

unhcr violates refugee rights imprisoned for “crime” of solidarity

Lilofer Tahir Qadir (case number T-1290), an Iraqi woman asylum seeker in Turkey who requested living assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was referred to an organisation in Istanbul since the UN does not provide any assistance to refugees awaiting a refugee status determination. While in Istanbul, Lilofer's six-year old daughter, Aisha Khalid Yussif Ameer, was raped. Despite a medical report and Lilofer's request for intervention, the UNHCR has taken no action. In another indignity, on January 25, when Diyar Mustafa Kareem, case number M-59211, stabbed herself in the chest in front of the UNHCR office upon receiving information that her

casefile has been closed, the UNHCR had her and her two children arrested. Diyar feared being refouled to Iraqi Kurdistan.

IFIR calls on groups and individuals to send letters of protest to the UNHCR in Turkey demanding their provision of adequate living assistance to refugee claimants, including to Lilofer Tahir Qadir; providing legal and medical support to Aisha Khalid Yussif; and granting Lilofer and Diyar Mustafa Kareem and other women fleeing sex-based persecution in Islamist societies protection. Protest letters can be sent to: UNHCR, fax: 0090-312-438-2702, e-mail: turan@unhcr.ch.

On January 30, Pascal Marchand, a member of the Collective against Expulsions, was imprisoned at Vorst prison in Brussels, Belgium. He was sentenced to one year imprisonment for “assault and grievous bodily harm,” “attempt to rob,” and “destruction of property.” In fact, Marchand was arrested for demonstrating against the collective expulsion of Roma gypsies on October 3, 1999. The police had even marked their skin before deporting them. He is appealing the court decision.

The authorities have kept Marchand in solitary confine-

ment and beaten him on a number of occasions. The Collective against Expulsions has been subjected to numerous acts of intimidation by judicial and police authorities and many of its members remain charged. The Collective has called for civil disobedience given the Belgian government's criminalisation of the social movement for the undocumented. IFIR supports its call for the liberation of Marchand, that all charges are dropped, and that the political character of his sentence be recognised. For more information and to support Marchand, contact ccl@altern.org.

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Editorial

time to fight back

by javad aslani

Jack Straw and his European counterparts are busy rallying support for their draconian anti-asylum policies. Amidst a barrage of poisonous propaganda and a constant war of words against the most vulnerable people in our communities, public opinion is being prepared to pave the way for yet another piece of legislation to further curtail the right to asylum.

Sound bites like “illegal,” “bogus,” “economic migrants,” “human smugglers” and “cheats” are unashamedly used in a coordinated manner by government officials to cre-

ate an anti-asylum seekers’ environment and instigate hatred and anxiety amongst the population at large.

Of course, the UK general election is looming. The Labour party must not be seen as being “soft” on asylum. The Labour government has not only successfully beaten off the Tories’ advances in this battleground but is becoming the champion of the European war against asylum seekers.

We, refugees and asylum seekers, have had no illusion

about the European governments’ attitudes towards asylum seekers. The French, German, Dutch, British, Danish, Swedish, Belgian ... governments have for some time put aside any pretence of respecting the right to asylum.

European governments are bent on destroying the right to asylum. They have organised themselves and have strengthened their cooperation. If successful, no asylum seeker will be able to put foot on the shores of fortress Europe, unless opposed by a mass

movement organised by refugees and asylum seekers, progressive individuals and institutions, trade unions and labour activists.

European governments aim to put the last nail in the asylum rights’ coffin.

It is time to fight back!

(picture below courtesy of the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism)



iranians at risk of deportation from australia

Mojteba Hassanpour, Hassan Gohari and Bahman Karimi, three Iranian asylum seekers who had been detained in Curtin detention centre in Perth, Australia for over a year, are facing deportation to Iran. In an attempt to facilitate their refoulement, the Australian government has transferred them to an unknown location. Recently another Iranian asylum seeker, Farshchian, was similarly deported back to persecution. The three were never given attorneys to assist in defending their claims. The IFIR – Australian Branch and the

Free the Refugees Campaign (FRC) have called for the cancellation of their deportation and for their immediate release and their recognition as refugees.

