

HAMBASTEGI

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German Christian Democratic Party Retreats

Following a statement from F. Mertz, the head of the German Christian Social Union Party and Christian Democratic Union faction, advocating a ban on the political activities of asylum seekers, the IFIR-German Branch and the Worker-communist Party of Iran – German Committee held various protests.

Demonstrations and protest actions were organised at their headquarters and offices in Bremen, Cologne, Hagan, Hamburg and Essen to express opposition to the restriction of political freedoms. Nasrin Ramazanali, the IFIR – German Director also met with B. Machaczek, an MEP and member of German

parliament to lodge IFIR's strong condemnation and request an official clarification on the subject.

On March 15, IFIR received a letter from of the B. Machaczek stating the following:

“I received a reply from Berlin this morning.

Hermann Gruha has critically discussed this matter with members of the Working Group. I can now inform you that this item has been withdrawn from the agenda of the parliamentary Immigration Commission. As you can see, this view have been criticised within our party.”

Refugee Activist Homes Raided in Australia

In the wake of the escape by 14 asylum seekers imprisoned at Villawood Detention Centre in Australia, the Australian police raided up to 50 homes of refugee rights supporters including Arsalan Nazarian, an activist of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees - Australia Branch in their hunt to recapture the asylum seekers. Nazarian whose home was raided

while he was out related the intimidation experienced by his flatmates. “The police bashed at the door, totally surprising my flatmates,” Nazarian said. “After showing some identification, the police barged in, demanded ‘where is Arsalan’, and started going through the unit. They tried to get in to a room where a woman flatmate was getting dressed. All this happened while two

children aged 6 & 8 looked on in shock and fear.” Nazarian rang the immigration authorities and asked them if they had a warrant to search the premises. “They said the woman in the house had invited them over!

“It is already appalling that refugees are locked up like criminals,” Nazarian said. “Now those who support

refugee rights are also treated as criminals! Is it now illegal to support human rights?”

The Villawood escape, involving seven men, two women and five children, occurred after the group got hold of pliers used during construction work at the centre. The group had all had their applications refused by the notoriously harsh refugee review tribunal, and feared

Editor: Maryam Namazie

Asst. Editor: Javad Aslani

E-mail: ifir@ukonline.co.uk

Tel: 0044 7730 107 337

Fax: 0044 208 813 9734

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

Web Site: www.hambastegi.org

Editorial:

Kamal Mohammadian

An Iranian Refugee, Killed

by Maryam Namazie

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Editorial**Kamal Mohammadian****An Iranian Refugee Killed****by maryam namazie**

Two years ago, Kamal Mohammadian, an activist and political prisoner from Iranian Kurdistan, who had managed to escape to Iraqi Kurdistan, was handed back to the Iranian government by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. 16 days ago, after years of torture and abuse, he was executed along with three others by the Iranian government, according to the Kurdistan Committee of the

Worker-communist Party of Iran.

Mohammadian's tortuous life and death is one more example of how unsafe Iraqi Kurdistan is for Iranian asylum seekers. It is just one more example of why the Islamic Republic of Iran is condemnable, unsafe to deport asylum seekers back to Iran and why it must go.

Refugee Activist Homes Raided in Australia, continued from page 1

deportation. Nazarian explained the desperate situation of the detainees. "The detention centres are hellholes, holding innocent children, women and men, in some cases for several years, in prison like conditions, with abuse common. The government's harsh procedures mean that many deserving refuge are told they are to be deported. Just last week, one detainee attempted suicide after hearing he was to be

deported. After returning from hospital, the government attempted deportation, only to have the detainee returned from Malaysia. Refugees came here for a new life - not continued persecution. Is it any wonder they try to escape?" Nazarian, IFIR-Australia and the Free the Refugees Campaign of which IFIR-Australia is a member believe the escapes, protests, hunger strikes and suicide attempts are a direct result of the detention, deportation and traumatic treatment within the detention centres. The only solution is to close the detention centres altogether and grant asylum seekers protection.

Welcome to Australia

On Wednesday March 14, Ala Yusef, an Iraqi asylum seeker, was deported to Iraq via Syria. The Australian police empowered by a new piece of legislation, injected Ala with a tranquilliser and deported his unconscious body back to persecution.

