

HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



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Editorial

Women Fleeing Islamist Societies must be Granted Asylum

By Maryam Namazie

Though women face sex discrimination, suppression and violence in every corner of the world, and though there are innumerable reasons forcing them to flee, a leading reason for women's flight is undoubtedly political Islam. Seventy five percent of the world's refugees are fleeing from Islamist societies. Of the top five countries producing asylum applicants in Europe, three of them are Islamist

societies, namely Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran.

Political Islam's first victims are women. In Somalia, women are bayoneted in the vagina; in Iraqi Kurdistan, 4,000 women have been maimed and killed in the name of "honor;" and in Pakistan, women are accused of *Zina* (adultery) in 15% of rape trials. In Bangladesh, in a period of 8 months, 174 acid attacks were made on women and girls primarily for refusal to

marry and domestic violence; of these 174, 10 were girls under 10, 79 were aged 11-20, and 20 were aged 20-30. In Iran and Afghanistan, women are stoned to death for voluntary sexual relations outside of marriage.

Islam and the Koran

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UK Civil Rights Caravan Continues Campaigning

The UK Civil Rights Caravan continued its campaign against racism and racist attacks and for full rights for asylum seekers. On Sunday September 24, the Caravan visited the Unemployment Centre and participated in the S24 counter conference and demonstration against the Labour conference in Brighton.

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Meeting with German Parliamentarians on Bias towards Iranian Asylum Seekers

The German Branch of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) and others have organised a national campaign against the anti-refugee policies of the German government. The campaign's demands are the unconditional and

immediate release of all detained asylum seekers, the reopening of rejected cases, recognition of the right to asylum for women escaping Islamist societies, an end to deportations, the right to stay and asylum for asylum seekers.

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Women Fleeing Islamist Societies Cont. from Page 1

require “obedience,” “chastity,” and “righteousness” and promote sexual violence against women who transgress religious norms. Political Islam imposes its misogynist rules by laws, governments, courts, the army, intelligence and police services, Islamic terrorist groups, assassinations and fatwas.

Since 1981, when the Islamic Republic of Iran established itself through mass repression and consolidated Islam in power, the global refugee population has tripled. Though Western governments encouraged the growth of political Islam during the Cold War, and continue to maintain it for political and economic gain, they refuse to support its victims using the racist theory of cultural relativism.

In an era where political Islam is responsible for some of the grossest and most violent crimes against women and humanity, advocates of women fleeing sex-based persecution cannot remain silent on political Islam - one of the root causes of

flight.

Clearly, women fleeing Islamist societies must be granted protection solely due to their sex.



Meeting with German Parliamentarians on Bias towards Iranians Cont. from Page 1

On September 29, the IFIR - German Branch and others organised a demonstration at the German parliament with over 200 people. Several organizations spoke at the demonstration or sent solidarity statements, including the UK Civil Rights Caravan.

A delegation comprising of Maryam Namazie, Nasrin Yusefi and Mina Ahadi then went into Parliament to meet with representatives of the Human Rights and Refugee parliamentary commissions.

The delegation requested an investigation into the German government’s bias towards Iranian asylum seekers.

The delegation provided statistics compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on asylum applications and refugee status determination, which revealed non-conformity in recognition rates for Iranian asylum seekers. The

percentage of recognition rates in 1999 for Iranian asylum seekers in Belgium (66.7%), in Canada (77%), in Italy (77.6%), in New Zealand (100%), and in the US (89.4%) were substantially higher than in Germany (20.8%). Statistics confirm the correlation between low approval rates and close political and economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Other statistics provided by the delegation documented that conditions in Iran continue to be repressive though Western governments and the media have labelled Khatami, the current president, a “reformer.” According to the UNHCR, there has

been a significant increase in Iranian asylum applicants in a number of countries, including Austria (118%), Belgium (70%), Germany (27%), the Netherlands (68%), Slovenia (57%), Sweden (32%), Switzerland (177%), and the UK (26%).” During this period of increased protests in Iran, Iranian asylum seekers have become one of the top five applicants applying for asylum in Europe after Yugoslavia (FR), Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey.

IFIR also discussed the reasons for rejection issued by the German government by providing sample cases, further proving that the German government’s bias is valid and not based on actual conditions in Iran.

The parliamentarians agreed to submit said documentation to the human rights, refugee, interior ministry and foreign ministry units for discussion.

