

# HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



January 22, 2001

## uk policy leads to death of iranian asylum seeker

On January 18, 2001, the body of Ramin Khaleghi, a 27-year-old Iranian, was discovered in the so-called 'International Hotel', a hostel housing asylum seekers in Leicester. Ramin had been a political prisoner in Iran for a number of years, before managing to flee to Britain. Yet the Home Office rejected his claim for asylum, despite, we understand, medical evidence of torture at the hands of the Iranian police. One week after learning of his rejection, Ramin took his own life.

Ramin's death comes at a

time when claims for asylum from Iranian refugees are getting less and less of a hearing from the UK authorities, despite widespread acceptance of the oppressive nature of the Iranian regime. Since January 18, other asylum seekers at the 'International Hotel' in Leicester have been camped out in the hostel's lobby area in protest at the death of their friend. Residents have been complaining for several months of conditions in the hostel, a run-down former hotel in the city centre

*cont. page 3*

## asylum seekers in leicester meet to vent their anger

On the evening of Friday, January 19, a day after the body of Ramin Khaleghi, a 27-year-old Iranian asylum seeker was found in his room in Leicester, a mass meeting was held.

Over 200 asylum seekers attended the meeting held in one of the halls of the "International Hotel," to discuss ongoing protests against the UK government's inhuman asylum policies.

At this meeting, several asylum seekers, Ramin

Khaleghi's uncle, Maryam Namazie, IFIR's Executive Director, Said Arman, the IFIR's UK Director and Suresh Grover, Chairman of the National Civil Rights Caravan addressed the gathering.

The hotel management initially refused to allow the press and cameramen to enter the hotel and cover the meeting.

Nonetheless, the meeting and Ramin's death was covered on BBC1 and other news outlets.

**Editor: Maryam Namazie**

**Asst. Editor: Javad Aslani**

**E-mail:** ifir@ukonline.co.uk

**Tel:** 0044 7730 107 337

**Fax:** 0044 870 129 4167

**Address:** P.O. Box 27236  
London N11, England

**Web Site:** www.hambastegi.org

**editorial:  
no one must  
be next  
page 2**

**Editorial**

# no one must be next

by maryam namazie

Last Friday, we joined over 200 asylum seekers, friends and family members to share our sadness and outrage over the loss of Ramin Khaleghi at the 'International Hotel' in Leicester. Ramin was a 27-year-old Iranian asylum seeker who committed suicide a week after his asylum claim had been rejected by the UK Home Office. Tragically, Ramin had many family members in London – a sister, aunt, uncle, a nephew, and cousins... yet he was forcibly dispersed to Leicester, where he lived and died alone.

Ramin was the latest victim of the Islamic Republic of Iran's brutality and the UK government's anti-asylum policy. According to the Home Office's latest available statistics, out of 970 Iranian asylum cases determined in November 2000, 895 cases – 92 percent - were refused. Like many others, Ramin's refusal had nothing to do with his claim, his being a

former political prisoner, his being tortured, and the appalling situation in Iran but everything to do with the UK's asylum policy and its relations with the Islamic regime.

At the public meeting, many of the 200 asylum seekers asked us who would be next. They said the majority of those staying in the hotel had been refused and could identify with Ramin's despair.

In the coming weeks and months, the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR), the National Civil Rights Movement, the UK Civil Rights Caravan, and the Campaign against Racism and Fascism will be initiating various political and legal actions to demand justice for Ramin.

Real justice for Ramin can only come about if the policies that caused his death are ended.

That's the only way to ensure that no one will be next.

## six more executed in iran

The Islamic Republic's state radio announced that six of the eleven people on death row were executed early in the morning of January 17, 2001. The death sentences of two others are to be carried out at a later date and the remaining three people were given a stay of execution on the grounds of a pardon exercised by the relatives of the victims. The regime's chief prosecutor has recently stated that 800 prisoners have been identified for execution.

The IFIR strongly condemns these crimes of the Islamic Republic of Iran and calls on individuals and organisations to voice their condemnation at this wave of killings. This recent wave of executions is a desperate attempt by the regime to maintain itself in the face of mounting popular defiance and daily protests.

United efforts can ensure that countless lives are saved.