On Friday March 16, a young Iranian asylum seeker imprisoned in Villawood detention centre, attempted suicide while his father was on hunger strike protesting their situation.

Again on March 20, security forces at Villawood detention centre approached Akbar Alinejad, an Iranian asylum seeker, in order to deport him.

Alinejad locked himself in and attempted suicide by slashing his wrists with a razor blade.



The guards broke in and transferred him to a deportation centre.

Iranian and Iraqi asylum seekers' share from "civilised" Australia is long-

term detention, death, suicides, tranquillisers, and deportations. In its treatment of asylum seekers, the Australian government violates every civil rights norm and brazenly facilitates the death of innocent people who are escaping persecution and repressive societies.

Contrary to the despicable official treatment of asylum seekers and refugees at the hands of the government, the labour movement and progressive people in Australia are a source of inspiration and hope for combating the Australian

government's racism. Last week, members of the Mines, Forestry and Construction Workers' Union staged a mass demonstration to protest the deportation of eight Indian refugee workers and called for the resignation of Philip Ruddock, the Australian Immigration Minister. Asylum seekers also continue to resist. Most recently, Iranian asylum seekers at Port Hedland detention centre staged a demonstration on March 21. The IFIR office in Sydney held a picket on the same day in solidarity with their action. On March 29, up to 60 asylum seekers erupted when officers tried to remove some detainees from the centre for deportation.

Racists Attack Iranian Asylum Seeker in UK

Farid Hosefar, a 31-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, who had been dispersed to a hostel in Sunderland, was attacked by two knife-wielding racists on March 15. As Farid returned from the city centre to his hostel, he was set upon in an underground subway and stabbed several times. The attack resulted in serious injuries to his arm and back, requiring forty-eight stitches. Ten days earlier another asylum seeker residing in Sunderland had been the victim of a stabbing.

On March 22, a week after the attack on Farid, the IFIR-UK branch organised a picket at the Sunderland police station. Around fifty asylum seekers demanded that proper protection be provided, an end to racism and dispersal, among others.

The current anti-asylum atmosphere, fanned by the government, media and politicians, has paved the way for the escalation of such attacks. Only united resistance can push racism back.

Release Farrokh Shiri

On March 7, Farrokh Shiri, an Iranian asylum seeker staying at a YMCA hostel in Penzance had just discovered his appeal for political asylum in Britain had been turned down by the UK Home Office. He was given eight days in which to make a final appeal against the decision. In a very distressed state, Shiri threatened to take his own life with a ball-bearing gun. After several hours, Shiri was arrested and charged. He faces two charges - one relating to possessing a replica handgun and another of intending to use an imitation firearm with the intent of resisting arrest. He appeared before Penzance Magistrates Court on March 9 and his case was fast-tracked to the

Crown Court. Shiri was remanded in custody at HMP Exeter, where he was placed on the Prison Hospital Wing. He appeared before the Truro Crown Court on March 16, and was remanded into custody until May 4. Because he has been in custody, he has been unable to make his final appeal to the Home Office and the period he was given to do this has expired. Also, if he is found guilty of the criminal charges, he faces a lengthy prison sentence - then deportation.

To support Shiri, contact IFIR, the National Civil Rights Movement South West, or the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC).

“I am very, very puzzled. In this country they say I am not allowed to kill myself, but on the other hand they want to return me to people who will kill me.”

- Farrokh Shiri, Iranian asylum seeker. HMP Exeter, March 15, 2001

international refugee news

* Arrests

Thirty-three “illegal immigrants” from India, Afghanistan, Iran, Sri Lanka and Turkey were detained near Nova Lhota, 250 kilometres (155 miles) southeast of Prague near the border with Slovakia. The refugees will be returned to Slovakia. (The Associated Press, March 29, 2001)

Slovene police captured a group of 66 “illegal

immigrants” from China, Iran, Iraq and Turkey at a Slovene-Croatian border crossing Obrezje on March 28. They were discovered after one of the customs officers heard a noise coming from the interior of the truck. The immigrants, aged between 18 and 40, will be sent back to Croatia. (STA news agency, Slovenia (via BBC), March 28, 2001)

Greek authorities discovered two Kurdish

stowaways hiding in a container after hearing noises. One was so exhausted he was taken to hospital. Elsewhere, authorities on the island of Chios in the Aegean arrested four Afghans on a boat, which had come from the Turkish mainland. Earlier Bulgarian border officials arrested 36 “illegal immigrants” trying to enter Greece. (Agence France Presse, March 25, 2001)