In continuation of their actions against the anti-asylum policies of the Australian government, IFIR Australia and FRC are organising a public meeting on February 27 at 7pm at the Parramatta Town Hall against detention. For more information on the public meeting, contact IFIR Australia director, Kobra Bahrami, aus@one.net.au.

against racism in slovenia

In Slovenia, there is a new wave of intolerance and xenophobia. The state with its politics and the media's irresponsible coverage of the problem are behind this wave. An open hunt on immigrants at the border has already taken its first victim; an Iranian was recently killed by the Slovenian police. To combat intolerance, xenophobia, racism and fascism, the Office for Interventions is organising a manifestation and march in Ljubljana on February 21, 2001 at 14.00 starting in "Zvezda" Park in Ljubljana. For more information, syhapa@mail.ljudmila.org.

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international refugee news

* Deaths

Last month, Ramin Khaleghi killed himself – a week after his asylum claim was rejected. Like many other Iranian refugees, Ramin was a victim of torture, but 92 percent of them are routinely turned away. **“Asylum seekers such as Ramin are left with no option but to flee to Europe,” says Maryam Namazie of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees. “Upon arrival they are detained, dispersed, housed in degrading conditions,**

deprived by the voucher system and eventually deported.” (The Big Issue, February 12-18, 2001)

The University of Houston released a study that links a rise in migrant deaths along the US - Mexico border with stricter U.S. immigration policies contributing to an increase in immigrant deaths from 231 in 1999 to 369 in 2000. (The Fort Worth Star-Telegram, February 15, 2001)

A Denver, US police officer who shot to death a Salva-

doran immigrant in 1996 lied on a report about the incident, according to photographic evidence uncovered by an investigation. The police officer will face “serious consequences” if the allegations are proven, Denver District Attorney said. (Agencia EFE, February 10, 2001)

Five Guatemalans were killed when a bus chartered by Mexican immigration officials to return 24 detained immigrants to Guatemala overturned in Tierra Nueva municipality. Three of the

Guatemalans were pronounced dead at the scene and two others died from their injuries at nearby hospitals. (Agencia EFE, February 6, 2001)

Three Austrian policemen who were suspended after a Nigerian asylum seeker died in their custody are to return to work, although an inquiry into their role in his death continues. The 25-year-old Marcus Omofuma died on May 1, 1999 after the police bound and gagged him on board a flight to the Bulgarian

capital Sofia, from where he was to be sent back to Nigeria. (Agence France Presse, February 5, 2001)

Iranian Afshin Molagan [**IFIR representative in Leicester**] joined a demonstration against the asylum system this weekend in Leicester. He was also marching for Shokrolah Khaleghi, who was found dead at the International Hotel Leicester, on January 18. Afshin says his 27-year-old friend - known as Ramin - had given up after his claim for asylum had been turned down and killed himself. (Leicester Mercury, February 5, 2001)

* **Deportation**

The Irish Minister for Justice O'Donoghue said he has made 1,132 deportation orders since the Immigration Act came into force in July 1999, and 222 people were deported since then - up until last week. Six people were deported in 1999, 187 last year and 29 this year until earlier this month. O'Donoghue said a further 22 people had left before deportation orders

could be enforced. (The Irish Times, February 15, 2001)

The UK government pledged the year ahead would see the biggest mass deportation of "bogus" refugees in British history. The Government was determined to achieve 30,000 "removals" in the 12 months beginning in April - a three-fold rise on the current rate. The Government line came after the Immigration Service staff union claimed the asylum system was falling apart and that around a dozen people a month were forcibly deported. (The Express (UK), February 14, 2001)