## ali reza rezagh's deportation halted

Last December, the police in Stockholm, Sweden, arrested Ali Reza Rezagh, an Iranian asylum seeker and transferred him to a detention centre to facilitate his deportation to Iran.

This arrest coincided with a sit-in protest by Iranian asylum seekers organised by the IFIR-Stockholm Office. As soon as news of Ali Reza's arrest reached protesters, a picket was organised outside the detention centre.

An IFIR delegation met with the centre's management to highlight the dangers he would

face if deported and managed to delay his deportation.

In a subsequent meeting with the 'Aliens Department,' on December 21, 2000, the IFIR delegation demanded the cancellation of Ali Reza's deportation order and warned the authorities that they would be held accountable for his life and safety.

A series of delegations and protest actions finally paid off and forced the immigration authorities to change their decision. Ali Reza was released on January 17; his case will be reviewed once more.

## uk policy leads to death of iranian asylum seeker

continued from page 1

currently housing around 400 asylum seekers. There are severe problems of sanitation, inadequate heating and poor food. Residents also face problems of hostility from some sections of the local population. Since June 2000, doctors' surgeries in Leicester have refused to register any more refugee patients.

In September 2000, CARF and the National Civil Rights Movement established a local group in Leicester - the Leicester Civil Rights Movement (LCRM) - to provide support and campaign for refugees and victims of racist attacks in Leicester. LCRM is campaigning for justice for the refugees housed at the 'International Hotel' so that the tragic death of Ramin Khaleghi will not be repeated.

"Sometimes you get so frustrated when your life is in other peoples' hands. You fear for your life back home in Iran but when you get here, you live in fear too. When you get an answer from the Home Office, it is likely to be a refusal. Hopelessness can easily trigger suicide. All of us can identify with Ramin, all in the same situation." Iranian refugee, Leicester

"This tragic death appears to be a direct result of the Home Office practice of wilful and callous rejection of asylum

claims from Iranians, no matter how clear, strong and compelling they are." Frances Webber, leading immigration barrister

"The Home Office refusal of Ramin's claim was the final straw that led to his decision to take his own life, rather than be subjected to more of the same barbaric treatment in Iran. Effectively the refusal of asylum has become a death sentence for asylum seekers. We would like to ask Barbara Roche and Jack Straw if this is the price for the prevention of 'bogus' asylum claims?" Priya Thamotheram, Leicester Civil Rights Movement

"After enduring all kinds of mistreatment, imprisonment and torture in oppressive societies, asylum seekers like Ramin are left with no option but to flee to Europe. Upon arrival, they are further abused, detained, housed in degrading conditions, deprived by a voucher system and eventually deported." Maryam Namazie, IFIR

**For further information please contact:**  
**Arun Kundnani on 07957 240755**  
**Suresh Grover on 07801 331165**  
**Maryam Namazie on 07730 107337**  
**or Priya Thamotheram on 0116 253 1053**  
**Campaign Against Racism & Fascism**  
**www.carf.demon.co.uk**  
**National Civil Rights Movement**  
**www.ncrm.org.uk**

# international refugee news

## Anti-Asylum Legislation

\* 'Boat people' who would normally qualify as refugees will be deported if they 'riot' in detention centres. In the wake of the Port Hedland detention centre 'riot,' the Immigration Minister, Ruddock, said he accepted the view that chemical injections needed to be more "comprehensively implemented". The existing law allows detainees to be injected only after authority from doctors. Under Ruddock's proposals, detainees could be deported for 'threatening or assaulting' detention or police officers, and the search powers of guards would be increased. Under the new legislation, offences such as escaping from detention or threatening or assaulting guards would become "serious offences" which would allow the Government to deport people who would otherwise be given refugee status. (Sydney Morning Herald, January 23, 2001)

\* Spain will put into force a new, tougher law on immigration, that could see the expulsion of more than 30,000 people who entered the country illegally and lack official documents. Spain asserts the measure will bring

it into line with European Union legislation and will put an end to Spain's progressive status under previous legislation, adopted in December 1999. (Agence France Presse, January 22, 2001)

\* A new immigration law came into force that intends to provide documents for thousands of 'illegal immigrants' in Portugal and toughen punishment for people who employ undocumented foreigners. (The Associated Press, January 22, 2001)