* Children

In the UK, although asylum-seeking families are supposed to stay in emergency accommodation for a few days only, in practice many remain there for weeks or months. The net result is that an unknown number of children languish in a kind of limbo for weeks or months, living in accommodation designed for a seven-day stay, often going

without books, toys, and educational facilities. (The Guardian (U.K.), March 28, 2001)

*** Deaths**

Police detained 186 would-be immigrants aboard four boats off the southern coast of Spain after a body washed ashore. In a routine search of beaches near the town, police found the body of one man they believe drowned while trying to swim ashore from one of the boats. Once identified, the immigrants will be deported to their country of origin. (The Associated Press, March 28, 2001)

Tommy Klen Mayola, asylum seeker from Zaire, died on February 19. He fled to the UK after all his immediate family was murdered in Zaire. He had been living rough on the streets of London after losing his asylum claim. He was trying to get to the US. Twice he tried to smuggle himself aboard a Boeing jet at Gatwick airport. On the second attempt, he managed to get into the wheel bay of a Boeing. He died because of lack of oxygen and extreme cold. (National Campaign against Deportation)

*** Deportation**

After the Dutch parliament debated whether to deport 9,000 northern Iraqi Kurds seeking asylum in Holland, Germany has decided to "repatriate" 30 Kurdish-descent families to Turkey. (Turkish Daily News, March 29, 2001)

US immigration officials say Musa Fofana is resisting so forcefully that they have been unable to get him on a plane to deport him to Gambia. They are seeking a court order that would allow them to sedate him. But Fofana said he is a citizen of Sierra Leone, not Gambia, and he fled his country. The U.S. Public Health Service has agreed to sedate Fofana and accompany him to the airport, but only under a court order. (The Houston Chronicle, March 22, 2001) Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, has secretly begun a programme to use chartered aircraft to fly thousands of "failed" asylum seekers out of Britain against their will. The measure is seen as the start of the Government's "big push" to remove 30,000 asylum-seekers by the end of the year. (The Independent (U.K.), March 27, 2001)

Fifteen Iraqi Kurds who were expelled by Israel after "sneaking" across the border from Lebanon spent their first night at a U.N. checkpoint in southern Lebanon, refusing to surrender to Lebanese authorities. The eight women, five men and three children under two, were returned by Israeli authorities to the Lebanese side a day after they cut through a border wire and entered Israel. Lebanon has been cracking down on "illegal aliens." Last July, a Lebanese court sentenced 184 "illegal immigrants," mostly Kurds who had come from neighbouring countries, to one year in jail each. (The Associated Press, March 27,

2001)

The Netherlands' government is sending 9,000 Iraqi Kurds, who have applied for asylum there, back to northern Iraq. The Netherlands' Parliament discussed the issue and the majority agreed that the Kurdish refugees should be sent back to northern Iraq, because Kurds have been living there in safety for two years. Asylum applications from northern Iraqi Kurds had not been accepted due to recent developments in northern Iraq. (Turkish Daily News, March 26, 2001)

*** Detention**

Fourteen people believed to be seeking asylum in Australia will be handed over to immigration officers after being found on an Indonesian boat in the Torres Strait. The group is believed to be from the Middle East. This was the 11th boat to be detained off northern Australia so far this year, taking the total number of people who sought to illegally enter Australia in the same period to 1,089. (The Australian Associated Press, March 29)

The Australian federal government rejected a human rights report, which said it should pay \$35,000 damages for its treatment of two Chinese asylum seekers in the Port Hedland detention centre in 1996 and 1997. The immigration department officers had failed to adequately inform them of their right to legal advice on arrival; they were kept in isolation for up to three

months and immigration officers were slow in responding to eventual requests for legal assistance. (The Australian Associated Press, March 28, 2001)

Fourteen people, including five children, remain on the run after escaping from the Villawood detention centre in Sydney's southwest. Searches of about 50 Sydney homes of people who had visited the detainees are continuing in a bid to locate the escapees. The escapees include seven men, two women and five children from the Middle East and Africa. (The Australian Associated Press, March 28, 2001)

In the wake of the escape by 14 asylum seekers imprisoned at Villawood Detention Centre in Australia, the Australian police raided up to 50 homes of refugee rights supporters including Arsalan Nazarian, an activist of the **International Federation of Iranian Refugees - Australia Branch** in their hunt to recapture the asylum seekers. Nazarian whose home was raided while he was out related the intimidation experienced by his flatmates. "The police bashed at the door, totally surprising my flatmates," Nazarian said. "After showing some identification, the police barged in, demanded 'where is Arsalan', and started going through the unit. They tried to get in to a room where a woman flatmate was getting dressed. All this happened while two children aged 6 & 8 looked on in shock and fear."

