

# HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



88

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## Editorial

### Human Rights in the 21st Century: An Escalation in the War to End the Right to Asylum

By Maryam Namazie

The assault of Western governments and media against asylum seekers has reached absurd proportions. Under the pretext of a "war against human smugglers," these governments are fighting an all out war against the very right to asylum. They are redefining the act of seeking asylum as a criminal one and characterizing asylum seekers as "illegals, bogus, security risks, welfare cheats and undesirables." By doing so, they hope to

create justifications for their racist laws, detention, physical and psychological torture of asylum seekers, vouchers, inhumane living conditions, racist assaults and killings and the deportation of innumerable human beings.

This deceitful propaganda war against "human smuggling" is not meant to create safer routes for those fleeing political and economic repression nor end human trafficking. Fortress Europe has

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### UK Civil Rights Caravan Begins Campaigning Tour

Starting mid-September 2000, the International Federations of Iranian and Iraqi Refugees will be travelling in a Civil Rights Caravan throughout England for one month with other progressive and anti-racist organizations in solidarity with asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and victims of racist attacks and murders. The Caravan, a form of grassroots resistance, is demanding full rights for asylum-seekers, refugees, undocumented workers,

migrants and victims of racist attacks, the right to asylum and an end to detention, deportation, vouchers and dispersal, and an end to racism and racist violence.

The Caravan's first stops were in Leicester and Oxford during September 15-17. In Leicester, the Caravan attended a public meeting of over 200 people, including asylum seekers and activists. A Caravan sup-

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## Campaign

### Against Ethnic Cleansing in Iran

On September 15, 1999, the Iranian parliament passed legislation ordering the removal of more than two million refugees from the country. More than 1.4 million of these refugees are made up of those who have fled Afghanistan. The legislation also set the

deadline of March 2001 for the total removal of all Afghan refugees. Afghan refugees in Iran are amongst the most deprived section of the Iranian working class. The Islamic Republic of Iran is claiming that with

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already guaranteed that no asylum seeker can enter legally or safely. In fact, this war is meant to further deter, restrict and endanger asylum seekers, keep them out and end the very right to asylum.

Thousands have already died trying to get in. While racist and repressive laws have been directly responsible for the deaths, governments hypocritically feign "defence of the lives of migrants" in their war against human smugglers in order to conceal their culpability in the deaths and the repression asylum seekers have fled. Following the tragedy of 58 Chinese asylum seekers found dead in a container at the UK border, Western governments called for tough new measures to "halt the worldwide trafficking of humans" so as to avert scrutiny over why human beings must hide in an air-tight container to get to a relatively freer and safer life.

While the death toll rises, governments are adding newer and more repressive ways to "combat smuggling." France will triple fines levied against transport companies who carry "illegal immigrants." Australia has maximum terms of 20 years in prison for immigrant smugglers

and has banned welfare workers from helping asylum seekers freed from detention centres to punish them for arriving illegally. Belgium is launching an information campaign to dissuade "illegal immigrants" who are lured by traffickers' promises of jobs and welfare benefits (as if asylum seekers are taking life-threatening measures to live in inhumane conditions and eat rotten outdated food). Italy is securing deportation agreements with countries. In the UK, drivers carrying stowaways are fined 2,000 pounds per person.

The October 1999 European council of ministers' lines of action on immigration explicitly divulge their real aims: cooperation with countries of origin, control of the migratory flow and continuing the fight against illegal immigration networks. The push for a United Nations convention on organized crime, which includes protocols on migrant smuggling and trafficking and strict provisions for the deportation of "illegal migrants" and an obligation for the home countries to take them back, is also aimed at restricting asylum seekers, increasing cooperation with persecutors and further criminalizing asylum seekers.