\* Airlines or ferry operators, which bring passengers to Ireland without proper immigration documentation, will be subject to legal penalties under proposed legislation. Ireland is now the only EU member-state without carriers' liability law. (The Irish Times, January 11, 2001)

## Deaths

\* Spanish authorities have arrested 41 'illegal immigrants' in makeshift boats, but found another dead and five missing. Hundreds of would-be immigrants die every year trying to get to Spain from northern Africa

in ramshackle boats. (Reuters, January 21, 2001)

\* The bodies of 58 Chinese asylum seekers who suffocated in a truck en route to Britain last summer were expected to be flown back to China. The 54 dead men and four women were discovered by British authorities at the port of Dover in June last year, crammed into the back of a truck carrying tomatoes. Two people survived the journey. (Reuters, January 18, 2001)

\* One of the 24 Sri Lankans deceived by smugglers into thinking he was on his way to Germany died due to the cold. (Agence France Presse, January 18, 2001)

\* The death toll of a ship disaster off Turkey's Mediterranean coast has reached 20 as authorities discovered several more bodies washed ashore. The cargo ship, packed with 'illegal immigrants' mostly from south Asia, split in two after hitting rocks off the resort town of Kemer on New Year's Eve. (Agence France Press, January 10, 2001)

## Deportation

\* Two thousand one hundred Afghan refugees residing in this northern province have 'voluntarily' returned home since a 'voluntary

repatriation programme' was arranged with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees last year. 500 Afghan nationals enter Iran across Sistan Baluchestan border daily. The programme was put on hold this week ahead of a UN Security Council decision on the sanctions against the Taliban militia. (IRNA news agency, Tehran (via BBC), January 18, 2001)

\* Twenty-four Sri Lankans who arrived in Kazakhstan thinking it was Germany have been refused refugee status. They could now face deportation within 30 days. The Sri Lankans were detained near the Kazakh border with Russia in late December after being deceived by smugglers into thinking they were on their way to Germany. The men were told that if they kept on walking, they would end up in Germany. They then walked four days across the steppe in bitter temperatures, during which one died due to the cold. The men carried the corpse with them. (Agence France Presse, January 18, 2001)

\* A total of 14,890 'illegal immigrants' were captured in Turkey's northwestern Edirne province in 2000 going to Bulgaria and Greece. A total of 272 'illegal immigrants' were deported from Kapikule Border Gate, 197 of them were deported from Habur Border Gate, 66 from Gurbulak Border Gate, four from Pazarkule Border Gate, three from Ataturk Airport, three from Sarp Border Gate, and two from Cilvegozu Border Gate. (Anadolu Agency (Ankara),

January 14, 2001)

\* Greek police arrested 102 foreigners during a sweep of this northern port city to round up 'illegal immigrants'. Most were Albanian, but those arrested also included immigrants from Russia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Khazakstan and Armenia. The immigrants are scheduled to be deported sometime in the next five days. (The Associated Press, January 11, 2001)

\* The UK Home Office Minister, Barbara Roche, competed with the Conservatives yesterday as each side tried to show that it had the tougher record on dealing with 'unfounded' asylum and immigration claims. Roche said that 7,600 people were deported, after unsuccessful applications, during 1999. This was the highest figure ever. The combined total of 'illegal immigrants' and refused asylum applicants deported had risen from 26,000 in 1996 to almost 38,000 in 1999, with 42,000 so far counted during 2000. (The Times (London), January 9, 2001)

## Detention

\* Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock has asked his department to finalise a proposal that would release hundreds of children from

Australia's detention centres. Back from a tour of Sweden's detention centres, Ruddock said he was now prepared to consider releasing children and their mothers. However, fathers would be required to remain in custody. According to the latest departmental figures, there were 386 children in Australian detention on January 16. Single parents - including fathers and their sons would likely be unable to leave detention centres. (The Age (Australia), January 23, 2001)

\* Australian Police used capsicum spray to subdue inmates during a 'violent riot' by 180 detainees 'armed with iron bars and bricks' at Port Hedland in



Western Australia. Charges may be laid. Opposition immigration spokesman Con Sciacca said the 'riot leaders' appeared to be 'hard-core criminals who should be shipped out immediately.' (The Age, January 22, 2001)