Nazarian rang the immigration authorities and asked them if they had a warrant to search the premises. "They said the woman in the house had invited them over! "It is already appalling that refugees are locked up like criminals," Nazarian said. "Now those who support refugee rights are also treated as criminals! Is it now illegal to support human rights?" (IFIR, March 28, 2001)

Three "boat people," including a pregnant woman, are set to be released from hospital on Christmas Island after treatment for dehydration. The three were among 22 people stranded at sea for a week on an Indonesian boat in the Indian Ocean after the vessel's engine failed. Those aboard were handed to immigration officers there. (The Australian Associated Press, March 28, 2001)

A Palestinian man has been kept in solitary confinement for eight months in two Australian immigration detention centres. In that time Mohammed Dawood, 27, has had only two visitors, and has tried several times to commit suicide, including an attempt last week to swallow a fluorescent light tube. (The Sydney Morning Herald, March 27, 2001)

*** Legislation / Laws**

Albanian Kosovans whose applications for asylum were stayed pending the progress of a test case were given a legitimate expectation by the Secretary of State for the Home

Department that, if the applicant in the test case succeeded in his contention that his claim should be substantively determined in this country rather than in Germany, their claims would be similarly dealt with. The applicant was an Albanian from Kosovo who claimed asylum as a refugee. The Secretary of State decided that he should be removed to Germany for the substantive determination of his asylum claim. The applicant sought, in December 1998, to challenge that decision by way of judicial review, on the ground that Germany was not a safe third country to which he could be returned. (The Independent (U.K.), March 23, 2001)

A Hungarian government official called it a "regrettable decision" by the French government to grant asylum to a group of Gypsies, or Roma, that left Hungary in July and filed a complaint at the international court of human rights in Strasbourg, France, citing racial harassment in their homeland. (The Associated Press, March 23, 2001)

Asylum seekers are being refused State-funded legal aid at a crucial final stage of their applications for refugee status due to staff shortages at the Refugee Legal Service. The Legal Aid Board has stopped funding legal services for asylum seekers whose appeals against deportations have been rejected and who are seeking to challenge that decision by a judicial review in the High Court. This means asylum-seekers who have lost their appeals against deportations would have to

hire private practitioners, which could cost thousands of pounds. Since last year, asylum-seekers have 14 days in which to seek leave for judicial review, compared with up to six months for non-asylum-seekers. (The Irish Times, March 29, 2001)

*** Living Conditions**

The majority of Spanish citizens agree that the immigrants who arrive in the country should do so under legal conditions - that is, with work contracts, according to the latest poll on immigration by the Centre for Sociological Research. A substantial majority say they believe all people should have freedom to live and work in any place. (RNE Radio 1, Madrid (via BBC), March 28, 2001)

Asylum seekers living in London are served by the Government's far from generous benefits system. A single 18-24 year old receives £28.95 a week; a single person aged 25 or above gets £36.54, and a couple receive £57.37 between them. A child under 16 is due £30.95 and a "child" of 16 or 17 gets £31.75. Only £10 of each benefit tier is in cash. The remainder is given as vouchers, which can only be used in certain shops. If the asylum seeker uses a £5 voucher to buy goods worth £4.79, the change is pocketed by the shop. When 50 charities and other agencies working with asylum-seekers were surveyed recently, 41 said they had come across refugees unable to feed themselves. (The Evening Standard (U.K.), March 21,

2001)

*** Numbers**

The number of asylum applications received by the UK last month was the lowest in 20 months, the Home Office said. There were 5,520 applications, down 13% on January and down nearly 10% on the same period last year. However, the numbers of appeals made by refugees whose initial applications were refused reached its highest-ever level at 10,405, up by more than a fifth on the previous month. The actual number of refugees is significantly higher than these figures because they do not include spouses, children or other dependants who arrive in the UK with the asylum-seeker. (Press Association (U.K.), March 23, 2001)