By focusing on human smugglers, Western governments are

attempting to channel people's wrath away from their policies and their direct complicity in the deaths and abuses. When fighting human trafficking becomes the "public's priority," deportation, the forcible return of human beings back to persecution, is rationalized in absurd terms. In Canada when a large number of asylum seekers entered "illegally," most were deported. An "expert" with the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada portrayed the deportations as a success against smuggling. "Since smugglers get paid after delivering their clients, the mass detentions and deportations destroyed their business plan," according to a newspaper article. There is no mention of the fate of those forcibly returned.

These governments have deleted the word "asylum seeker" from their daily vocabulary and instead repeatedly bombard the public with terms such as "illegals" and "bogus." By doing so, they deliberately strive to conceal the repression asylum seekers are fleeing from and their own complicity in the political and economic repression in the countries of origin. Look at the asylum statistics. The main asylum applicants in Europe are from Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Algeria, Nigeria, - countries where massive rights violations take

place. In reality, asylum seekers are fleeing the intolerable. Most are fleeing from Islamist societies where they can be stoned to death for a voluntary sexual relationship, lashed for "improper" veiling, and imprisoned, tortured and executed for political opposition or organizing a labour strike.

If not resisted, an escalation of the war against human smuggling will only increase the number of victims on a tragic and unprecedented scale. While governments are determined to end the right to asylum, the International Federation of Iranian Refugees and progressive organizations are determined to push back their assault. Such resistance must become stronger, more militant and part of larger progressive social movement, which unconditionally demands an end to deportation, detention, racism, and inhumane living and social conditions. A movement, which demands full and equal rights for asylum seekers. A movement, which demands the freedom to choose one's place of residence and work. A movement, which demands open borders.

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port group was established to support asylum seekers and victims of racist attacks in Leicester. The two Federations also visited a hostel to meet with Iranian and Iraqi asylum seekers. In Oxford, the members of the Caravan joined the Barbed Wire Conference, which voted to join the Caravan's activities. Caravan members then joined a demonstration outside the notorious Campsfield Detention Centre. Maryam Namazie, Keyvan Javid (Iranian Federation) and Dashty Jamal (Iraqi Federation) spoke at the various events and / or were interviewed by the press.

The Caravan's route is as follows:

22-24 September: Brighton  
29-01 October: Sheffield,  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
06-08 October: Exeter, Ply-  
mouth, Bristol  
14 October: London Na-  
tional Demonstration  
Against Racism  
20-22 October: Margate,  
Dover  
27-29 October: Coventry,  
Birmingham, and Manches-  
ter

The Civil Rights Caravan's ongoing list of supporters: Action 58, Active Resistance to the Roots of War, Anti-Nazi League, Asian Dub Foundation, Ladislav Balaz, Black Networking Group, Narayan Bhattacharjee, Bradford Immigration and Asylum Support and Advice Network, Professor Lee



Bridges, Brighton & Hove District Trades Council, Brighton & Hove UNISON, Brighton & Hove Unemployed Workers Centre, Bristol Defend Asylum-seekers Campaign, Saffron Burrows, Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, Campaign for Justice for Carl Egonu, Campaign to Close Campsfield, Chhokar Family Justice Campaign, Chinatown Monitoring Group, Christopher Alder Campaign, Chumbawamba, City of Plymouth UNISON, Committee of Refugees from Turkey, Committee to Defend Asylum-Seekers, Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign, December 18 Online Network for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers, Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support Council, Dover Residents Against Racism, Europe-Roma, European No-Border Network, Exeter Anti-Fascist Action, Exeter Campaign to Defend

Asylum Seekers, Exiled Writers' Ink, Farhan Mire Family Campaign, Federation of Iranian Refugees, Fight Racism Fight Imperialism, Freedom and Justice for Samar and Jawad, Friends of Mumia in Devon, Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights, Hackney Refugee and Migrant Support Group, Diane Hammill, Hillsborough Justice Campaign, Human Too, International Federation of Iraqi Refugees, Jewish Socialist Group, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, Justice for the Plymouth Gypsies, Justice for Ricky Reel Campaign, Kalayaan, Kebele Kultur Project, Kent Refugee Action Network, Imran Khan, Kurdistan Information Centre, Liban Ali Family Campaign, Liberty National Council, Mike Mansfield, Michael Menson Family Campaign, Mubarek Family Campaign, National Civil Rights Movement, National Coalition of Anti-