A Greek policeman and bus driver returning Albanian "illegal immigrants" caught in Athens back to Kakavija, Albania will be tried for beating an Albanian girl. During 2000, Albanian police revealed 20 cases of maltreatment against Albanian immigrants. (ATA news agency (Tirana, Greece), February 14, 2001)

Turkish security forces detained 106 migrants who had

been pushed across the border by Greek authorities after trying to enter Greek territory. They included Azeris, Afghans, Pakistanis, Algerians, Palestinians, Iranians, Iraqis and Syrians. (Reuters, February 12, 2001)

The Australian Government will not make special arrangements for pregnant "illegal immigrants," despite recommendations from a Senate inquiry. Issues considered by the inquiry included the case of a Chinese woman who was forced to undergo an abortion after being returned. The committee's calls for an inquiry into the use of sedation and restraint in detention centres have also been rejected. (The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 8, 2001)

Greek police searched for a group of 30 Iraqi Kurds and Pakistanis who escaped after smashing windows of a police bus while being deported to Turkey. Police managed to capture 25. Tens of thousands of people from Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East "sneak" into to Euro-

pean Union member Greece each year. If caught, most face deportation to the last country they passed through before entering Greece. (The Associated Press, February 7, 2001)

A two-day strike called by the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union to pressurise the provincial and the federal governments to deport some 50,000 Bangladeshi refugees settled in the state since 1964 paralysed life in India's north-east state of Arunachal Pradesh. (Agence France Presse, February 7, 2001)

* **Detention**

After 1996, asylum seekers landing in US airports are automatically jailed pending the outcome of their cases. They are strip-searched, shackled, and parcelled out to a network of 900 jails and detention centres nationwide. Locally, they are housed at the 300-bed Elizabeth Detention Centre in Elizabeth, N.J., and the Wackenhut, which houses up to 200 people. Wackenhut Corrections Corp. is a Florida-based com-



pany that runs 55 jails in the U.S. and around the world. The firm has a five-year, \$49 million contract with the INS to operate the jail in Queens. In interviews, a dozen present and former INS detainees tell stories of grown men scrawling words on the walls with their own faeces, and of people staging hunger strikes - including one started last week at Wackenhut. They also tell stories of detainees trying unsuccessfully to take their own lives by hanging with threadbare sheets or swallowing analgesics and liquid detergent. (NY Daily News, February 16, 2001)

“Illegal immigrants” who have not committed a crime are being held in jails because of management and behavioural problems at Australian Department of Immigration detention centres. The State Government told the Minister for Immigration, Ruddock, that it opposes the practice and will stop taking detainees unless the Federal Government proves they should be jailed. (The Sydney Morning Herald, February 13, 2001)

Australasian Correctional Management has placed an advertisement in major papers seeking a new centre manager for the Woomera Detention Centre in Australia. The Centre’s existing manager was called to Sydney in December to respond to allegations of sexual abuse at the centre. The position has a salary package of up to \$100,000. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 10, 2001)

The UK Home Office faces a compensation bill, which could reach millions of pounds for wrongly jailing asylum seekers for travelling on false passports. Thousands were imprisoned between 1994 and 1999, when the high court ruled that jailing asylum seekers for travelling on false documents breached the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees. (The Guardian (UK), February 7, 2001)

*** Legislation / Laws**

A Canadian Supreme Court ruling protecting two Canadians from extradition to face the death penalty in the United States could have profound implications for the way the federal government deals with deportees and refugee claimants, legal observers predict. In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ordered Ottawa to seek and receive assurances Atif Rafay and Glen Burns will not face capital punishment if they are extradited to the state of Washington to stand trial for 1994 murders. (National Post - Canada, February 16, 2001)

The United Nations refugee agency urged Italy to rapidly adopt legislation on asylum seekers, otherwise, the legislation which has been pending for four years could face further years of delay. Italy has become one of Europe’s major destinations for refugees, but still has no law on dealing with them. (The Associated Press, February 16, 2001)

