



Special Issue

International Federation of Iranian Refugees

Ninth International Conference

‘Asylum after September 11’

Stockholm 16-18 November 2001

Summary of Proceedings

Maryam Namazie



Around 200 delegates, members and guests from seven European countries participated in the International Federation of Iranian Refugees' Ninth International Conference entitled 'Asylum After September 11' in Stockholm, Sweden during 16 to 18 November 2001. [Since the

majority of IFIR branch representatives are refugees and asylum seekers, representatives from Northern Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Greece, Pakistan, and several other countries were unable to attend.] Invited speakers included Mahin Alipour of the Int'l Campaign in Defence of Women's Rights in Iran, Rebwar Arif of the Federation of Iraqi

Refugees, Maria Bexelius of Amnesty International, Anita Dorazio of Asyl Committee, Lars Fransen of the Swedish Immigration Ministry, Sten de Geer of the Swedish Parliamentary Committee on Refugee Issues, Asqar Karimi of the Worker-

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Resolution Number 1 (9/11/2001)

Asylum after Sept. 11

1. After the September 11 catastrophe, a new phase of attacks on human aspirations and rights has begun taking the world to the threshold of one of contemporary history's darkest periods. The September 11 catastrophe has provided the strongest propaganda for justifying the militarization of the international climate and assaulting human freedoms and rights on the one hand and has created a new wave of flight of millions of victims of this new phase on the other. In this political climate, an attack on civil and asylum rights is one of the aims of Western governments.

2. This assault which began with the end of the Cold War

has reached unprecedented heights in recent years. Measures taken by Western government in restricting asylum rights have by and large created such abysmal conditions that only a miniscule percentage of those vast numbers fleeing are successful in gaining refugee status and safer living conditions. The great majority are facing closed borders, dangerous journeys, death, rightlessness, denial of welfare and social rights, a clandestine life, detention and deportation to the persecution they had fled from.

3. The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) accurately

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communist Party of Iran, and Okoth Osewe of 'No-one is Illegal'. Fahimeh Parvaz, a spokesperson from the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in Pakistan was denied a visa by the Swedish authorities and could not make it to the conference.

The first day of the conference opened with a roundtable panel discussion in Swedish and English on 'Asylum After September 11'. Maryam Namazie, the IFIR Executive Director, elaborated on the status of asylum and the increasing assault on asylum rights and critiqued European Union policies specifically towards asylum seekers fleeing Islam-stricken countries. She called on European states to grant them protection and cease support of Islamic states and groups. Maria Bexelius, the Amnesty International representative, presented a report on the inhumane treatment of refugees by the European states and called on them to adhere to their international commitments towards asylum seekers. Okoth Osewe from 'No-one is Illegal' exposed EU policies, condemned attacks on asylum rights and exposed support extended to oppressive and reactionary states. Sten de Geer of the Swedish Parliamentary Committee on Refugee Issues elaborated on problems related to Swedish asylum laws and practices while Lars Fransen of the

Swedish Immigration Ministry defended the Swedish government's record on asylum as one of the most humane towards refugees. Anita Dorazio from Asyl Committee who provided case studies of mistreatment suffered by clandestine asylum seekers condemned the Swedish government's policies. The panel discussion concluded with Maryam Namazie who rebuked the Swedish government's assertions and called for an extensive international effort by all concerned agencies and human and civil rights organisations in defence of the basic and civil rights of asylum seekers. Discussions ensued. Following the panel discussion, the IFIR's International Secretariat held a meeting with city and country branch directors to discuss organisational and campaigning concerns.