Deportation Campaigns, Gareth Peirce, Plymouth Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers, Plymouth Socialist Alliance, Plymouth Trades Union Council, Satpal Ram, A. Sivanandan, Southwark Day Centre for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees, Statewatch, The Monitoring Group, Torbay Anti-Racist Group, Frances Webber, Westminster Short Life Housing, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Worker-communist Party of Iran - UK Committee, Youth Communist Organisation - London, Benjamin Zephaniah. ([www.ncrm.org.uk/caravan](http://www.ncrm.org.uk/caravan))

**STOP  
DEPORTATIONS  
AND  
DETENTIONS**

*Campaign Against Ethnic  
Cleansing in Iran*  
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their deportation it aims to reduce the problem of "unemployment and crime" - the same old absurd racist argument in Europe and North America that seeks to address the problem of unemployment through expulsion of refugees and migrant workers. In fact, this policy is primarily aimed at the working class in Iran.

Government agencies are now actively implementing this order and the hunt for these refugees has accelerated. The regime's thugs are physically attacking Afghan refugees, arresting them, confiscating their properties, transferring them to special camps, and finally releasing them inside the Afghan border with minimal resources.

Despite the severe drought, renewed fighting in Afghanistan, and the repressive Islamic groups, the mass deportations are being carried out with the full support and active participation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to the UNHCR, this ethnic cleansing which began on April 8 is part of a "voluntary repatriation program" in line with an agreement reached between the Iranian government and the UNHCR. 101,122 Afghans have already been deported since the start of the UNHCR-sponsored program.

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees unequivocally condemns the ethnic cleansing policy against Afghan refugees in Iran and holds the Islamic Republic of Iran and the UNHCR directly responsible for the catastrophic consequences of this policy. This fascistic policy must be opposed. Join IFIR's campaign and defend the rights of these Afghan citizens. Demand an end to deportations and equal and full rights for all Afghans living in Iran.

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E-mail: hqpr00@unhcr.ch

Islamic Republic of Iran:  
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E-mail:  
khatami@president.ir,  
iran@un.int

## **Urgent Action Labour Activist Mahmoud Salehi Must be Immediately Released**

On August 28, 2000, Mahmoud Salehi, president of the Saez Bakers' Union in Iranian Kurdistan was summoned back to prison for an additional ten months.

He had been arrested last year along with four other

## **UPDATES ON IFIR URGENT ACTIONS**

**Minoo Homily**, the Iranian refugee claimant in Turkey whose case had been closed by the UNHCR despite having fled sex-based persecution was reopened several days after IFIR's campaign began on her behalf. She has been granted refugee status. In addition, **Roya Mosayebi**, the woman asylum seeker in Germany who was beaten and forcibly veiled to prepare her casefile for deportation to Iran, has been resettled in the United States.

IFIR congratulates all those who acted on their behalf.

members of the Union and imprisoned for four months because of his union activities. At the time, he was released without being sentenced.

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) condemns the Islamic regime's continued repression of labour rights

and demands Salehi's immediate and unconditional release.

IFIR calls on all to send letters of protest to the Islamic regime: Fax: +98 21 646 4443  
E-mail:  
khatami@president.ir,  
iran@un.int

## **International Refugee News**

□ Bosnian Serb police detained 12 [asylum seekers] from Iran on Thursday as they tried to cross the Sava River into Croatia, a United Nations spokesman Douglas Coffman told a news conference. So far this week Bosnia has detained 22 migrants from Iran, Iraq, Tunisia and Turkey en route to Western Europe, Coffman said. Last month, 12 Iranians drowned in the Sava River when their boat cap-

sized as they tried to reach Croatia. Over the past two weeks, Croatia had turned back at least 309 migrants who had crossed from Bosnia, Coffman added. He called on the Bosnian government to clarify its policy on deporting "illegal immigrants" and to set up detention facilities. (Reuters, September 14, 2000).

