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Iraqi and Iranian asylum seekers against war on Iraq!

Maryam Namazie

An attack on Iraq - with or without UN support - will cause a human catastrophe of staggering proportions and must be unequivocally opposed. In the event of a war, the Pentagon plans to drop 300-400 cruise missiles on Iraq on the first day and a further 300-400 on the second day alone. The US government is also considering using chemical and nuclear weapons in Iraq. It is expected that millions may die - even if the bombing is short-lived. Already, as a result of economic sanctions most of Iraq's 24 million people are dependant on food rations; 60 per cent of the population (around 16 million people) rely solely on it. An attack will disrupt the food pipeline causing mass hunger and starvation. 30 per cent of children under five - that is 1.26 million children - will be at risk of death from malnutrition. It is expected that at least 1.45 million refugees and asylum seekers will try to flee and 900,000 people will be newly displaced within Iraq (add that to the millions who have already fled Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Palestine as a result of USA/ NATO and Islamic terrorism). The attack on Iraq will be a catastrophe on the scale of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It will also increase instability in the Middle East, already one of the most explosive regions in the world.

Despite what the USA and UK governments say, the attack on Iraq has nothing to do with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), implementing UN resolutions, fighting terrorism, and liberating the people of Iraq or even oil but has everything to do with a New World Order (NWO) and the USA's attempt to gain complete hegemony in a uni-polar world. More than any other country, the USA itself has used WMD, including nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and depleted uranium in the 1991 Gulf War. Also, the Iraqi government was supported by the West when it used chemical weapons to slaughter the Kurds. Economic sanctions against Iraq (imposed by the UN Security Council 14 years ago) are themselves WMD causing widespread disease, hunger and death. Mr. Halliday, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, who resigned in 1988 in protest said: 'We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple as that ... Five thousand children are dying every

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People's duty towards asylum seekers in event of attack on Iraq

It is clear to all that if the USA attacks Iraq, millions of innocent people will suffer, die or attempt to flee. Reactionary regional governments including the governments of Turkey and Iran have already made it clear that in case of an attack, they will prevent asylum seekers from entering their borders. They have even placed military troops to prohibit an influx of those fleeing. The UNHCR will be no real help either given its role in assisting government in migration control rather than refugee protection since the end of the Cold War.

In light of this, Iraqi asylum seekers can only be truly assisted with the direct intervention of the people of the region. The people of Iran and elsewhere and especially those residing near the Iran-Iraq border must begin to set up facilities to help minimize their suffering. Such actions may include providing shelter, food, medicine and clothes. People must be prepared in advance in order to act promptly if an attack takes place to intervene independently of the Islamic regime of Iran. The people of Iran can show the world that they are in solidarity with the Iraqi people. We must not forget that many people in the West have done the same for Iranian asylum seekers - that is to stand up against the anti-asylum policies of Western governments.

At the same time, pressure must be placed upon the Islamic regime of Iran to open its borders to all Iraqi asylum seekers. Of course we must continue to resist the USA's inhuman and bloody attack but we must also ensure that if it occurs, its victims are given the full support they deserve.

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month...' He also said the sanctions 'satisfies the definition of genocide: a deliberate policy that has effectively killed well over a million individuals, children and adults.' Though food and medicines are supposedly exempt from the sanctions, the Sanctions Committee has often vetoed and or delayed requests for baby food, agricultural equipment, heart and cancer drugs, oxygen tents, X-ray machines, ambulances, vacuum flasks, cleaning materials and so on.

The attack on Iraq is not about implementing UN resolutions either since many have not complied with such resolutions including Israel on an ongoing basis in regards to the Palestinian territories!

The attack is also not about fighting terrorism. The USA and West have themselves supported and encouraged Islamic terrorism. They have supported the Islamic regime in Iran, a pillar of political Islam in the region, and other Islamic groups including in the past the Taliban vis-à-vis the Eastern bloc and the rise of the Left in for example Iran. The USA and NATO's indiscriminate bombing and economic sanctions are also themselves one pole of terrorism in the world. Support for the Israeli government and its occupation of Palestine is yet another form of terrorism and supports Israeli terrorism as well as encourages Islamic terrorism.

The attack on Iraq is not about the 'morality' of liberating the people of Iraq; on this, one can only state that it is surely perverse to liberate people by slaughtering them! We know this is not the case since the USA has lined up well-known war criminals to take over a post-Saddam Iraq (see the long list who attended the London 'opposition' conference). So much for their concern for the Iraqi people's rights! The people in Iraq do not want the despotic and reactionary regime of Saddam Hussein but they also don't want any US-backed, ethnocentric-Islamic reactionary opposition. It is the people of Iraq who must choose their own political system in a secure and free environment.

The attack is also not about oil; there's no point in owning more oil if you don't want to sell it. The USA also effectively controls Iraqi oil through the so-called 'oil for food programme' already.

What's clear is that this attack on Iraq is yet another attempt by the USA to establish what Bush Sr. coined as the New World Order. In an uncertain post-Cold war era, the USA wants to take advantage of the 11 September tragedy to establish its domination and a uni-polar world. It wants to change the norms of international relations. **If this attack goes ahead, the USA will bomb the world into barbarity and unbridled terrorism. The war must be stopped by the millions of civilised humanity who have come and continue to come to the fore.**

No to another Hiroshima in Iraq!

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.'

A meeting on stoning and execution in Iran at the House of Commons in the UK

On Tuesday 11 February, a meeting on stoning and executions in Iran was held at the UK House of Commons. At this meeting, in which several Members of Parliament and members of the public attended, Mina Ahadi, Coordinator of the International Committee against Stoning and Maryam Namazie, Coordinator of the Campaign against Executions in Iran, spoke about the brutal law of stoning and escalating executions in Iran.

