

HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



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May 5, 2002

Condemn Swiss Government and Red Cross

Join our protest opposing 'return' program for Iranian asylum seekers

On Monday 6 May, the Red Cross in Zurich is holding an informational conference for Iranian asylum seekers on the Swiss government's new 'return program' to Iran. This conference follows meetings between the Islamic regime of Iran and the Swiss government to facilitate the 'return' of Iranians with the assistance of the International Red Cross.

With this program, the Swiss government aims to compel and bribe Iranian asylum seekers to abandon their legitimate claims and return to their persecutors, and to portray Iran as a safe country. The 6 May conference and the Swiss government's 'return' program are a blatant assault on Iranian refugee rights. The International Federation

of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) strongly condemns the Swiss government and its implementing partner, the International Red Cross. Those fleeing the brutal Islamic regime in Iran must be granted asylum and protection from deportations and from all forms of coercive measures to compel 'returning' to Iran.

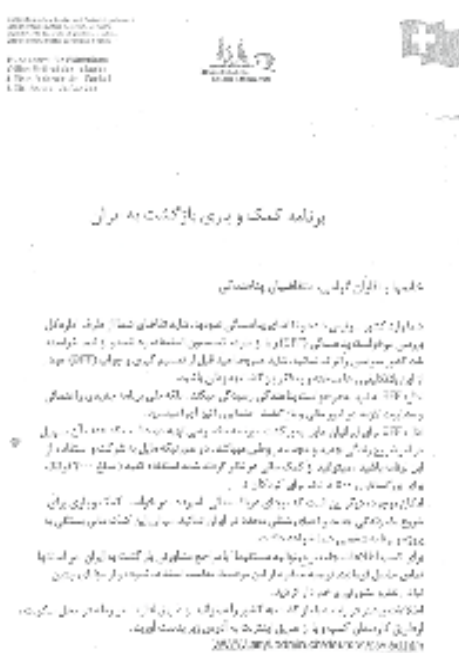
The IFIR-Swiss Branch and other civil rights organisations have called for a demonstration on 6 May at the Red Cross Office in Zurich to expose and oppose this anti-asylum policy. IFIR calls on all groups and individuals to join our demonstration and send letters of protest to the Swiss government and the Red Cross.

JOIN Protest Demonstration at Red Cross Office in Zürich

Monday 6 May, 4:00pm

At: Volkshaus, Gelber Saal, Stauffacherstrasse 60, 8004, Zürich

Swiss Government Letter to Iranian Asylum Seekers on Return to Iran Program



'You have entered Switzerland and are seeking asylum. Your request may be denied by either the Federal Office for Refugees (BFF) or by the Swiss Asylum Review Commission and you will be asked to leave the country. Before the BFF's decision and response, however, you may want to end being in suspension and think of returning to your native country. The BFF does not only conduct asylum determination procedures but also, under a new program, provides necessary assistance and counselling regarding financial matters and possible return. The BFF has begun a special program for Iranians wishing to return, which aims at facilitating a new life and reintegration in your native country. If you are interested in participating and utilizing this program, you can receive financial assistance (2000 Francs for adults and 500 francs for children). Another available resource is that instead of receiving the aforementioned financial assistance, you can ask for assistance to start a new life and job in Iran. The amount of this assistance will depend on your personal plan and project. To acquire more comprehensive information, contact the Cantonal Return to Iran Counselling Services. We suggest that you take advantage of these favourable circumstances, and utilize the exchange of views and counselling.'

Open Letter to the Heads of the Swiss Federation Office for Refugees and Red Cross

Maryam Namazie



I am writing on behalf of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) to express our strongest condemnation of the Swiss government's Return to Iran Program, supported by the Swiss Red Cross.

In the past, the Swiss government has instituted this program for Afghans and Iraqi Kurds as well since

they and Iranians are some of the largest groups seeking protection in Europe from brutal and repressive Islamic regimes and groups. This program is yet another coercive measure used by the Swiss government to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers in Switzerland, deter others from seeking protection, and deem Iran safe for those being 'returned'.

IFIR reiterates that Iran is unsafe for Iranian asylum seekers. Just a few weeks ago, several asylum seekers who 'returned' from Australia were arrested or disappeared. In the past few months, according to Amnesty International, Karim Tuzhali, an asylum seeker deported from Turkey, was executed and Khaled Shoghi who was

also deported from Turkey was sentenced to death by the Islamic regime in Iran. The Islamic regime in Iran continues to be a major abuser of civil rights. The Swiss government cannot implement a program 'returning' or deporting asylum seekers to such conditions. The Swiss government is duty-bound to recognise their right to asylum and protection from persecution.

In 1999, the Swiss government was forced to apologise for its treatment of Jewish refugees at the time of the Holocaust following the publication of a report which stated that the Swiss government had helped the Nazis in achieving their goals

by turning away thousands of Jews trying to escape into Switzerland. Today, the Swiss government is planning to turn away, 'return' and deport thousands of Iranian asylum seekers fleeing the holocaust committed by political Islam.