Korea has been under inter-

national criticism for not granting refugee status to asylum seekers since it became a signatory of the International Convention on Refugees in 1992. For the first time, the government recognized an Ethiopian asylum seeker as refugee. According to a local activist, the government should improve its harsh refugee recognition system including scrapping the 60-day limit which stipulates that asylum seekers can only apply for refugee status within their first 60 days and the one week to appeal a government rejection. (The Korea Herald, February 16, 2001)

Enforcement of immigration control, which involved the removal of a child settled in a good school after her parents’ application to remain in the United Kingdom had been refused was not a breach of child’s right to education under the European Convention on Human Rights. (The Times (UK), February 13, 2001)

At last week’s Franco-British summit in Cahors, it was agreed that immigration officials from both countries would travel on Eurostar trains between Paris and London via Calais, inspecting papers before and during journeys. Up to 400 immigrants a month have been entering Britain illegally by Eurostar. (The Guardian (UK), February 13, 2001)

The Danish government is divided over whether Denmark should follow the European Union’s common rules for asylum seekers even

though they may not be ideal or retain the exception it has on legal issues and asylum. (The Nordic Business Report, February 12, 2001)

Two days of talks on human trafficking ended with European Union leaders calling for common laws and penalties against it. Tens of thousands of victims of human trafficking risk their lives, are forced to have sex for money and must labour in filthy factories for years—all for passage out of the poverty of their home countries. EU Justice Commissioner Antonio Vitorino said the 15 EU nations should agree by July on common sanctions of a minimum 6-year sentence for traffickers. Bodstroem also said he wants to standardize Europe’s laws against trafficking in humans and the sexual exploitation of children. (The Associated Press, February 11, 2001)

Human Rights Watch condemned asylum proposals put forward by UK Home Secretary Jack Straw. Straw’s plan, which is being discussed at an EU ministers’ meeting in Stockholm, calls for a complete overhaul of the 50-year-old international refugee regime. “Straw’s proposal is a major step backwards for refugee protection and contrary to international legal norms,” said Reilly. “Such a rigid rule could seriously compromise the security of refugees.” “Many refugees are simply not able to find safety in neighbouring countries in their region of origin.” “The right to seek and enjoy asylum is an individual right.

Governments cannot make a blanket decision to exclude refugees simply on the basis of their country of origin." "Such a proposal could result in returning refugees to countries where they could face persecution, torture, and even death-without serious consideration of their asylum claim." (HRW, 9 February 2001)

French immigration officials are to be based at Waterloo station and British officials will do the same at Lille and the Gare du Nord in Paris in a tightening of controls on "illegal immigrants" under a new deal between UK and France. French President Chirac will need to bring in legislation in order for it to take place. (The Evening Standard (UK), February 9, 2001)

An agreed list of countries from which asylum applications would automatically be rejected was proposed by Jack Straw to try to curb refugees arriving in Britain. The Home Secretary questioned whether the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees, which obliges countries to offer sanctuary to people who claim "a well-founded fear of persecution," was any longer effective or relevant. He suggested that a three-tier system be inaugurated, identifying countries as "safe", "intermediate" or "repressive." Asylum seekers from countries in the first category would not be considered. Applications from intermediate nations would carry a presumption of safety. Refugees from the third group, which could include Afghanistan or Iraq, would have to apply to enter

the EU from outside, but a quota system would ensure they were shared around. (The Daily Telegraph, February 8, 2001)

Hauliers who try to bring "illegal immigrants" into Spain - by land, sea or air - and are discovered at the border will have "to take responsibility for them" and return them to their country according to draft regulation of the Aliens Law. The government is to reinforce surveillance at border posts to check the entry of immigrants without documents. (ABC web site (Madrid), February 8, 2001)