□ Pakistan and Iran have agreed to exchange

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information about criminals, "illegal immigrants" [read asylum seekers] and speed up their extradition. The Iranian deputy interior minister, Syed Mostafa Tajzadeh, called on the interior minister, retired Lt-Gen Moinuddin Haider, in Islamabad today [12th September]. (Radio Pakistan, Islamabad (via the BBC), September 14, 2000)

□ Bill Morris, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, was accompanying a 30-year-old Iranian doctor who has fled religious persecution in his home country on his weekly shopping trip to highlight the grotesque voucher scheme operating in this country. The doctor, who came to Glasgow in the summer, lives on £26.34 in food vouchers and £10 in cash each week and gets support from charities for housing and clothes. (Press Association (UK), September 13, 2000)

□ From the beginning of 2000 to the end of August, about 11,500 persons were caught crossing into Croatia illegally, said the Croatian Interior Ministry's foreigners and migrations department head, Bozena Katanec. Some of them were immediately deported and some were released on condition that they leave Croatia on their own. There are now 80 persons, caught as "ille-

gal immigrants," at a camp for foreigners in Jezevo, outside Zagreb. According to figures released by the Interior Ministry, the highest numbers of "illegal immigrants" are Romanians (3,640 of them have entered Croatia without valid papers). They are followed by Turks (2,500), Iranians (2,470) and the Chinese (527) and Yugoslav citizens, i.e. Kosovo Albanians (600). (HINA news agency, Zagreb (via BBC), September 12, 2000)

□ The State Marine police detained 1,131 "illegal immigrants" at several popular landing spots here in the first eight months of the year. From the 1,131 [asylum seekers] detained, 968 were Indonesians, Iraqis (102), Iranians (17), Bangladeshi (one) and others (43). In the latest incident at 2am today, he said, the Marine police detained 77 Indonesian "illegal immigrants" comprising 58 men and 19 women during an Ops Nyah operation at Sungai Condong, near here. He said the asylum seekers aged between 15 and 50 were believed to have left Dumai in Indonesia at 6pm yesterday. (New Straits Times (Malaysia), September 12, 2000)

□ Australian Federal Police have charged 11 [asylum seekers] from Iraq and Iran over "rioting" at the Woomera Detention Centre last month. Eight of the charged men are in custody at the Adelaide Remand Centre, three are be-

ing held at the Woomera Detention Centre. One has been given bail to appear at the Port Augusta Magistrates Court next month, the remainder will appear in the Adelaide Magistrates Court on September 22. They have been charged with public order offences and obstructing police. It brings to 18 the total number of people charged following last month's incident at Woomera. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, September 12, 2000)

□ Fifteen people jumped off a train at the Channel Tunnel complex in Folkestone, Kent, including two Romanians, seven Bangladeshis, three Iraqis and three Iranians. They were all arrested. (Daily Mail (London), September 6, 2000)

□ The federal government is under fire over its move to deport "failed asylum seekers" even if their application for refugee status is under review by the United Nations. Opposition Leader Kim Beazley said it was disgraceful that Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, had recommended withdrawing from the complaints process of the International Convention Against Torture. (The Associated Press, September 5, 2000)

□ Eighteen Iranian nationals, including two children, were detained Tuesday by Bosnian police while attempting to illegally cross into Croatia.

