers in remote, privately run outback detention camps while their requests for refugee status are processed. Many are then sent home. About 200 protesters gathered outside the Villawood detention centre. Many waved to family members inside the camp and waved banners including "Free the Refugees" and "Lock Ruddock Up." Australia is examining tough new laws to deal with detained asylum seekers. (Reuters, April 9, 2001)

The Australian Immigration Minister, Ruddock, has claimed that conditions in refugee detention centres are better than in many Australian homes. A group of about 50 people demonstrated at Villawood Detention Centre in south-west Sydney yesterday to highlight the plight of asylum seekers.

Free the Refugees Campaign spokesman Arsalan Nazarian [also IFIR activist] said people were resorting to extreme action because they were being subjected to "inhuman and traumatising conditions". (The Sydney Morning Herald, April 9, 2001)

Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said there was no need for an inquiry into the administration of his department's detention centres, despite recent rioting. Last week, rioters torched buildings at the Curtin detention centre in Western Australia. (Associated Press, April 9, 2001)

According to Lord Bassam of Brighton: Nationality is a factor, although not the only factor, in deciding whether a case is suitable for consideration at Oakington [detention centre], as the country of origin has a bearing on the likely complexity of the claim. The nationalities currently considered potentially suitable for Oakington are; Albania, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Ivory Coast (temporarily suspended), Czech Republic, Estonia, Ghana, Hungary, India, Iraq, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tanzania, Ukraine, Uganda, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe. (Hansard, House of Lords, 9 Apr 2001: Asylum Seekers: Detention at Oakington)

Australian immigration authorities on Thursday sought tougher policing powers after 200 asylum seekers went on a

'rampage' at a remote detention centre. It was the second 'riot' at a camp in a week and refugee support groups warned more protests were being planned. Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock introduced legislation to beef up security at the camps by allowing strip searches of detainees. Australia's immigration policies are beginning to attract more violent and desperate protests. On Monday, a Pakistani man set himself on fire in front of parliament in Canberra after his wife and three daughters were denied immigration visas. He is in critical condition in hospital. On Thursday last week, about 40 detainees at Curtin turned homemade weapons against staff in protest against three other detainees being sent back to the Middle East. That riot ended peacefully. Australia's policy of mandatory detention for illegal immigrants has been widely criticised by human rights groups, with cramped conditions and long periods of detention raising tension in the mostly outback camps. (Reuters, April 5, 2001)

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Tear gas was used to break up a riot at Curtin Detention Centre in Australia. (The Australian Associated Press, April 5, 2001)

Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock warned 'illegal migrants' that rioting will not help them to stay in the country. The warning came after about 200 inmates at the Curtin detention centre, near Derby, in Western Australia's far north, went on a rampage. (Agence France Presse, April 5, 2001)

(The Sydney Morning Herald, April 5, 2001) A man who attempted to hang himself at the Curtin detention centre in Australia was cut down and beaten for "hours" by Australasian Correctional Management staff, according to allegations in a confidential draft report prepared for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The report also details verbal abuse and beatings alleged to have been performed by the staff at the centre in Western Australia.

Ponnampalam Kailasapillai fled Sri Lanka in September 1996 and hoped to join his brother, who earlier had found safety in Canada. But when Kailasapillai stopped to change planes at Dulles International Airport outside Washington, D.C., immigration officials detected that his passport was not his own. Suddenly, he found himself caught in the United States asylum system. He would remain stuck in that system, held in one Virginia jail after another, for the next 54 months. He was kept in jail until Thursday, when Justice

Department officials abruptly reversed themselves and declared that he could go free, as long as he went on to Canada. (The San Jose Mercury News, April 4, 2001)

In December, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service Miami district transferred 90 women out of the Krome Service Processing Center amid allegations that guards had sexually abused female detainees. At the time, officials said the transfers to the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Centre were intended to protect the women and prevent more abuse. Now, with the women gone, comes a fresh sexual abuse claim from a male detainee who says that a male Krome employee pressured him for sex in exchange for help getting him released from detention. (The Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, April 3, 2001)