Britain was accused of ducking its responsibilities to refugees as the Home Secretary said that people fleeing war and persecution should be encouraged to remain in countries close to the ones they had left behind. Habib Rahman, chief executive of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, said: "This is just shifting Britain's responsibilities somewhere outside. It is creating fortress Europe and fortress Britain. Developing countries are already carrying the largest burden and this idea will destabilise them even further." Of the world's 22 million displaced people, only three million are living in EU countries, according to the UNHCR. Straw suggested that EU countries should establish "resettlement programmes." A spokesman for the UNHCR said such an idea risked turning into a "cherry-picking" programme where EU countries selected people according to their skills and qualifications rather than their right to

asylum. (The Independent (UK), February 7, 2001)

Over 30,000 "illegal immigrants" have started a process of regularization in order to obtain Portuguese residence permits since January 22, 2001, when the alterations to the law on immigration came into force. 3,343 residence permits have already been granted. (RDP Antena 1 radio, Lisbon (Portugal), February 6, 2001)

*** Living Conditions**

The Australian federal government today accused Labour states of encouraging "illegal immigration" by offering financial support for asylum seekers living in the local community. The Tasmanian government joined Victoria in offering support for unauthorised arrivals released from immigration detention on Temporary Protection Visas. The minister said Labour was encouraging more "illegal arrivals." (The Australian Associated Press, February 14, 2001)

Workers at the Red Cross refugee centre in Sangatte outside Calais said minor clashes between frustrated refugees had become increasingly common as crossing the Channel had become tougher. "This place was originally opened in 1999 for 200 people. Right now we have 849," Michel Derr, the manager of the centre, said. "We have reached a critical level of overcrowding and it's generating enormous tension." Some 25,000 "illegal immigrants" were caught trying to cross

the Channel at Calais last year, with 1,700 cases reported last month. (The Guardian (UK), February 13, 2001)

Temporary Protection Visa refugees deposited in Melbourne from immigration centres as far away as Western Australia's Curtin detention centre are reportedly given nothing but an envelope containing Centrelink, Medicare and bank forms and a tourist map of the city. Often they have to stay in backpacker accommodation or rooming houses and face eviction when they cannot pay the bills. (The Age, February 12, 2001)

An Iraqi family who fled persecution was recently released from detention and into the Victorian community on Temporary Protection Visas. This was a freedom of sorts, but it is hard to feel free when you cannot speak the language (which means you cannot get a job) and when the Federal Government refuses to pay for settlement services or to help find a place to live. (The Age, February 12, 2001)

*** Myths**

Canadian Immigration Minister said Canada would lift the upper target range of immigrants to 235,000 a year in 2002, from the present 225,000 a year. "A successful immigration program like ours is not just about numbers on a page, but rather about hard-working people and their families who come here from the world over to help build our economy, our society and our culture," she said. The top 10 countries sending im-

migrants to Canada in 2000 were: China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, United States, Iran (5,598), Yugoslavia, and Britain. (Reuters, February 8, 2001)

The number of undocumented workers in the United States could be several million more than federal officials have previously estimated, according to a new analysis of Census Bureau data and Labour Department records. Most of the undocumented workers found employment in the new economy, and their availability may even have helped fuel it, according to a study by economists at Northeastern University. (Boston Globe, February 6, 2001)

*** Protests**

A US immigrant rights group gave California officials 30 days to break the police department's ties to the Immigration and Naturalization Service or run the risk of civil disobedience by thousands of Latinos. (Los Angeles Times, February 14, 2001)

Fifteen people were injured, two seriously, in a "riot" between asylum seekers and smugglers last night at a Red Cross camp for refugees seeking asylum in Britain. French riot police "quelled" the fighting after more than an hour of running battles outside the centre, a converted Channel Tunnel warehouse, at Sangatte near Calais. (The Independent (UK), February 12, 2001)

