



## Support Asylum Seekers in Greece

Eight Iranian asylum seekers entering Greece were arrested by the police and imprisoned. In protest to their arrest and mistreatment, the imprisoned asylum seekers have been on hunger strike for the past 9 days. In a telephone conversation with the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR), one of the arrested asylum seekers described the conditions of two of those on hunger strike as extremely critical and confirmed that the

authorities had not made any attempt to transfer them to hospital. The eight are currently in 'Kordolo' prison. According to recent Greek regulation, asylum seekers entering Greece illegally will be subject to arrest, imprisonment and fine, despite the fact that most asylum seekers are forced to flee persecution without proper documents. Those unable to pay the fine are to remain in prison until deported to their countries of origin.

Imprisoning and fining asylum seekers are a travesty of justice and a violation of the rights of asylum seekers. These new regulations in Greece only serve to humiliate and swindle asylum seekers and deny them access to determination procedures.

IFIR calls on all groups and individuals to protest against Greek policy and defend the right to asylum of the eight and others. Write to the

government of Greece and the UNHCR demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the eight as well as all asylum seekers from prison, their immediate transfer to hospital, recognition of their right to asylum, and an end to anti-asylum legislation. Please send your letters to the following addresses: Greek PM: mail@primeminister.gr; Greek commission to the UN: Mission.Greece@itu.ch; UNHCR office in Greece: great@unhcr.ch.

## The USA's 'war on terrorism' is a war on Middle Easterners

Maryam Namazie



Effective November 15, 2002, the USA has issued yet another draconian measure in its so-called 'war against terrorism'. As of that date, all non-immigrant males 16 and older from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan or Libya are required to register with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS)

within a month or face deportation and exclusion from the USA. This 'National Security Entry-Exit Registration System' applies to all those who were last admitted to the United States on or before September 10, 2002, and who will remain in the United States until at least December 16, 2002. Like criminals, these boys and men will be questioned, fingerprinted and photographed and will have to return annually to re-register until further notice. (Asylum seekers and permanent residents are not required to register since the required information is already in their files.)

Clearly, this law is nothing but state racism. It deems criminal and condemns an entire group without any

accusation or evidence. It is no different from, for example, the Israeli government's detention and interrogation of all Palestinian boys and men during the reoccupation and is in line with the same USA policy towards 120 thousand Japanese, 60 percent of whom were US citizens, during World War II. The USA detained these Japanese-Americans in camps and was only impelled to concede that it should not have detained an entire group without any accusation, evidence and trial and to give

the survivors compensation in 1983. The 15 November 2002 law of the USA government is fundamentally the same. It is clear-cut racism under cover of legality.

In addition to being racist, this new law undermines people's rights and recognised norms. Aren't people innocent until proven guilty? This is what Hollywood films propagandize on a daily basis. Mustn't there be an accusation before people can

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be fingerprinted and photographed? Doesn't the accused have the right to a trial, lawyer, and access to the discriminating evidence? Yes, for a while now, these rights and standards haven't been applicable to us 'easterners'. We all know their theory of cultural relativism well. When it comes to Iran, everything is safe and dandy for the people there and it is nothing more than 'their own culture'. When we come to Europe and the US from that living hell, the same rights and laws that have been gained by the working class and people of these countries and belong to all humanity are still not applicable to us. We also know this all too well. Just one summary look at the treatment of these governments of asylum seekers and migrants will clearly reveal the varying standards.

Of course terrorism is a real

concern for you and I and the vast majority of the world's people. After all, it is we who have been and are the victims of USA/NATO and or Islamic terrorism. But what does this law have to do with 'combating terrorism'? Of course all the states mentioned are despotic. There's also no doubt that they are terrorist. After all, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a fundamental pillar of political Islam and Islamic terrorism. But what has this got to do with the tourist or student or person who has a work visa? The USA has more of a relationship with the governments of Iran, Iraq and so on than the people of those countries. The West supported Saddam; the Islamic Republic of Iran was the West's alternative vis-à-vis the rise of the Left in Iran...

We know very well that when it comes to the political-economic interests of these

states, they label some governments as terrorist at certain times to suit their needs. In the past, Iraq, for example, was one of the USA's friends, including when it used chemical weapons against the people of Halabje. Right now, too, an ex-Iraq general Nizar al-Khazraji who is seen by the USA as a possible successor to Saddam Hussein has just been placed under house arrest in Denmark for leading the Anfal Operation against the Kurds in the 80s after a Kurdish refugee recognised him in the street and filed a grievance against him.

But what's even more interesting is that the USA government calls the Islamic regime in Iran terrorist yet just this week allowed Iran's UN envoy Mohammad Javad Zarif, a representative of state terrorism, entry to the USA. This is while every day and every week, we hear news of the return of ordinary

people and the deportation of asylum seekers. Khatami, the regime's president, has gone to NYC several times and NYC's entire police force and law has defended him, while deterring the Islamic regime's victims and opponents. We know full well that their aim is not ending terrorism but ending our rights and protests. We are their real targets.

In any case, no one really believes that the USA government is going to defend our rights and or eradicate terrorism. The USA is itself a source of terrorism and rightlessness. Only we can stop the restrictions on civil rights and eradicate terrorism. If we agree that every advance in people's rights is the result of struggle, then we must agree that it is those same progressive people in the USA and world that can end this insecurity, rightlessness and the war of terrorists.

## Stop Executions in Iran

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) unequivocally condemns the Islamic Republic of Iran and executions in all forms and calls on groups and individuals to exert pressure on the Islamic regime to stop the executions and stonings. We must not allow this regime to kill anymore human beings. International pressure can be instrumental in saving lives. Send your letters of protest to: Mohammad Khatami, E-mail: khatami@president.ir. Address: The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.