Over 160 remand prisoners at the Negombo prison in Sri Lanka staged a protest campaign on top of the prison roof demanding that they be produced before a Magistrate or be released on bail. These prisoners are 'deportees' mostly from European countries who were apprehended while attempting to gain illegal entry. They are being remanded pending investigations. Under the present law such prisoners can be kept in remand prison without bail for up to three months until investigations are over. Some of the prisoners who participated in the protest claimed that they have been in remand for over

three months, but the authorities have not taken any steps to produce them in court. (The Sri Lanka Daily News, April 3, 2001)

Australia's treatment of asylum seekers was appalling and the subject of international condemnation, said Senator Meg Lees the Australian Democrats leader said. "I think it's disgraceful, the way in which people are being treated when they come here for asylum, having already suffered trauma, often torture, where in their own countries they are not safe." "We have to remember that the majority of those people coming in, from countries like Afghanistan, are going to be found to be genuine refugees," she said. (The Australian Associated Press, April 3, 2001)

A group of 12 Afghans being held in an Australian immigration detention camp have threatened to kill themselves, possibly by self-immolation, rather than be sent home, a refugee support group said. The threat comes a day after a Pakistani man, whose wife and three daughters were denied Australian immigration visas, set himself alight in front of the Australian parliament in Canberra. (Reuters, April 3, 2001)

* Legislation / Laws

Austria's Interior Minister Ernst Strasser drafted a four-point programme for a new asylum and immigration policy. Strasser wants the EU to adopt uniform minimum standards for asylum procedures and he plans the

creation of a separate asylum and integration centre. The rigid quotas for immigrants should be replaced with more flexible regulations. (Die Presse, Vienna (via BBC), April 12, 2001)

The Russian government has approved rules for granting temporary asylum on the territory of the Russian Federation. The decision is to be taken by the local bodies of the Ministry for Federation Affairs and Nationalities. Asylum can be granted for up to 12 months. It can be prolonged for another year by decision of the local body responsible for migration issues. (RIA news agency, Moscow (via BBC), April 12, 2001)

The amendment to the Czech asylum law, which was approved by the government, should tighten up and speed up clearing of applications for asylum and 'prevent misuse' of this right. It will also enable courts to check on asylum procedures. A refugee will be able to ask for asylum within seven days from the date when he/she was informed about this possibility. (CTK news agency (via BBC), April 9, 2001)

The executive body of the European Union has adopted a proposal setting out minimum standards for the reception of asylum applicants in member states. Under the proposal, all EU members would be obliged to provide asylum seekers. That implies a minimum level of assistance - housing and health care - and access to the job market after six months. Under the proposal, EU members will be able to reduce or withdraw the support when applicants dem-

onstrate they are not serious about the asylum procedure or when their behavior makes continuing the reception process unreasonable. The Commission's proposal is linked to an earlier proposal for minimum standards on procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status, adopted last fall. That proposal currently is under study by the member states. (The Associated Press, April 4, 2001)

* Living Conditions

A Red Cross refugee centre near Calais, France at Sangatte is regarded as an unofficial waiting room for the thousands of people who attempt the illegal crossing each month intending to seek asylum in Britain. It was opened in 1999, has 700 beds and 16,000 people passed through it in its first year of operation. Most are believed to have entered Britain illegally. (The Daily Telegraph (U.K.), April 13, 2001)

Ministers should replace the voucher system introduced for asylum seekers, said Bill Morris, head of the Transport and General Workers, a year after the controversial scheme was introduced. The policy means those waiting to learn whether they can live in Britain receive benefits in vouchers rather than cash. But the scheme was costly and wrong. "It stigmatises the people who receive it. It marks them out, it has led to a lot of attacks on asylum seekers," he said. It had also led to the "impossible situation" where asylum

seekers were subsidising major supermarkets, according to Mr Morris. "But as a matter of social justice we say when people are fleeing persecution they should be treated fairly." (Press Association (U.K.), April 9, 2001)