*** Protests**

Kurdish refugees protesting a Dutch government decision that would force them to leave the country clashed with

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police in The Hague and smashed windows at the Dutch parliament building. Two police officers were injured in the clash, one with a broken jaw and another with broken fingers, and seven protesters were arrested. A number of streetcars in the city were damaged by protesters. About 500 people marched from a park to the parliament building, where they presented parliamentarians with a petition calling on the Dutch government to reverse a decision made last year that declared northern Iraq a safe area for Kurds. The decision would revoke the refugee status of many Kurds currently residing in the Netherlands and force them to leave the country. (Reuters)

Amjad Ksalily an Iranian, 24, is a fugitive from the police and the Department of Immigration. He escaped from Villawood immigration detention centre 13 weeks ago by removing bars and crawling through a stormwater drain. Ksalily is one of 17 people on the run from Villawood who are hiding in and on the outskirts of Sydney. The detention centre had its largest breakout last Monday, when 14 people escaped. He feared that if he were caught he would be returned to Iran and jailed. The result would be the same if he gave himself up, he said. "Living is not too good. For now, at least I am free." (Sydney Morning Herald, April 2, 2001)

Up to 60 "illegal immigrants" have been involved in a "riot" at the

Port Hedland detention centre in Western Australia, which erupted when officers tried to remove some detainees from the centre. "Some individuals were resisting being repatriated and others were protesting their removal," he said. (AAP, March 30)

About 250 Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians, Algerians, Bangladeshis, Africans and many more sat for hours in the hot sun, holding banners and chanting: "We want protection not detention" and "We want freedom". (The West Australian, March 22, 2001)

Refugees, asylum seekers and human rights NGOs joined a protest in Johannesburg, South Africa to express concern at the lack of administrative justice afforded to refugees and asylum seekers. (SAPA (South Africa), March 20, 2001)

*** Racism / Fascism**

A Tory backbencher claimed that he was the victim of political correctness as MPs from all parties denounced his views on immigration. John Townsend said he was right to say that Britain's "homogeneous Anglo-Saxon society" had been "seriously undermined" by mass immigration. In a speech he made almost two weeks ago, the MP for Yorkshire East, who is standing down at the next election, said that immigrants were partly to blame for rising crime rates in some areas. (The Daily Telegraph (U.K.), March 29, 2001)

Politicians were told by the Confederation of British Industry not to "play the immigration card" at the election. CBI director-general voiced particular concerns at political leaders becoming "xenophobic" at election time, saying it "does business a disservice". The Financial Times (U.K.), March 28, 2001)

William Hague's efforts to push the issue of asylum seekers to the forefront of political debate have succeeded with almost all the FT/ Banks Hoggins O'Shea FCB focus group saying the UK is too welcoming to refugees and regulations are too lax. There was also suspicion that asylum seekers received preferential treatment in schools and hospitals with interviewees reporting that refugees were able to jump National Health Service waiting lists and were given better access to council housing. (The Financial Times (U.K.), March 27, 2001)

William Hague came under fire after it emerged that the Tories are planning to screen a party election broadcast, which depicts a group of eastern European immigrants attempting to enter Britain. (The Guardian (U.K.), March 27, 2001)

Austria's far-right Freedom Party suffered big losses today in Vienna's municipal election after campaigning with anti-immigrant slogans and a relentless attack on the leader of the largest association of Austrian Jews. (The New York Times, March 26,

2001)

A new EU survey has found high levels of intolerance in Ireland and Britain. The survey found almost one-fifth of people in this State find the presence of people of another nationality disturbing in their daily lives. Almost a third - 30 per cent - of people in the State believe immigrants are more often involved in crime than are non-immigrants. Greece was the most intolerant state, with 38 per cent disturbed by the presence of other nationalities. Denmark follows with 24 per cent. The same proportion - 17 per cent - in this State and in the UK found the presence of other nationalities disturbing. The EU average was 15 per cent. (The Irish Times, March 21, 2001)

Racism is a threat, which, if unchallenged, could undermine the very fabric of Irish society, the Irish Prime Minister said. (Agence France Presse, March 21, 2001)