The speakers highlighted the Islamic regime of Iran's serious and gross violations of rights and urged MPs to exert pressure on the UK government to end political relations with the regime until the abolishment of stoning and an end to executions.

In her speech, Mina Ahadi said: 'while Amnesty International has collected one and a half million signatures for a petition against stoning, the British government has not uttered even a single word of criticism of stoning - let alone condemn it. Tony Blair and Jack Straw have made no protests whatsoever to the Iranian government against stoning or other horrendous violations of human rights in Iran. Indeed, they have shown no interest at all. The policy of the European governments and the EU towards the Islamic Republic of Iran has been one of appeasement and support – something which we and other human rights' organisations have strongly condemned.' She added that while the Islamic regime of Iran has retreated as a result of the International Committee against Stoning's pressure and temporarily suspended stoning, the cancellation of the stoning law depends on continuing this struggle and exposing this issue internationally.

In her speech, Maryam Namazie said: 'Furthering relations with the Islamic regime, including recent meetings between Tony Blair, Jack Straw and Donald Anderson with the regime's foreign minister, Kamal Kharazzi, are deplorable. They condone, maintain and justify the escalating executions and human rights violations in Iran. The UK and EU have been 'dialoguing' with the Islamic regime for many years; nothing has fundamentally changed. In fact, the human rights situation has worsened. Clearly, dialogues and bilateral relations do not change brutal practices and regimes. Could Nazi Germany or the former apartheid regime of South Africa be made to change their policies and practices via talks and dialogue? An end to political links with a repressive regime can exert far more influence and pressure in defence of people's rights, particularly in Iran where there is widespread protest and opposition to this regime and a movement for its ouster. The breaking of political ties will support rights and the people in Iran rather than the regime.'

John McDonnell, the MP chairing the meeting, stated that there was much support amongst MP's against stoning and executions in Iran. He announced that he and several others will carry out a number of actions to exert pressure on the UK government in order to condemn the Islamic regime of Iran.

International Committee against Stoning
Campaign against Executions in Iran
February 14, 2003

Why we are refugees

Wednesday January 29, 2003
The Guardian
Letters
www.guardian.co.uk/letters/story/0,3604,884210,00.html

We refugees and exiles are writing to raise our concerns about the prospect of Britain withdrawing from the European convention on human rights if asylum "reforms fail to stem the flow of unfounded asylum seekers" (Blair warning on rights treaty, January 27). How can Mr Blair know asylum seekers are unfounded without first allowing them access to a fair determination procedure? Calling them "unfounded" is part of the propaganda war to justify inhuman asylum policies. In fact, most asylum seekers are genuine; they have been fleeing the same countries for decades, including Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, the Sudan, Somalia - countries we have fled from. That asylum seekers are no longer deemed "genuine" has nothing to do with changed repressive situations, but with the changed position of the British and EU governments with regard to asylum seekers and refugees in the post-cold war era.

Asylum seekers are being deemed security risks to justify these policies when most are fleeing repressive states and movements - often supported by the UK and EU - and US-led terrorism such as economic sanctions and bombings. Even if a minuscule number of terrorists are found among the vast number of asylum seekers, they can't be generalised, just as Dr Harold Shipman cannot be generalised to label all British doctors as murderers.

Withdrawing from the convention won't enhance security; rather, diminished rights will make it more unsafe for all of us living in Britain.

Maryam Namazie, Abdinali Gorod, Abdellatife Ismail, and 12 others
London

Political Prisoner executed by Islamic regime

Sassan al Kanaan, a 37 year old political prisoner, was hanged on 19 January 2003 in Sanandaj, Iranian Kurdistan by the Islamic Republic of Iran. When Al Kanaan's sentence was issued, the *Campaign against Executions in Iran* raised his case with the European Commission External Relations Directorate-General and the UK parliament as well as in public opinion in an effort to stop his execution. His brother participated in a rally organised by our *Campaign* and the *International Committee against Stoning* on January 14 at the EC in Brussels. Much local and international effort took place, including his mother's visit of the UN's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's delegation visiting Iran, to save his life. Despite this the regime hastened his execution and threatened his mother to bury him without any commotion so as to prevent protests during his memorial ceremony.

The *Campaign* is outraged at Al Kanaan's execution and calls on the international community and public opinion to condemn the Islamic regime of Iran for his execution.

The *Campaign against Executions in Iran* unequivocally opposes capital punishment and calls for its abolition in all countries. The Campaign aims to:

* mobilise international protest against and condemnation of executions in Iran
* galvanise public pressure against the Islamic regime in Iran and its Western government supporters
* save the lives of those under execution sentences
* stop executions in Iran

Updates

* Several Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey and Greece have recently committed suicide, namely Hadi Shahbazi, Mohammad Hussein Tamana, Kamran Farmandeh, Javad Azimi and Shahram Zarkani because of their closed case files by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and their threat of being deported back to Iran where they feared persecution. IFIR once again holds the UNHCR responsible for these deaths. It continues to call on asylum seekers not to commit suicide or harm themselves in any way but to resist UNHCR and anti-asylum policies via positive and organised means.
* Farhad Alipour has been on hunger strike since 31 January in a detention centre in Malmo, Sweden in opposition to his deportation to Iran by the Swedish government. He can hardly speak and is in critical condition. IFIR has demanded that the Swedish authorities release him immediately and grant his protection.

Editor: Maryam Namazie
Translators: Laili Panahi
E-mail: ifir@ukonline.co.uk
Tel: +44 7730 107 337; **Fax:** +44 8701351303
P.O. Box 27236, London N11 2ZF, England
www.hambastegi.org