\* The UK Chief Inspector of Prisons attacked as "utterly inappropriate" a government scheme to move hundreds of asylum seekers

into jails where they mix with prisoners. Many of the asylum seekers, who have committed no crime, have been split up from partners and families and placed in jails with some of the worst conditions and highest security levels in the country. No other European state did this. At the start of November, 280 asylum seekers were being held in jail. A further 450 were in prison service accommodation designed for people held under the Immigration Act. (The Independent (UK), January 22, 2001)

\* Twenty-nine 'illegal immigrants,' all Kurds or Iraqis, were detained outside Paris, France after they boarded a lorry bound for Britain. The 29, all men except for one, were later released. (Agence France Presse, January 18, 2001)

\* The Greek coastguard has released figures that show it has taken more than 4,100 'illegals' into custody over the past 13 months. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, January 17, 2001) Thirty-one foreigners were detained while attempting an illegal crossing to Greece on January 12 in an operation of the Bulgarian border police. 21 Romanians, 8 Ukrainians and 2 Indians were detained. The offenders will be fined and banned from staying in Bulgaria and will be expelled from the country. Since the start of the year, the police of the regional border sector in Petrich have detained about 200 offenders. Last year saw

about 2,400 attempts for illegal border crossings; 7,400 people of 40 nationalities were caught. (BTA (Bulgarian news agency), Sofia (via BBC), January 17, 2001)

\* Iraqi refugee Amir was held at the Woomera detention centre on the edge of the Australian outback for nearly a year, cut off from the world behind razor-wire fences. In the past year, about 1,500 asylum seekers have been sent to Woomera, a makeshift camp at a former rocket test range 280 miles north of Adelaide. It was condemned recently as a "hellhole" by former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. "I can't imagine a worse place to send people who are fleeing persecution," he said, adding he was shocked by the use of tear gas and water cannon to quell a riot late last year by about 100 frustrated detainees. (Reuters, January 17, 2001)

\* About 1,700 'illegals,' including 270 children, are incarcerated in high-security detention facilities in Curtin, Port Hedland and Woomera in South Australia's remote outback. Isolated from the broader community, relatives they may have in Australia and from legal and moral support, many of the 'illegal immigrants' languish indefinitely in detention — some in solitary confinement — until their applications for refugee status are examined. Most face automatic deportation. Critics also

allege they are being treated as criminals because that's exactly how Australasian Correctional Management, the U.S. private firm that runs the government's detention system, sees them. ACM is a subsidiary of Wackenhut Corrections Management, a billion-dollar global company owned by former Federal Bureau of Investigation Agent George Wackenhut. The head overseer of 40,000 prisoners worldwide, Wackenhut says: "Australian operations are very important to us." "They're really starting to punish people the way they should have done all along. The do-gooders say 'no, punishment is not the answer.' But I can't think of a better one." (Asian Wall Street Journal, January 17, 2001)

\* The family of a French man is accusing US guards of beating 33-year-old Philippe Le Menn to death. Immigration records show that Le Menn was detained by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1993 and failed to appear for a deportation hearing, making him an 'illegal immigrant.' (The Associated Press, January 16, 2001)

\* Security forces in northwestern Turkey detained in the past two days 111 'illegal immigrants' preparing to enter Greece and Bulgaria. The immigrants were intercepted in several separate groups in the province of Edirne, which borders both Bulgaria and Greece. They included

Afghans, Bangladeshis, Indians, Iranians, Iraqis and Palestinians. (Agence France Presse, January 15, 2001)

\* Ten asylum seekers who smuggled themselves into Britain locked inside a freight train were being questioned by police. The refugees were found inside a freezing cold metal goods wagon at Rugby, Warwickshire, after pounding on the walls begging to be released. The young men were believed to be Ukrainians, Kosovans and Afghanis. They were arrested and taken to a detention centre. (Sunday Mirror (UK), January 14, 2001)

\* Eight Afghans have been caught illegally crossing into Hungary from Romania. They ran away from the border guards but were soon caught. Some 803 'illegal aliens' were stopped coming via Romania into Hungary last year, up from 712 in 1999. (The Associated Press, January 10, 2001)

\* Turkish police detained nearly 100,000 people who had illegally crossed into the country last year. (Reuters, January 10, 2001)

\* Three detainees at the Port Hedland detention centre in northern Western Australia escaped overnight. The escapees were two Kuwaiti men and a Palestinian man. (The Australian Associated Press, January 10, 2001)