IFIR calls on the Swiss government to immediately end its return to Iran program and cease and desist from deporting or 'returning' Iranian asylum seekers to persecution. IFIR also calls on the Red Cross to cease its collaboration in sending people back to imprisonment, torture, rightlessness and execution.

We look forward to an immediate resolution to this urgent matter.

The UN Human Rights Commission Fails to Censure Iran

In its annual session, the UN Human Rights Commission failed to censure Iran for the first time in nineteen years. The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) condemns the Human Rights Commission for its decision to exclude one of the most brutal and repressive regimes of contemporary history from its list of violators.

The fact that the UN Human Rights Commission has failed to censure Iran is

fundamentally the response of reactionary Islamic and regional regimes to the fascist policies of the Israeli government and the USA's active support for its policy against the Palestinian people. The USA and Israel's reactionary policy have not only victimised the people of Palestine but also strengthened political Islam and increased the suppression faced by the region's people. The IFIR calls on groups and individuals to condemn the

UN Human Rights Commission's decision. Needless to say, it is the working class and progressive people and social movements that can defend civil rights in Iran and elsewhere - not the UN Human Rights Commission.



Sample Letter of Protest to Swiss Government and Red Cross' 'Return to Iran Program'

Bundesamt für Flüchtlinge (BFF)
 Quellenweg 6
 3003 Bern-Wabern
 Fax: +41 31 325 93 79
 E-mail: info@bff.admin.ch

Sozial-, Rechts- und Rückkehrberatung
 Kronenstrasse 10
 8006 Zürich
 Fax: + 41 1 360 2851
 E-mail: info@srk-zuerich.ch

I/My Organisation strongly condemn(s) the Swiss government's 'Return to Iran Program' for Iranian asylum seekers, supported by the International Red Cross. Iranian asylum seekers have fled a brutal and repressive regime, which grossly violates civil rights. They must be granted asylum and protection from deportation or programs intending to coerce return.

I/We demand an immediate end to the 'Return to Iran Program'. Needless to say, I/we hold the Swiss government and Red Cross responsible for the lives and security of Iranian asylum seekers.

Signed
 Name, E-mail, Date

cc: ifir@ukonline.co.uk

Are Iran and other Middle Eastern Countries Safe for Asylum Seekers?

IFIR - UK Branch Annual Conference on UK Asylum Policy

Speakers: Maryam Namazie, Imran Khan, Suresh Grover, Bruce Burson, Chris Randall, Dashty Jamal, Saeed Arman and others

Friday 24 May 2002

5pm - 10pm
 University of London Union (ULU)
 Room: 3E, Mallet Street
 London WC1E
 In English

Saturday 25 May 2002

10am - 10pm (Music and Food from 6pm onwards)
 The Peel Centre, Percy Circus, London WC1X 9EY
 Nearest Tube: King's Cross
 In Persian

For more information, please contact Saeed Arman on: +44 (0)7931 866985, Email: ifiruk@yahoo.com, www.hambastegi.org.

Iranian Asylum Seekers Face Persecution upon 'Returning' to Iran

Two Iranian asylum seekers who had been refused status by the Australian government have been arrested by the authorities on their return to Iran and ordered to appear before an Islamic tribunal. Since their arrival, they have been exiled by their families, their phones have been tapped, their movements monitored and they had been prevented from obtaining work or a passport. The two returned 'voluntarily' after two years of detention in Woomera.

'I am very afraid.... I don't know what will happen from one day to the next. There is no future for me. My family is under pressure to disown me,' one told *The Age* (29 April 2002) from Iran. The man said he decided to go

home because the psychological pressure of being in detention for almost two years had finally got to him. 'During the riots last year I was badly beaten by the guards and each day people were slashing themselves and trying to kill themselves. I thought nothing can be worse than this, but I was wrong,' he said. A second former detainee said he was interrogated for six hours at Tehran airport on arrival and ordered to appear before an Islamic tribunal. He said he had been asked to justify criticism he had made of the Islamic regime while seeking asylum in Australia. He also faces charges of leaving the country illegally.

Iranians living in Australia on temporary protection visas

are also concerned about the disappearance of two other male detainees who 'returned' to Tehran. They say one man apparently never left the airport where his family had been waiting for him and the other vanished from his home several days after returning.

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) is extremely concerned about the fate of these men and all others who are refouled to or forced to leave for Iran as a result of anti-asylum practices and policies of Western governments. IFIR holds both the Islamic regime of Iran and the Australian government responsible for the lives and security of these men and others. IFIR reiterates its call for an end to

all deportations and coercive measures forcing asylum seekers back to persecution.

Other Recent Publicised Cases of Persecution of Asylum Seekers who have been deported:

According to Amnesty International 6 March 2002 Urgent Action 69/02:

Karim Tuzhali was executed on 24 January 2002 at Mahabad prison, western Iran. He was a former asylum seeker who was forcibly returned on 20 June 1998.

Also, 50-year-old Khaled Shoghi, who was reportedly forcibly returned from Turkey and arrested in 1997, has been sentenced to death.

Send Letter of Protest to Swiss Government and Red Cross' on the 'Return to Iran Program' Page 3

Visit IFIR site for latest international refugee news, urgent actions and press releases:
www.hambastegi.org

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