Farmers in Australia's isolated far north have urged the government to adopt a tougher stand on boat people in a bid to "prevent foot and mouth disease entering the country." The president of the Pastoralists and Graziers' Association of Western Australia, Barry Court, said he believed the risk of infection from uncontrolled landings by foreign vessels was so great that boats carrying "illegal immigrants" should be turned back. "Why bring them in at all?" Court asked. "They are causing lots of problems when they do get here. It may be harsh, but let's

give them food and water and fuel and send them back and say: 'Look, we just cannot take you, because there are major immigration and disease problems in Australia'." (Agence France Presse, March 20, 2001)

*** Restrictive Measures / Militarisation of Borders**

Greece plans to boost border security and hire more than 1,800 new border guards over the next two years amid fears that clashes in the Balkans may cause a wave of illegal immigration. Greece currently has about 1,200 border officers. (The Associated Press, March 29, 2001)

Senior EU officials arrived for talks with ministers from five Balkan countries on the growing problem of immigrant smuggling, trafficking in women and organized crime in the region. Ministers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Yugoslavia were to attend the talks. (Agence France Presse, March 28, 2001)

A Ukrainian man has become the first person to be charged under Ireland's human trafficking laws enacted last year to deal with smuggling of "illegal

immigrants." Under the Illegal Immigrant (Trafficking Act) Act 2000, those found guilty of smuggling people into the country face a maximum 10-year jail sentence and an unlimited fine. (Agence France Presse, March 27, 2001)

Interior ministers from several European Union countries met to outline joint actions to combat "illegal immigration," money laundering, racism, xenophobia and Internet crimes. During today's meeting, battling immigrant trafficking from China was stressed to be a top priority. (ANSA News Agency, March 26, 2001)

In the past 18 months, about 24,000 undocumented migrants have used Sangatte, France as a jumping-off point in their attempt to reach Britain. In a vast hangar-size building once used for construction of the nearby Channel Tunnel, the French Red Cross provides food and shelter for hundreds of travellers. When night falls, they try to sneak aboard trucks headed for Britain by ferry or on the train, that carries vehicles beneath the channel. Up to 150 refugees are caught nightly by security guards and are returned to the Red Cross centre. At the Sangatte centre, a sign in six languages lists

the perils of attempting a surreptitious crossing: "Very high winds; electrocution risk; squashing risk; mortal danger." However, refugees like Jafari ignore the warning. "What should we do? We do not have passports. And even if we did, nobody would give us visas," he says. (U.S. News and World Report, March 26, 2001)

*** Women**

The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Philip Ruddock, has failed to convince the Federal Court that a Colombian woman threatened by criminals over her murdered brother's drug debts was not entitled to refugee status in Australia. Fenny Sophia Redondo Sarrazola fled Colombia in 1996 to join her husband and children after strangers had gone to her home and demanded she pay her brother's \$ US40,000 (\$ A81,000) debt. Authorities told her to solve the problem herself by disappearing. The brother was murdered in 1995. Mrs Sarrazola's claim of being a refugee was based on her fearing persecution because of her membership of a particular social group, namely, her family, and that Colombia was not willing or able to protect her. The

Refugee Review Tribunal rejected her claim. A single judge of the Federal Court overturned the tribunal's decision. Last week, a Full Court of three judges dismissed the minister's appeal. (The Canberra Times, March 27, 2001)

A federal appeals court significantly broadened the interpretation of grounds for political asylum when it ruled against deporting a Mexican woman who said she would be abused by her father if she were forced to return. The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled that Rosalba Aguirre-Cervantes, 19, should be allowed to remain in the United States because of her past mistreatment, her "well-founded fear" of future abuse, and the fact that Mexico "is unable or unwilling to interfere with that persecution. Aguirre-Cervantes said she had been beaten regularly since infancy by a father who wielded a horsewhip, tree branches, a hose and his fists, and refused to allow her to seek medical treatment. Lawyers said the ruling was a milestone in the long-running effort to expand the right to political asylum for victims of domestic violence in nations where the crime is tolerated or even ignored. (Los Angeles Times, March 22, 2001)

**END DEPORTATION AND
DETENTION NOW!**

CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR IFIR OFFICES AND MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