Six-year-old Zahraa Al-

Khaffaf was in the bath when her father, Haydar, stopped and listened closely to the words she was singing. "We are not criminals. We are refugees, and we want our freedom." It was a chant the child had heard during 11 months spent in Australia's immigration centres - South Australia's Woomera, Sydney's Villawood and Melbourne's Maribyrnong. The family, who fled the persecution of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, was recently released from detention and into the Victorian community on temporary protection visas. (The Age, February 12, 2001)

Thousands of people have taken to the streets of Madrid and Valencia to protest against Spain's tough new law on immigration. The law, which came into effect last month, could lead to tens of thousands of "illegal immigrants" being expelled from Spain. Between 7,000 and 10,000 immigrants from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe marched through the centre of Madrid demanding work and residency papers in Spain. About 3,500 marched in the eastern city of Valencia. Labour unions, left-wing politicians, intellectuals and popular figures from the Spanish cinema and music world joined Sunday's march to support the immigrants' plea for papers. (British Broadcasting Corporation, February 11, 2001)

*** Racism / Fascism**

A UK judge was criticised after claiming that the murder of an Indonesian-born man

who had been called "nigger" before being kicked and beaten was not racially motivated. Jan Pasalbessy, 48, was beaten by a gang of four while his 14-year-old stepdaughter begged them to stop outside the Royal Gwent hospital in Newport in June 12 in what police described as a racial attack. (The Guardian (UK), February 16, 2001)

Right-wing Pauline Hanson, leader of the One Nation political party, urged the Australian government to stem the tide of "illegal immigrants" by sending arrivals straight back to their home countries. Hanson accused the mostly Middle Eastern "illegal immigrants" of being "disease-ridden queue-jumpers who cost the taxpayer dearly by falsely claiming refugee status." (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 12, 2001)

A poll of 1,106 Germans aged between 14 and 25 interviewed shows that more than a third believe Adolf Hitler's government had "a good side." Among those aged 14-16 in the former East Germany, 15 percent thought the Nazi regime had been a "good idea." The figures will be published in full with government statistics showing a 39 percent rise in violent crimes against foreigners last year. 13,753 right wing extremist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic acts were recorded in the first 11 months of last year compared with 9,456 in the same period in 1999. The number of violent acts against foreigners was 553 compared with 397. (The Daily Telegraph (UK), February 8, 2001)

Ireland, the country that for more than 150 years sent its people abroad in search of a job or a new life is denying those same aspirations to its newest and most vulnerable residents. Physical and verbal attacks on immigrants and people of colour are commonplace. A survey of 157 African asylum seekers by a charity found that 95% of them suffered racially motivated discrimination. Last year, a Dublin bus driver accused of verbally abusing a Gambian passenger became the first person to be convicted under the country's Prohibition on Incitement to Hatred Act. (Los Angeles Times, February 4, 2001)

*** Restrictive Measures**

Around 20 refugees from Kosovo were allowed back into Australia as legal immigrants. They were among 4,000 refugees granted safe haven in Australia, before being forced to return to Kosovo last year, so Australian authorities could process their applications for permanent residence. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, February 16, 2001)

Britain and Italy will soon be sending immigration teams to Bosnia to "help" it control its borders and stem a flood of "illegal immigrants." "Rather than just providing advice or gathering information these teams would work with local border police," said British Home Office Secretary Jack Straw. "The Western Balkans is now one of the main illegal immigration routes into Europe. We, and the [European

Union] collectively, must act decisively to ensure it does not become a permanent feature of life in the Western Balkans.” (CNS News, February 14, 2001)

Some foreign airlines are risking having their jets seized or landing rights suspended for refusing to pay fines for bringing “illegal immigrants” to Canada. More than 1,700 fines were laid against 40 airlines between last April to September. Most fines are deducted from a \$3.5-million security bond posted by the carriers. However, several “Third-World carriers” have refused to pay their fines even after warnings of plane seizure. (The Toronto Sun, February 14, 2001)

A smuggler was sentenced to four and a half years for “trafficking illegal immigrants” into Britain in the back of his van. (Press Association (U.K.), February 14, 2001)