### Mansoor Hekmat (1951-2002)

With the bloody suppression of the revolution in Iran and the imposition of an ultra-reactionary life on the people, tens of thousands of human beings, alone and without organisation, fled the Islamic Republic of Iran in search of security and tranquillity. Organising this vast human mass around the most modern and humane advances of humanity, unconditionally defending their right to asylum, and creating an international organisation without taking into consideration people's nationality, religion, sex and or political affiliation became an immediate necessity. Creating the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) was Mansoor Hekmat's response to these conditions. As he said: 'Our entire life story is changing the lives of human beings.'

# Sangatte Camp Finale and the Prospects for Asylum in Calais

**Farshad Husseini**



After three years of debates and clashes between British and French officials, the Sangatte refugee camp has finally been closed to new entrants. Currently, 1,100 asylum seekers are still at this camp and are to be interviewed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) by next April. If they are accepted by the UNHCR, half of them will be sent to Britain and the other half will most likely stay in France. As of April 2003, this camp will be closed down for good.

Sangatte, which was opened by the French Red Cross three years ago to temporarily house asylum seekers in Calais, has been the most disputed asylum camp in Europe. Sangatte is important because of its geopolitical location which is at the main entrance route to Britain. Each month, hundreds of asylum seekers from Iraqi Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Iran and other countries enter Britain via this route to apply for asylum. In fact, the British government's campaign against this camp and their

efforts to close it down began ever since the camp was established. Political and legal challenges between the British and French governments turned into a serious dispute. During the three years of the camp's existence, the British and French media tried hard to depict a grotesque image of the camp and the asylum seekers in it.

They portrayed the camp as the source of all asylum seekers to Britain and argued that there would be a continuous influx of asylum seekers into Britain until this camp was shut down.

The clashes among France and Britain on the issue of Sangatte raises the question of why two governments that are so close in their anti-asylum laws were caught up in a political battle over Sangatte. Clearly, Sangatte has not become a point of contention because of it being a transit point for asylum seekers entering the UK or for it being the source of the asylum flow into Britain. In fact, it has become a point of contention because it was the meeting point in the policy of the two governments' lack of responsibility towards the rights and needs of asylum seekers. Neither government was or is willing to take responsibility for safeguarding and guaranteeing a safe life with basic social rights for asylum seekers. The French government excluded refugee recognition from its policy towards these asylum seekers

once the camp was opened. The British government (which has a role in producing refugees by creating or supporting inhuman and repressive regimes in the world) also refused to secure a decent standard of living for those fleeing persecution. This is the crux of the policy of these two countries. Their refusal to ensure the human rights of the asylum seekers is the key to Sangatte. The other key is in the hands of the media, which created beasts of the asylum seekers. The French and British media worked hard to make people think that these are not legitimate refugees but 'illegal' immigrants making their way to Britain to earn money, without mentioning the reasons or factors for their flight. The media's efforts are to conceal the root cause of the refugee flow not only to France and Britain, but also to Europe as a whole. This is an effort to degrade refugees, their dignity and their human rights. This is the hidden secret of Sangatte.

Sangatte has been shut down. The two sides have kissed and made up and apparently everything seems to have ended well. Could this be called the end of the fate of Sangatte though? Will bringing down the shutters of Sangatte put at ease public opinion from an issue that has been the media's fodder for three years? So can they tell people everything has finished? What happens to the asylum seeker - the asylum seeker who reached and reaches Sangatte with a thousand difficulties and

calamities? Will s/he turn around and go back home upon seeing Sangatte's shutters down? Can they now tell people to remain under threat of terror, death and misery because Sangatte has been shut down? Obviously not. Camps don't create refugees; repressive governments with long records of human rights violations do. Until they exist, so will asylum seekers. The only thing that will change is the miserable lives of these victims in Calais. From now on, people will see asylum seekers sleeping in the streets and in boxes. They will see women and children curled up in the cold. The images we will see on TV will be of the youth, women and children who have died of hunger and the cold near the former Sangatte camp.

Yet the asylum seeker who has fled death and rightlessness will not succumb to death so easily either. Such inhuman policies will actually encourage resistance and strengthen the struggle of asylum seekers. Only one day after Sangatte refused access to new entrants, we witnessed nearly a hundred asylum seekers who occupied the church of Calais and held a sit-in protest. Although, this protest was crushed by the police a few days later, more serious images of the lives and struggles of refugees were demonstrated. What's important is that we mustn't allow the first scenario to be repeated in Calais. We must support the struggle of asylum seekers to protect their rights and not allow them to die on the streets of Calais.

# JOIN IFIR

\* I wish to join the **International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR)** as:

\_\_ Member (£25.00 p.a.)\_\_ Affiliated Group (£100.00 p.a.)

\* I wish to make a donation of: £\_\_ I wish to subscribe to Hambastegi English or Iran Monitor: \_\_ (£50.00 p.a.)

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to the International Federation of Iranian Refugees and mail to P. O. Box 27236, London N11 2ZF.

\* I wish to make a standing order:

To: The Manager of (your Bank) \_\_\_\_\_  
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Please pay the **International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR)** the sum of £\_\_\_\_\_ each month / quarter / year (delete as appropriate) until further notice and debit my Account no: \_\_\_\_\_ Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_ starting on (date): \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

[FOR OFFICE USE ONLY] To: **International Federation of Iranian Refugees**, Lloyds TSB bank plc. Sort Code: 30-99-86, account no. 0057223.

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