The group was arrested near Brcko, in the northwest of the country. (Agence France Presse, September 5, 2000)

□ Turkish security forces have detained 179 [asylum seekers] in the eastern province of Van. During the previous 48 hours, security forces detained 51 Iraqis on the back of a truck they stopped near the town of Gulpinar in Van province bordering Iran. In a second operation, 43 Iraqi and 8 Uzbek nationals were caught while walking on foot towards Gulpinar. Troops in Edirne province, which borders Greece, detained 69 [asylum seekers], including Iranians, Iraqis, Afghanis and Palestinians. Since January, more than 5,000 people have been detained in Turkey while trying to reach Europe. (Agence France Presse, September 4, 2000)

□ Five "illegal immigrants" charged with property offences in relation to the riots, who appeared in the Adelaide Magistrates Court - four Iraqis and one Iranian ranging in age from 21 to 31 - were remanded in custody by Magistrate Tony Newman to appear again next Tuesday. All have been charged with property offences. Ahadee also faces a charge of physical violence. The men appeared today handcuffed and flanked by court guards during their brief, individual hearings in which

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they all remained silent. Charged are Ahadee, Bahman Darabi, 25, Farid Sameri, 24, Farhad Guraat, 21 and Fersheed Mokhtaryan, who was listed as being born in 1969. Twenty-four of the refugee seekers were removed from the centre last Tuesday and taken to the Adelaide Remand Centre, where they remain in custody. Australian Federal Police expect to lay more charges by the end of this week. (The Associated Press, September 4, 2000)

□ Refugee groups today warned of more riots like this week's Woomera detention centre rampage unless the government changes its treatment of asylum-seekers. At a rally outside the Department of Immigration in Sydney, protesters voiced their support for the rebellion at the South Australian complex. "We wholeheartedly support and understand why this happened as refugees have been denied their rights in every way," Ian Rintoul, spokesman for the Refugee Action Collective, said. "There is no other way to make their voices heard and we are here to tell (Immigration Minister Philip) Ruddock that he's going to continue to see riots in detention centres and protests on the streets." A former refugee from Iran, who would only give the name Cyrus, accused Mr Ruddock of being racist against

Middle East refugees. "What (Ruddock) has done to refugees in this country is shameful - detention centres are Nazi camps," he said. Maqsood Alshams, a Bangladeshi journalist, who was released from Villawood detention Centre in Sydney four months ago, said conditions were inhumane for detainees. "There are not enough beds, people have to sleep on mattresses on the floor, there were food shortages five times in January, they gave us expired medicines and assaults on detainees are common," Mr. Alshams said. The protesters called on the government to end mandatory detention of asylum seekers and grant full rights to refugees instead of temporary visas. (The Associated Press, September 1, 2000)

□ Police retrieved the bodies of another five Iranians who drowned after their boat carrying at least 20 "illegal immigrants" capsized in the river separating Bosnia and Croatia. The find of the five bodies raised the official death toll to twelve, including three children, since the ill-fated crossing on Tuesday. At least four Iranians also drowned while trying to cross the Sava River to Croatia on their way to Western European countries in May. In the first six months of this year, Croatian customs officers detained more than 5,000 people for allegedly trying to cross the border illegally. (The Associated Press, August 31, 2000)

□ Croatian police have handed over to Bosnian police 66 "illegal immigrants" from Iran, Iraq and Turkey, U.N. officials said Thursday. They were detained in Croatia after transiting through Bosnia en route to Western Europe. The 13 Iraqis, 47 Iranians and 6 Turks were discovered hiding in the back of a large truck. They were handed to the Bosnians at a border crossing. International officials estimate that some 20,000 migrants try to reach the West every year. Croatian police also informed the U.N. that they sighted two more bodies in the Sava River on Thursday morning and were trying to retrieve them. The bodies of four adults and three children were found earlier this week. The victims belonged to a group of Iranians whose boat capsized Tuesday while they were trying to cross the river to Croatia. (The Associated Press, August 31, 2000)

□ Enduring the heat, about 20 Iranian and Bangladeshi children chanted, "give us visas" and "be fair when making the decision" in Japanese from 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. The children are among 64 overstayers who have turned themselves over to immigration authorities to seek residency since Sept. 1, 1999. (Asahi News, August 29, 2000)