**Next Issue of
Hambastegi:**

**Monday
October 16**

*UK Civil Rights Caravan
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On Wednesday September 27, the Caravan joined a candle light vigil in London's Chinatown for the hundredth day after the 58 Chinese asylum seekers were found suffocated in a container trying to enter the UK.

On Thursday September 28, the Caravan held a press conference for its official launch. Later, 157 black balloons were released opposite Downing Street, one to represent each death due to racist violence, death in police custody or immigration laws since the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. Speakers at the Press Conference included Imran Khan (Lawrence family solicitor), Jabez Lam (of Action 58 - representing the 58 Chinese migrants who died trying to enter the UK), Abdul Kadir (cousin of Farhan Mire, a Somali asylum seeker killed by racists), Ladislav Balaz (Europe-Roma, a Roma who has faced death threats in the UK as well as back home), Frances Webber (a leading immigration barrister), and Suresh Grover (chair of the National Civil Rights Movement). Maryam Namazie was also interviewed by BBC television

on behalf of the Caravan for news programs that was aired on the same date. In addition to Namazie, two Iraqi asylum seekers who were knifed in the head and hand respectively and a UN representative were interviewed on the situation in the UK and the increase in racist attacks because of the government's xenophobic policies and statements.

On Friday, September 29, the Caravan went to Sheffield, met with asylum seekers in a hostel, and attended a public meeting of over 150 people. Sam Azad spoke on behalf of the IFIR and Dashty Jamal spoke on behalf of the Iraqi Federation. At the meeting, a well-known attorney agreed to assist asylum seekers pro bono.

On Saturday, September 30, the Caravan went to Newcastle. To coincide with the Caravan's arrival, the North East Campaign for Asylum Rights (NECFAR) staged a demonstration to protest the increasing levels of racism and xenophobia being aimed at asylum and immigrant

groups in the UK. Over three hundred people participated in the demonstration. Azam Kamguyan spoke on behalf of the IFIR, Dashty Jamal on behalf of the Iraqi Federation and Suresh Grover on behalf of the Caravan. After the demonstration, a meeting was held with various asylum seekers; a centre in Sheffield agreed to provide support to asylum seekers in that city.

The Caravan's next stops during October 6-9 are Exeter, Plymouth, Bristol and a solidarity meeting outside the London Park Hotel refugee hostel in London.

**To endorse,
support or
find out more
about the
Civil Rights
Caravan, see
the National
Civil Rights
Movement's
Web Site at
www.ncrm.org.uk/
caravan.**

Alessandro Lopez, a leading Columbian trade unionist, and Maryam Namazie, IFIR Executive Director at Leiceseter Public Meeting.



Iranian Asylum Applications Submitted in Europe, Jan. - Jul. 2000

Country	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Total
Germany	388	299	360	306	344	342	434	2,473
UK (cases)	185	150	195	315	460	430	540	2,275
Austria	208	128	147	109	223	177	385	1,377
Netherlands	224	183	150	176	160	108	181	1,182
Slovenia	21	46	166	101	119	200	313	966
Belgium	23	12	22	31	71	151	255	565
Sweden	96	60	52	63	43	34	45	393
Switzerland	35	45	49	45	49	39	108	370
Denmark	27	44	61	15	25	37	27	236
France	40	23	37	17	16	15	38	186
Norway	36	21	26	11	18	21	27	160
Other	54	22	28	20	36	28	25	213
Total	1,337	1,033	1,293	1,209	1,564	1,582	2,378	10,396

Demonstration Against German Government's Racism

On September 30, 2000, the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR)-German Branch organized a demonstration against racism at Zwickau camp, in Southeast Germany. Over a hundred asylum seekers and their supporters joined to condemn the German police's violent and racist raid on the camp on Monday 25 September to deport two families. As reported earlier, a struggle ensued between the police and around 300 asylum seekers demanding an end to deportations. At 3:30am, the

police were forced to retreat, leaving behind several severely wounded asylum seekers who were hospitalised.

IFIR-German Branch has approached an opposition German party who has provided a pro bono attorney to represent the Zwickau camp in a complaint against the German authorities.