The second day of the conference (in Persian) began with a moment of silence for all those killed attempting to reach safety and for those who lost their lives struggling against political Islam. The formal business of the conference began with the adoption of the conference's rules and procedures. Several solidarity messages were read. In her opening speech, Maryam Namazie elaborated on the latest developments regarding asylum and refugee rights and the Islamic Republic of Iran and political Islam in the region and the

world and laid down the future direction and priorities of the IFIR. Mehrnoush Moosavi, the editor of Hambastegi Persian Weekly and a member of the IFIR's International Secretariat, spoke on the IFIR's campaign in Defence of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers; Rebwar Arif, the Executive Director of the Federation of Iraqi Refugees spoke of the status of Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers world-wide. Asqar Karimi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Worker-communist Party of Iran then addressed the conference. Farshad Hoseini, the IFIR's Deputy Executive Director presented the IFIR's report to the conference and a discussion around the report ensued with delegates and participants entering into a discussion over the report. During the next item of business, Mehrnoush Moosavi opened a discussion on IFIR's role as an effective instrument for the defence of asylum rights. This was followed by another contribution by Keyvan Javid, the editor of Hambastegi Persian-Monthly and a member of IFIR's International Secretariat, on IFIR's future direction and priorities. Ladan Davar, the Finance Director and Nasrin Ramzanali, the Organisational Director, added to the discussions. The debate around IFIR's priorities continued into the third day leading to the adoption of a resolution laying down IFIR's priorities and action plan for the future.

The main topic of discussion during the third day of business was focused on 'The Declaration of Refugee Rights'. Farshad Hoseini introduced the Declaration, which was thoroughly debated; due to the complexity and importance of the Declaration, the conference resolved to establish a special commission to look into the issues raised and publish the final document in end-December.

The final item of agenda was a deliberation and discussion around a number of resolutions submitted to the conference. The following were adopted: Resolution on Asylum after September 11; Resolution on Political Islam, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Refugee Phenomenon; Motion in support of the Federation of Iraqi Refugees; and Motion on a salary for the post of IFIR Executive Director. Prior to the close of the conference, Mahin Alipour from the International Campaign in Defence of Women's Rights in Iran and Shiva, and Sara Nakhaie, two clandestine women asylum seekers delivered speeches on the problems and difficulties facing women asylum seekers in Sweden.

Finally, elections for the post of IFIR's Executive Director were held. Maryam Namazie was re-elected by a significant majority. Namazie ended the successful and historical IFIR conference with a closing speech.

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assessed the regressive trend of the period after the end of the Cold War, provided warning on its destructive consequences over people's lives, clearly demonstrated practical ways of resistance and has been at the forefront of the struggle for the defence of human aspirations and asylum rights. As a result of IFIR's struggles, tens of thousands of asylum seekers gained the right to asylum and achieved improved living conditions and social rights. In the current situation,

however, when world public opinion has more extensively grasped the status and dangers of political Islam and Islamic terrorism, and political activities have turned to the Left, IFIR can and must capitalize on this exceptional international situation to begin a wider and more international counterattack. Under the current circumstances, assaults on asylum rights can be pushed back and ended by relying on progressive public opinion worldwide.

Motion Number 1 (9/11/2001)

Executive Director Salary

The Ninth Conference of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) resolves that the IFIR Executive Director receive a monthly salary as a full time employee of the organisation. The Conference also

emphasises that the Executive Director's monthly salary is the first priority of the organisation. In determining this salary, the country where the Executive Director resides will be taken into consideration.

Resolution Number 4 (9/11/2001)

Declaration of Refugee Rights

The Declaration of Refugee Rights was debated at the International Federation of Iranian Refugee's Ninth Conference. While its general framework was agreed to, a special commission was assigned to prepare and issue the Declaration by the end of the year.



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Motion Number 2 (9/11/2001)

In Support of the Federation of Iraqi Refugees' Resolution

The Ninth Conference of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees adopts the Federation of Iraqi Refugees' resolution:

1. We demand the prosecution of Nezar Khezrehji, the first commander of the Iraqi army

during 1987 to 1999 who is currently an asylum seeker in Denmark, in an international tribunal.