آدرسها و تلفن های تماس با دفاتر و سازمانهای عضو فدراسیون

AUSTRALIA استرالیا

Kobra Bahrami
Tel: +61 404 865 421
aus@one.net.au

AZERBAIJAN آذربایجان

Baku Clandestine Office باکو
Khosro Mohebbi
PO Box 246
Baku 370,000 Centre
Tel: +99 450 3246259

BELGIUM بلژیک

Brussels Office بروکسل
Hossein Pesh Ehsan
P. B. 1032
Bruxelles 1000, Belgium
Tel: 0478 904 163
E-mail: Hossein@fregates.be

CANADA کانادا

National Toronto Office

Siamak Amjadi تورنتو
1052 Pape Avenue
P.O. Box 60087
Toronto, ONT. M4K 3Z3
Tel: +1 416-526-1027
siamak_amjadi@yahoo.ca

Toronto

Homa Arjomand تورنتو
1052 Pape Avenue
P.O. Box 60087
Toronto, ONT. M4K 3Z3
Tel: +1 416-526-1027
homa_arjomand@hotmail.com

Vancouver Office ونکوور

Fahimeh Sadeghi
PO Box 19640
Vancouver BC V5T 4E7
Tel: +1 604 727-8986
Fax: +1 604 727-0049
federationbc@yahoo.com

London Office لندن

Masood Alvand
PO Box 35131
London, ON N5W 5Z6
Tel: +1 519 681-7826
Hours: M, W and F
m_alvand@yahoo.com

Ottawa Office اتاوا

Davood Aram
New Comer Center
218 Argyle St., Room B6
Ottawa, ON K2P 2H4
Tel: +1 613-232-9634 ext. 448
Fax: +1 613-232-3660
d_aram@hotmail.com

DENMARK دانمارک

Mahmoud Gasvini
Postboks 1234
2300 Kobenhavn S
Denmark
Tel: +45 2049 3098
nahid@mail.danbbs.dk

ENGLAND انگلستان

London Office لندن

Saeed Arman
BM Box 1919
London WCIN 3XX
England
Tel: +44 7931866985
ifiruk@yahoo.com

FINLAND فنلاند

National Vassa Office

Amir Tavakoli واسا
VPN Postrestante
65320 Vaasa
Tel: +358 405821776
tavakoli@hotmail.com

Jyvaskyla Office جیواسکیلا

Jamal Heydari
PL403
40101 Jyvaskyla

Tampere Office تامپیر

Abdol Golparian
Postrestante
33560 Tampere

GERMANY آلمان

National Office

Nasrin Ramazanali
IFIR, Postfach 1947
25409 Pinneberg
Hamburg
Nyosefi27@aol.com
Mobil: +49 0179 1003 423

Berlin Office برلین

Mohsen Satvati
IFIR, Postfach 650149
13301 Berlin
Tel: +49 179 290 1390

Bochum Office بوخوم

Vida Barati
Postfach 150129
44613 Herne
Tel: +49 0173 733 4270
E-mail: VidaBarati@aol.com

Bremen Office برمن

Abdollah Cheragali
IFIR, Postfach 104460
28044 Bremen
Mobil: +49 172 177 7030

Darmstadt Office دارمشتات

Mehrnousch Musawi
Tel: +49 175 740 2582
E-mail: mehnousch@aol.com

Dortmund Office دورتموند

Bahram Nazarinia
IFIR, Postfach 18206
44362 Dortmund
Tel: 0173 733 4270

Essen Office اسن

Nahid Javadinia
IFIR, Postfach 101728
45017 Essen
Tel: +49 172 449 1401

Frankfurt Office فرانکفورت

Shahnaz Moratab

Eckenheimer Land Str. 93
60318 Frankfurt am Main
Tel: +49 69 59 70 524
Mobile: +49 172 971 6227
Friday: 15:00-18:00 Hours
E-mail: Nshmm44@aol.com