European police officers and senior immigration officials are meeting to discuss the possibility of sending specialised teams to work in the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. “Experts” from 12 European countries including France, Denmark, Greece and Germany, are following up a joint proposal made by the UK and Italy last month for “detecting forgeries, gathering intelligence and providing training” for officials over a period of 12 months. Officials will also discuss coordination between the Balkan governments, Europol, the UN and Nato forces in the region. (Press Association (UK), Feb-

ruary 12, 2001)

Sixty-five Indonesians have been sentenced to between four and seven months’ jail by the Malaysian magistrate’s court after pleading “guilty” to entering the country without valid travel documents. The men, aged between 19 and 40, had no attorneys. (New Straits Times (Malaysia), February 11, 2001)

The Kenyan High Court has given the UNHCR three months to relocate four Iraqi dissidents out of Kenya. The four Iraqis — Karrem Radee Abed, Ahmed Alwan Muktasha, Sami Hameed Majed and Mushtak Kassem Abed — were first arrested in Kenya as they crossed the Kenya-Somali border at Elwark in mid-1999 and sentenced to six months in jail for being in the country illegally. (Agence France Presse, February 10, 2001)

Last year, just nine out of 3,200 asylum seekers were granted asylum in Finland and 450 people were granted residence permits. The number of asylum seekers reportedly remained the same as the previous year. The average time for an asylum application to be considered was over a year. (Nordic Business Report, February 8, 2001)

The UNHCR appealed to the European Union to avoid a “fortress Europe” mentality on immigration and to show greater generosity to refugees. (Reuters, February 6, 2001)

The European Union and the UNHCR promised joint ef-

forts to tackle refugee problems and the illegal trafficking of people across borders. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 5, 2001)

The United Nations mission in Bosnia has called on Western Europe to fund Bosnia’s new state border service if it wants to cut the number of “illegal migrants” using the country as a route to the West. Britain and Italy announced a joint initiative to stem the flow of migrants from the former Yugoslavia. The UN has welcomed the plan but says further funding is needed to make it work. Italy and the United Kingdom plan to send teams of immigration staff and police to Bosnia. (British Broadcasting Corporation, February 5, 2001)

Croatian Prime Minister welcomed a Western initiative to help his country combat “illegal immigration,” but said money and technical assistance would be more useful than sending officials would. (Reuters, February 5, 2001)

*** Risky Routes**

Hardi, an Iraqi Kurd, staying at the Red Cross shelter in Calais said it was getting harder to sneak into Britain. “It is dangerous, but it is the only hope. Saddam was killing us and it had become too dangerous to stay,” he said. At the shelter, signs in half a dozen languages warn about the dangers of trying to cross to England in the Channel Tunnel. However, these signs do little to deter some of the refugees. “We know it is dangerous and we know people have died

trying, but when you consider we have so little to lose and so much to gain, we must risk it,” said an Afghan. (Reuters, February 14, 2001)

A group of badly dehydrated, would-be immigrants have been rescued from a sealed freight container on a Turkish truck after a nearly weeklong journey, Italian police said. The six men, who identified themselves as Kurds, were trying to reach Germany. They were taken to a nearby hospital. (The Associated Press, February 13, 2001)

A one-month-old baby was among 29 Afghan refugees found entering Austria clandestinely by inflatable dinghy across the River March. Austrian authorities said the baby had been born during the mother’s long flight. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 11, 2001)

Italian coast guard cutters searched the Adriatic for a ship, which sent out a distress signal in the Gulf of Otranto, saying it had engine trouble with about 80 people aboard. (The Associated Press, February 11, 2001)

*** Sex-based Persecution**

Canadian immigration officials found that two daughters of a Somali woman could face genital mutilation if deported to Somalia. The immigration risk-assessment will be a key factor when the girls and their mother apply for permanent residence on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. (The Toronto Star, February 13, 2001)