\* Greek police arrested eight 'illegal

immigrants' from Iran who sailed to the Greek island of Samos in plastic boats. The group had boarded two plastic boats along the Turkish coast and set sail in strong winds. The Iranians, who were picked up by coast guard officials, were suffering from exhaustion and cold. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, January 9, 2001)

\* The 90 women transferred from the US Krome detention centre to a Miami-Dade County jail to protect them from sexual abuse are again at risk. On Dec. 12, two days after they arrived at Turner Guilford Knight Correction Centre, a maximum-security jail near Miami International Airport, some of the INS detainees were again subjected to sexual aggression. Federal authorities also are investigating allegations made by several women last year that male guards at Krome pressured them for sex. All those women were released. (The Fort-Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, January 8, 2001)

\* Ali Kadem, a 17-year-old Iraqi boy who tried to commit suicide should be released immediately from Melbourne's Maribyrnong detention centre along with his five younger siblings and his parents, refugee legal representatives said. Ali Kadem, whose family has been in detention in Australia for 14 months, tried to kill himself by cutting his throat when centre officials refused to let his father visit a dentist without handcuffs. A refugee

advocate said he was aware of a "really disturbing number" of suicide attempts at the Maribyrnong detention centre, with more than 10 people trying to kill themselves there over the past three years. (The Australian Associated Press, January 8, 2001)

## Protests

\* On January 19, a day after the body of Ramin Khaleghi, a 27-year-old Iranian asylum seeker was found in his room in Leicester, UK, a mass meeting was held in the International Hotel, a run-down hostel housing asylum seekers. Over 200 asylum seekers attended the meeting to discuss ongoing protests against the UK government's inhuman asylum policies. (International Federation of Iranian Refugees-UK, January 23, 2001)

\* Thirty-seven detainees face criminal charges after a 40-minute 'riot' in Port Hedland detention centre in Australia. Police in riot gear, backed by 20 Australasian Correctional Management officers, herded most of the detainees back into the facility and locked them into accommodation rooms. About 20 detainees who had barricaded themselves in a room were subdued by capsicum spray. Police said the 'riot' appeared to be a bid to draw attention to inmates' circumstances rather than an effort to escape. The incident involved one-quarter of all

detainees housed at Port Hedland. The Port Hedland facility set up as a detention centre in 1991 and houses 480 detainees. (The Australian Associated Press, January 22, 2001)

\* Australian opposition members of Parliament demanded that leaders of a 'riot' in one of Australia's controversial detention centres be expelled as criminals. Last year, detainees staged two riots at the Woomera Detention Centre, 1,300 kilometres west of Sydney to protest against poor conditions and the rejection of their asylum applications. (The Associated Press, January 22, 2001)

\* A group of 265 immigrants camped out in a church in northeastern Spain have launched a hunger strike to protest a new immigration law that could see the expulsion of more than 30,000 people who entered the country illegally and lack official documents. (Agence France Presse, January 21, 2001)

## Racism and Xenophobia

\* Police across Britain have been told to tackle racism towards asylum seekers or risk "significant public disorder" in a report by the Association of Chief Police Officers. Racial abuse towards refugees and asylum seekers has become "common currency." In addition, investigations of crimes involving refugees have been hampered by a

mistrust of authority and the police. The report also questions the police's role in detecting and expelling immigration offenders. (Press Association (UK), January 22, 2001)

\* The foreign-born population in the UK pays an estimated 10% more into government revenue than it takes out, according to research published. Overall, migration into Britain is likely to be beneficial for the British economy and society, which was carried out for the Government. Migrants on average did not disproportionately claim benefits. (Press Association (UK), January 22, 2001)

\* Racist incidents reported to the police rose by 107% last year, the UK Home Office disclosed. The total number of race crimes spiralled from 23,049 in 1998/99 to nearly 48,000 the following year in England and Wales, a new report shows. In some police forces, the increases were huge - up 459% in West Mercia and 364% in Devon and Cornwall - and none of the 43 forces showed a reduction. (The Guardian (UK), January 18, 2001)

\* Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock was forced to defend a document he carried on his Middle Eastern tour, which warned would-be refugees of the dangers of their plight. Ruddock was on his final leg of a tour of Jordan when critics questioned the document

prepared for intending 'illegal immigrants,' which included warnings about prostitution, crime and racial abuse. He said he was not mistaken when he decided to take the document on his tour of the Middle East. (The Australian Associated Press, January 18, 2001)