2. The Federation of Iraqi Refugees demands an end to the deportation of Iraqi Kurds by European governments. Declaring Iraqi Kurdistan as

safe is a political ploy and a clear attack on refugee rights.

3. The Federation of Iraqi Refugees demands that all Iraqi and Kurdish refugees in Turkey be protected and supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

While exposing the UNHCR's inhuman policies, we emphatically demand an immediate investigation into 50 cases.

The Federation of Iraqi Refugees calls for every freedom loving organisation to support its demands.

Resolution Number 2 (9/11/2001)

The Islamic Republic of Iran, Political Islam and the Refugee Phenomenon

1. Political Islam is that vile movement, which with the assistance of Western governments and reliance on Right wing and reactionary groups of the Middle East and North Africa, has been unleashed on people to confront movements for equality, freedom, modernity and socialism. Western states were the main backers of political Islam and Islamic states. By resorting to the reactionary theory of cultural relativism, internationally, they have justified their Right wing and inhuman policies and created a fortification against the growth of progressive and socialist movements.

2. The Islamic Republic of Iran is one the main pillars of political Islam and Islamic terrorism in the region and the world. The Islamic regime has unconditionally provided political, military and financial support to the vilest Islamic groups and currents in the region to promote its expansion, and has unleashed these groups and currents on the people of the region and the world. From its outset, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been in obvious contradiction with people's daily lives. A single day hasn't passed when it has not felt the threat of being overthrown. The regime's response to people thirsting

for freedom, equality and modernity has been over 100 thousand executions, sexual apartheid, stoning, flogging, imprisonment and reactionary laws.

3. The Islamic Republic of Iran and political Islam are one of the reasons for the flight and displacement of millions. From Palestine to Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and North Africa, people are fleeing religious repression, systematic state misogyny, war, violations of civil rights and Islamic terrorism. More than ever before, September 11 demonstrated to the people of the world the anti-human nature of Islamic terrorism. Today, above all, flight from Islam-stricken societies and the terrorism that governs

must be recognised as a firm reason for asylum.

4. With the collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the growth and expansion of the struggle for the overthrow of a pillar of Islamic terrorism in the region - the Islamic regime of Iran - by the people of Iran, the International Federation of Iranian Refugees stresses the need to further mobilise international solidarity for this struggle. Pressure on Western governments to end their support of the Islamic Republic of Iran and an insistence on prosecuting the heads of this regime for their crimes against humanity must be on the agenda of every progressive human being.

Resolution Number 3 (9/11/2001)

Our Priorities

After September 11 and the escalating war of terrorists, the world could face its darkest period in contemporary history. At the same time, the baring of political Islam's vile nature to the world, the expansive dimensions of people's struggle in Iran to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran - one of the main pillars of Islamic terrorism - and also the turn to the Left on an international scale can prevent this situation from taking hold. In light of this, the responsibilities of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees in

defending human aspirations and asylum rights, and fighting racism, fascism, nationalism, religion and misogyny has become manifold. IFIR is obligated to further the following priorities:

1. Intensify the struggle against the Islamic Republic of Iran, political Islam and Islamic terrorism
2. Relentlessly struggle against the reactionary theory of cultural relativism and to promote universal rights
3. Intensify the relentless struggle against racism, fascism, nationalism, religion, and patriarchy
4. Link the struggle of the

people in the West for civil rights and against USA and NATO terrorism with the struggle of the people in Iran against the Islamic Republic and political Islam.

5. Ensure financial security
6. Increase accessibility to public opinion
7. Become the main base for defending civil and asylum rights
8. Organizational development

Instruments to advance these priorities:

- * Focus on and organise the collection of financial assistance
- * Extend and strengthen protest campaigns

* Organisational expansion and enhancement

* Form an extensive political and practical leadership

* Expand and strengthen publicity and communication tools in English, Persian and local languages

* Invigorate branches in countries neighbouring Iran

* Organise national conferences

* Publicize IFIR's Web site and create local links

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