* Protests

About 200 protesters gathered outside the Villawood detention centre in Australia. Many waved to family members inside the camp and waved banners including "Free the Refugees" and "Lock Ruddock Up." Australia is examining tough new laws to deal with detained asylum seekers. (Reuters, April 9, 2001)

A group demonstrated at Villawood Detention Centre in southwest Sydney yesterday to highlight the plight of asylum seekers. Free the Refugees Campaign spokesman Arsalan Nazarian [also IFIR activist] said people were resorting to extreme action because they were being subjected to "inhuman and traumatising conditions". (The Sydney Morning Herald, April 9, 2001)

The 'illegal immigrants' who created a 'commotion' before escaping into the jungle while being led out of the Lenggeng detention centre for deportation in Malaysia will be charged with rioting. The 12 'illegals' (seven Indian nationals and five Bangladeshis) had been re-arrested. A manhunt for the remaining 19 escapees, all males, have been intensified with the deployment of

tracker dogs. (New Straits Times (Malaysia), April 2, 2001)

A 35-year-old Iranian man stripped naked in the Dutch parliament on Tuesday to draw attention to the Netherlands' refugee policy. "You are killers," the man shouted in English as he ran along the public balcony of the lower house in full view of television cameras, banging a wooden railing with his fist. Parliament adjourned for several minutes while security officers removed the man, whom a parliament spokeswoman said had been a 'illegal alien' in the Netherlands for the past seven years. The man said his action was designed to demand "freedom for foreigners." (April 3, Reuters)

On Tuesday, April 3 at 10am, Akbar Alinejad, an Iranian asylum seeker was taken from Villawood detention centre in Australia to the airport and put on the 2pm flight bound to Iran, despite conditions in Iran and his well-founded fear of persecution. Alinejad had spent 27 months in Villawood detention centre. As a result of extensive protests, in a stopover in Malaysia, Alinejad's deportation order was revoked and he was returned to Sydney. (International Federation of Iranian Refugees, April 4, 2001)

* Racism / Fascism

Ann Widdecombe, the UK shadow home secretary, said the existence of Sangatte in France showed that Europe was not prepared to help Britain deal with the problem of 'false asylum

claims.' She added: "We have to remove the reason people are drawn to Britain. The pull at the moment is that if you get to the UK you can disappear. We want to set up secure reception centres for all those claiming asylum. That would send out a deterrent message that you cannot come to Britain and simply disappear. For the genuine asylum seekers we could provide a proper resettlement package of social services support, language help and education." (The Daily Telegraph (U.K.), April 13, 2001)

The United Nations' special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia Maurice Glele-Ahanhanzo will visit Australia to look at government policies and equal rights and opportunity measures aimed at indigenous Australians and people from culturally-diverse backgrounds. (The Australian Associated Press, April 12, 2001)

A local authority has launched an information offensive to counter propaganda peddled by extremists opposed to asylum seekers. East Renfrewshire Council has reassured residents on an estate which was targeted by the National Front and has sent a special newsletter countering claims from a leaflet, distributed by the National Front, that a "flood tide of bogus asylum seekers" was set to swamp the area. The social inclusion manager for the council, said residents were more concerned that refugees

would be poorly housed than they were about any potential damage to the local community if they stayed. (The Scotsman, April 3, 2001)

The Council of Europe's racism commission said it was deeply concerned about Austria's "use of racist and xenophobic propaganda in politics" and complained current legislation was insufficient to combat xenophobia and discrimination. It also said that in Britain racism was "particularly acute" against asylum seekers and refugees, highlighted by media coverage and political discourse. In the five-nation report, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance also detailed continued problems in Albania, Macedonia and Denmark. (The Associated Press, April 2, 2001)