\* An Australian government campaign to deter 'illegal immigrants' by warning them they face racial hatred, family disunity and a life of crime and prostitution in foreign ghettos provoked dismay among human rights groups. The kit highlights the dangers refugees face if they decide to use people-smuggling gangs to get into other countries, and the hardships they confront once they reach their destination. It warns that they 'face racial hatred and violence because citizens are angry at having to support them. They end up living in slums, and depend on begging and crime to survive.' Smugglers are often 'pirates' who rape women, threaten clients with hand grenades and may force them to sell drugs or become prostitutes to pay off debt. The fact sheets also warns 'illegal immigrants' they may 'lose control of their children, who abandon their traditional values for modern Western culture.' Finally, they lose 'everything and are sent back home in disgrace, facing a lifetime of debt.' (Reuters, January 10, 2001)

\* Almost half the British electorate wants a total bar on future admissions of asylum seekers to the UK, a

poll revealed. Numbers backing an outright ban were exactly matched by those saying that asylum seekers should continue to be admitted. In the poll, some 54% said that Britain was already hosting too many immigrants, compared to 31% who disagreed. Tory proposals for dealing with incoming asylum seekers, by confining them to reception centres until their cases are dealt with, were approved by 60% of those questioned, compared to almost two-thirds who opposed Labour's scheme to disperse them around the country. Some 84% said the system for deciding claims should be speeded up, with 59% agreeing that a large number of claimants were cheats seeking a better life rather than people fleeing persecution. (Press Association (UK), January 7, 2001)

### **Restrictive Measures**

\* The United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, called on the government of Tajikistan to fulfil its international legal obligations by admitting thousands of Afghan civilians stranded in appalling conditions on Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. The Afghans - including more than 6,000 children - have been living for several months on two promontories on the Pyanj River, after fleeing the Taliban advance in northern Afghanistan. For many, the

only shelter has been holes in the ground covered with a flimsy roof made of reeds. Many are also within range of artillery on the Afghan side of the river. Sporadic shelling and a number of shooting incidents have been reported. (UNHCR, January 22, 2001)

\* In an attempt to stem the flow of Middle Eastern refugees, Australian Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock has spent the past week visiting Middle Eastern states and asking their leaders to help discourage people from travelling to Australia and seeking asylum. Investigations over the past eight months have found most Middle Eastern refugees fly into Malaysia, where visas are not required before going by boat to the Indonesian province of Java and then leaving from east-Javanese ports for Ashmore Reef - the closest Australian landform. (The Australian, January 22, 2001)

\* One of Britain's largest ferry operators has discovered 873 'illegal immigrants' hiding in lorries waiting to board boats for England from France since it started checks last month using devices that detect carbon dioxide emissions produced by breathing according to P&O Stena Line. Human rights activists said the searches could prevent legitimate refugees from seeking protection. A Home Office spokesman applauded Stena Line's move adding that the number of stowaways caught at the port

of Dover dropped by 34 percent in December. Stena Line said it started the checks to avoid fines that place responsibility for 'illegal immigration' on the airlines, ferries and lorry drivers who bring people in. (Reuters, January 19, 2001)

\* The Pakistani government has established the National Aliens Registration Authority, declaring amnesty for all 'aliens' to get themselves registered and obtain work permits. The sources further informed that the authority should register all the foreigners in Pakistan who had no permission to stay in Pakistan. (The Frontier Post (Pakistan), January 18, 2001)

\* The UK government faced fresh pressure last night to scrap its voucher scheme for asylum seekers after supermarkets criticised the programme and new figures revealed its huge cost. Sainsbury's and Somerfield want the "no change" rule scrapped and vouchers issued in smaller denominations. In a separate development, the Home Office said processing applications for vouchers and administering aid to asylum seekers cost £6.6m from April to September last year, over £1m more than the face-value of the vouchers. The Refugee Council, said: "This cumbersome system was introduced with the intention of reducing the number of asylum-seekers... However, the fact that numbers have not gone down shatters the

myth that benefits were attracting people. Vouchers expose victims of human rights abuses to discrimination, racism and grinding poverty.” (The Independent (UK), January 17, 2001)