□ Up to nine Iranians are believed to have drowned when their boat

capsized while they were trying to illegally cross the northern Bosnian border to Croatia, the United Nations said on Tuesday. One of the two boats carrying Iranians across the Sava River a border between Bosnia and Croatia turned over with 10 persons on board near the northern Bosnian town of Bosanski Brod. One survivor reached the Bosnian bank of the river Sava and informed the local police that the others probably drowned. Several persons, in the other boat that crossed safely, have been detained by the Croatian police on the other side. Police from both countries are searching the river and its banks for either survivors or bodies of those who drowned, he said. The Iranians arrived in Bosnia on Monday, on a flight from Istanbul. This is the second time in recent months that Iranians drowned while trying to cross the Sava River to Croatia on their way to western Europe. At least four drowned in May. (The Associated Press, August 29, 2000)

□ Bosnian police arrested 31 Iranians and 25 Kurds for trying to enter or leave the country illegally. 25 Kurds were apprehended while trying to enter Croatia. None of the group, which included 20 men, 1 woman and 4 children, possessed any personal documents. Also, over the weekend, local

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police informed international policemen that 31 Iranians were detained for attempting to cross into Bosnia without documents. All those apprehended will be deported to their home countries. (The Associated Press, August 22, 2000)

# WHAT IS IFIR?

## Mission

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) is committed to organizing Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in support of political and social campaigns which:

- \* defend refugee and human rights,
- \* expose the Islamic Republic of Iran and oppose the infiltration of its agents among Iranians abroad,
- \* reveal the progressive and modern character of Iranian refugees in contrast to usual negative and reactionary portrayals,

\* create a radical and progressive environment among Iranians abroad, and

\* place this force alongside the progressive forces in their countries of residence.

## Past Accomplishments

IFIR's accomplishments over the years are many. Recent examples are summarized below.

\* International Efforts Against Turkish Government Successful, September 1997: IFIR's campaign against the Turkish government's decision to deport 600 asylum seekers succeeded in canceling their deportation orders, gaining transit visas for those refugees who had been deported to Iraq prior to the initiation of the campaign, and gaining exit visas for those being transferred to a safe resettlement country.

\* The Dutch Government Backs Down, October 1997: On October 20, 1997 a five-member IFIR delegation was invited to speak at a parliamentary hearing about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA)

June 5, 1997 report on Iran. The IFIR Netherlands Branch also organized mass demonstrations and a sit-in to oppose the Dutch government's efforts to deport Iranian asylum seekers based on a report which effectively deemed Iran a safe country. In the face of such strong opposition, the Ministry called for an end to deportations until further investigations were made into the situation in Iran.

\* Iranian Refugees in Iraq end Successful Sit-in, September 1998: Faced with local pressure from Iranian refugees in Iraqi Kurdistan who has organized a sit-in as well international pressure coordinated by IFIR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) finally addressed the legitimate demands of the refugees. The UNHCR Iraq Branch Office agreed to the following: - Monthly food rations are to be doubled and additional blankets and cooking materials will be distributed. - Medical services as well as pharmaceuticals will be provided. - The refugee determination process will be expedited. - In 1999, 1,500 to 2,000 refugees will be transferred from Iraqi Kurdistan to safe third

countries.

\* The Anti-Refugee Policies of the German Government is Condemned, September 1998: A protest campaign summoned by the IFIR German Branch and three other organizations was endorsed by more than 200 organizations. More than 30 thousand individuals participated in the actions which took place in 36 cities throughout Germany.

\* International Solidarity for the Struggle of Iranian Refugees in Canada, October 5, 1998: With the IFIR Canadian Branch's initiative, ongoing protests have culminated into an expansive and national "Campaign Against the Federal Government Attacks on Immigrants and Refugees," comprising workers', women's, humanitarian and socialist organizations, including Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), a renown labor organization. The Campaign has gained public support through demonstrations, and actions, including occupying of government centers.

[www.hambastegi.org](http://www.hambastegi.org)

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