* Restrictive Measures / Militarisation of Borders

Twenty-six North African suspected 'illegal immigrants' were picked up from a boat which had been adrift in the Mediterranean for several days. They were spotted off the coast of Andalucia, southern Spain. They had set out from northern Morocco. One woman was hospitalised with dehydration. Another 23 were arrested Wednesday as they tried to dock at Cala de Rijana in the southern province of Granada. (Agence France Presse, April 12, 2001)

A recommendation that federal officials obtain search warrants before

opening mail coming into Canada has been rejected by the Immigration Department. (The Canadian Press, April 13, 2001)

A US federal judge in Fort Worth did not abuse his discretion in sentencing a 41-year-old man to 20 years in prison for illegally entering the United States after deportation, a federal appeals court ruled. (The Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 12, 2001)

An Indonesian fishing boat with 84 suspected 'illegal immigrants' aboard has been intercepted near the Ashmore Islands off Australia's north-western coast. The people, believed to be of Middle Eastern origin, were travelling on a 20 metre motorised fishing vessel and include 23 children. Twelve boats carrying 1,194 illegal immigrants have been detected by Customs Coastwatch so far this year compared to 16 boats carrying 1,017 people in the same period last year. (The Australian Associated Press, April 9, 2001)

Perry Wacker, 32, was found guilty by a jury at Maidstone Crown Court of 58 counts of manslaughter for the 58 Chinese who suffocated in his truck. Wacker, was also convicted of four counts of conspiracy. (The Associated Press, April 5, 2001)

The number of people being smuggled into Britain in cars and lorries has been cut by almost half since the introduction of fines for drivers found carrying 'illegal

immigrants.' The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said yesterday that penalties of £2,000 per 'illegal entrant' had reduced human trafficking at Channel ports by 42 per cent in the space of a year. The reduction is partly due to the introduction of carbon-dioxide testing of vehicles by officials in Calais and checks carried out by staff on board P&O StenaLine ferries. (The Independent (U.K.), April 4, 2001)

A Pakistani man, Shuharyar Kiyani, doused himself with petrol and set himself alight in front in protest to delays in trying to bring his wife and children to Australia from Pakistan. His initial application had been rejected because of the costs associated with looking after his disabled daughter. Independent MP Andrew Theophanous said it was outrageous someone had been forced to self-immolation to have his immigration case reviewed. "What human rights standards do we have when a genuine refugee's spouse and children are given no chance to flee persecution and reunite in Australia?" (The Australian Associated Press, April 4, 2001)

In 2000 a record 76,040 asylum applications were brought. According to the UK Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), over 80 per cent were declined. Frances Webber, an immigration law specialist, believes that EU immigration laws are xenophobic. The "vast majority" of her clients, she believes, "tell genuine stories and are at grave risk if they return to their country

of origin". In her opinion, "the West must take responsibility for the creation of refugees". (The Independent (U.K.), April 3, 2001)

A boat with 447 Iraqi Kurds going to Italy ran aground on an island near Athens in rough seas after being pursued by the Greek coast guard. About 50 of the 'illegal immigrants' were being taken to a hospital, while the rest were heading to sports and municipal facilities on the island, where they would be held. Among the passengers of the Medine were 39 women and 40 children. (The Associated Press, April 1, 2001)

* Women

According to Maryam Namazie, International Federation of Iranian Refugees, "...since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranians have been one of the top nationalities applying for asylum worldwide. Currently they're one of the largest. The reasons they're fleeing are extremely real. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, LATELINE, April 10, 2001)

On April 10, 2001 Judge Van Wyke, sitting in York, Pennsylvania granted asylum to a Spanish Gypsy J.J. who had fled a 7 year abusive marriage. In an oral decision, he termed her situation in her community similar to being "enslaved" since she was not allowed to go out alone, could only work along side her husband, was pulled out of school in the 5th grade and suffered numerous incidents of physical abuse.

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