\* Belgium said it would propose testing joint police patrols along the future borders of an enlarged European Union in a bid to combat trafficking in ‘illegal immigrants.’ The Belgian government mounted special border patrols with neighbouring EU states late last year to counter an expected flood of refugees ahead of ‘reforms’ cutting back on the benefits it pays out to asylum seekers. Belgium received 28,377 asylum seekers in the first nine months of 2000. (Reuters, January 17, 2001)

\* Belgian and Slovak Interior Ministers signed a joint document in which they pledged, among other things, to cooperate against organized smuggling of people to Belgium. Belgium had as of 3 January stopped providing financial assistance to people requesting asylum. Asylum seekers were now only being provided food and accommodation while they waited for a decision. Belgium had speeded up its handling of people’s requests for asylum and that the authorities were trying to decide on them within 20 days. (CTK news agency, Prague (via BBC), January 16, 2001)

\* Two suspected

asylum seekers have been apprehended after they were spotted hanging precariously underneath a moving truck in the UK. Two 21-year-old Russian men had been arrested and handed over to immigration officials. (Western Daily Press (U.K.), January 16, 2001)

\* An estimated 40,000 to 50,000 people tried to illegally migrate to Western Europe through Bosnia last year. (The Associated Press, January 16, 2001)

\* Another boatload of suspected ‘illegal’ immigrants has been detected by customs aircraft off Australia’s remote northwest coast. The boat was carrying 148 passengers, believed to be of Middle Eastern origin. (The Australian Associated Press, January 16, 2001)

\* French customs officials arrested 33 ‘illegal’ Kurdish immigrants — who included 1 Iraqi and 32 Turks — on their way to Britain from northern France. (Reuters, January 15, 2001)

\* 14,890 ‘illegal’ immigrants were captured in Turkey’s northwestern Edirne province in 2000 going to Bulgaria and Greece. The ‘illegal’ immigrants were from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria, Afghanistan and Morocco, were brought to Edirne. (Ankara), January 14, 2001)

\* Singapore will start using mobile x-ray machines to hunt for people hiding in cars and trucks on their way in from Malaysia. (The Associated Press, January 13, 2001)

\* Two leading Channel ferry operators have found 774 immigrants to the UK in the first month of a blitz. This is equal to potential fines of more than Pounds 1.5m (Dollars 2.4m) payable by the operators under UK legislation. On January 6, one month on, the company had found 644 ‘illegals.’ By yesterday, the figure had risen to 722. French operator SeaFrance, which returns any immigrants discovered on board back to Calais, found 130 people over the same period. (Lloyd’s List (UK), January 11, 2001)

\* Four Moroccan stowaways discovered on board a vessel, which berthed in Cork, Ireland, will apply for asylum. The men stowed away on New Year’s Day when it left Morocco bound for Cork Harbour, Ireland. En route, the captain of the vessel discovered the stowaways and placed them under ship’s arrest. When the vessel put in to port in Spain, the four men tried to seek asylum there but magistrates refused their application. Subsequently, they indicated their intention to the Portuguese authorities to seek asylum there, but this request was also refused. (The Irish Times, January 11, 2001)

\* Italian authorities detected more than 150 ‘illegal’ immigrants, mainly Kurds fleeing Turkey and Iraq, along Italy’s southeastern coast. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, January 11, 2001)

\* Visiting Australian Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Phillip

Ruddock, conferred here on 8 January with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi. Ruddock called on Iran as well as international fora to render assistance for solving the problem of ‘illegal immigration.’ Ruddock embarked on a regional tour taking him to Iran and four other Middle Eastern countries to ask officials of the said countries to take measures to prevent ‘illegal immigration’ of their nationals to Australia. (IRNA news agency, Tehran (via BBC), January 10, 2001)

#### **Sex-based Persecution**

\* In one of her last acts as attorney general, Janet Reno voided an immigration panel’s ruling that denied political asylum to a Guatemalan woman who fled her country to escape an abusive husband. Her lawyers had argued that Alvarado was a member of a persecuted social class by virtue of being a woman in a patriarchal culture that tolerated violence against women. (The New York Times, January 20, 2001)

**Next issue:**

**Monday,  
February 5,  
2001**

**[www.hambastegi.org](http://www.hambastegi.org)**