Giessen Office گیسسن

Bijan Shahabi
IFIR
Bahnhof Str. 38
35390 Giessen
E-mail: Bsha99@aol.com

Goettingen Office گوتینگن

Ataollah Setayesh
Postfach 2333
37013 Göttingen
E-mail: ataos@gmx.de

Hagen Office هاگن

Amin Soleiman Negad
Postfach 0303
58003 Hagen
Tel: +49 179 41 64 651

35390 Giessen
E-mail: Bsha99@aol.com

Hannover Office هانوفر

Fatemeh Aghai
Tel: +49 179 41 64 651
s.asli@planet-interkom.de

Kassel Office کاسل

Alireza Jamali
IFIR, Mombacher Str. 12
34127 Kassel
Tel/Fax: +49 561 89 46 89
Hours: Mon. - Friday (16 - 18)
Fri. (15:30 - 19:00)

Koeln Office کلن

Ladan Davar
Postfach 10 24 31
50464 Köln
Tel: +49 221 73 70 32
E-mail: Ladann@aol.com
Mobile: +49 172 209 34 31
Hours: Friday 16:30 - 18:30

Leipzig - Zwickau Office لایپزیگ - سویکاو

Mehdi Giasinagad
IFIR, Postfach 101002
04010 Leipzig
Mobil: 0172-47 38 630

Munster Office مونستر

Niaz Gaedi
IFIR, Postfach 3866
48021 Münster
E-mail: Ngaedi@aol.com
Tel: +49 173 27 43 686

Pleetenberg پلیتینبرگ

Dariush Safa
Ohlerstr. 100
Pleetenberg 58840
Tel: +49 179 612 1558

Wolfsburg Office وولزبورگ

Josef Haddadi Shahri
Mobil: +49 173- 80 34 318
Fax: +49 5361 779947

GREECE یونان

Nurush Naurasi

P. O. Box 8120
TK10010
Athens
Greece
Tel: + 30 972347071

HOLLAND هلند

Parisa Pouyandeh
Weena straat 745 آمستردام
3013 AL Rotterdam
Tel: 0622 851 734
Fax: 010 4330 3002

Eindhoven Office ایندوفن

Fatamah Eqdami
Postbus 1312
5602 BH Eindhoven
Tel: +31 627216121

IRAQ عراق

Selima Nih

Soleimaniyeh Office ارپیل

Erbil Clandestine Office
Contact: IFIR Secretariat

PAKISTAN پاکستان

Islamabad Clandestine Office اسلام آباد

Contact: IFIR Secretariat

SWEDEN سوئد

National Office
Esmail Moloodi
IFRS, Box 11103
404 23 Göteborg
Mobile: +46 70 492 0349
Tel: 704920349
E-mail: ifrs@hotmail.com
Sun., Tue., Thu., 18:00 - 20:00

Korosh Khosravi گیمو
Gimo
Flykting Rdet
Box 55
74702 Gimo
Tel: +46 0704 85 67 33
0173-40383

Göteborg Office

Avat Sadeghi یوتبورگ
IFRS, Box 11103
404 23 Göteborg
Tel: +46 739162415

Linköping Office لینشوپینگ

Habib Moradi
IFR, Box 8001
58008 Linköping

Malmö Office مالمو

Fakhri Naderi
IFR Box 17563
20010 Malmö
Tel/Fax: +46 040 611 6109

Stockholm Office استکهلم

Rahim Yazdanparast
IFR, Box 1172
172 24 Sundbyberg
+46 739802311

TURKEY

Clandestine Offices
Contact: IFIR Secretariat

Member Organizations

سازمانهای عضو فدراسیون

C.H.A.I.R. آمریکا - چیر

New York - USA
Sogand Saadat
GPO, P. O. Box 7051
New York, NY 10116
Tel: 1-212-747-1046
Fax: 1-212-425-7260
chairngo@aol.com

Victoria's Iranian-Canadian Centre

کانون ایرانیان کانادایی ویکتوریا
Abbas Mohammadi
VICC-ICA #200

930 Balmoral Road

Victoria, BC V8T 1A8
Canada

Tel: 250-388-4728

Fax: 250-386-4395

vicc22@hotmail.com

IFIR Secretariat

P.O. Box 27236
London N112ZF
England
Tel: (+44) 7730 107 337
Fax: (+44) 208 813 9734
ifir@ukonline.co.uk

Secretariat

Maryam Namazie
Executive Director

Farshad Husseini

Deputy Director

Keyvan Javid, Editor,

Hambastegi Farsi

Other Members:

Siamak Amjadi

Javad Aslani

Mehrnousch Musawi

Ramin Niakan

Nasrin Ramazanali

Amir Tavakoli