Protest letters against the recent assault on asylum seekers in Zwickau and in support of the campaign's demands can be sent to:

www.bundestag.de/btengver/mail/mail.htm,
claudia.Roth@bundestag.de,
info@gruene-fraktion.de,
lavo@gruene-berlin.de,
gruene@landtag.nrw.de,
webmaster@gruene.de,
einewelt@spd.de,
jusos@spd.de,
parteivorstand@spd.de,
redaktion@spd.de,
gerhard.schroeder@spd.de,
post@cdu.de,
innenpolitik@cdu.de,
bundesgeschaefsstelle@pds-online.de,
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redaktion@pds-online.de

**END
RACISM

END
RACIST
KILL-
INGS**

An International Network and Conference on Refugee Women Fleeing Sex-Based Persecution

Over the past several months, the Canadian Council for Refugees has been organizing a network of people interested in sex-related persecution, with the view to promoting better protection for women internationally. The objectives in developing the network are (a) promoting greater awareness of sex-specific elements of persecution and the refugee experience, particularly in countries where there is currently limited sensitivity to these issues; (b) facilitating information-sharing and expertise-sharing among those in different countries working for the recognition of gender-based claims; and (c) developing strategies for action, at local, regional and international levels, to promote recognition of sex-based claims.

The CCR is working towards an international conference on the subject to be held in Montreal, Canada in spring 2001. Themes to include are:

- worldwide context of sex-related violence and efforts to combat it
- successes and failures in

different countries' approaches to protecting women fleeing sex-related persecution

- resettlement of women fleeing sex-related persecution (including evaluation of the women at risk program)
- refugee definition issues
- particular issues relating to refugees fleeing domestic violence
- procedural issues
- documentation issues
- impact of sex on decision-making cases involving sexual orientation and children
- issues of racism as they relate to protection on the basis of sex-related persecution

Maryam Namazie is a member of the network's International Advisory Committee. Other members of the Committee are: Ariane Brunet, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Leanne Macmillan, Amnesty International, Audrey Macklin, Dalhousie University, Wendy Young, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Deborah Anker and Nancy

Kelly, Refugee Law Centre, Karen Musalo, University of California, Sharryn Aiken, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, Sisterhood Is Global Institute, Malathi de Alwis, International Centre for Ethnic Studies/Women's Coalition for Peace, Nastaran Mosavi, Ockenden International, Lee Ann de la Hunt, The National Consortium on Refugee Affairs, Kohki Abe, Kanagawa University, Faculty of Law, Elizabeth Ferris, World Council of Churches, Widney Brown, Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch, Barbara Harrell-Bond, American University in Cairo, Marguerite Garling, UNIFEM/AFWIC, Joyce Mends-Cole, UNHCR, Krista Daley, Immigration and Refugee Board, and Pamela Goldberg, CUNY School of Law.

**To join the network
or for more information,
contact,
Afsaneh Hojabri,
Phone: (514) 369-**

International Refugee News

On September 16, border guards at a port in Greece discovered 31 refugees hiding in a container. Three were pronounced dead at the scene and the rest transferred to a hospital. Since the beginning of 2000, over ten thousand asylum seekers have been arrested and deported at the borders of Greece and Turkey. During the same period, the Greek government has deported 2,468 asylum seekers, most of whom were from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. (IFIR Press Release, September 2000)

A mother has asked for asylum in the United States based on her son's disability (autism), claiming that he would be tortured and persecuted if he were to return to Pakistan. Other groups that have succeeded in arguing that they were persecuted or faced the threat of harm based on their social group include men living alternative lifestyles and women facing genital mutilation. (The Chicago Tribune, September 19, 2000)

International Refugee News
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The UNHCR granted refugee status to 43 of 145 Iraqi and Afghan "immigrants" who had been stranded in Indonesia, apparently trying to get to Australia. The 145 had been arrested on the Islands of Lombok and Sumbawa. The others will remain until the UNHCR has decided on their fate. Hundreds of "illegal immigrants" from the Middle East have been picked up in Indonesia's eastern islands in the past year, most of them found adrift in boats heading for Australia. (Agence France Presse, September 20, 2000)

Thousands of asylum seekers who were to be dispersed throughout Britain are opting to sleep rough in London rather than be given free housing elsewhere. Refugee support groups predicted last year that asylum-seekers would be unwilling to leave London because of the presence of people from their own communities, specialist immigration lawyers and medical services. (The Independent (London), September 21, 2000)

Over the past five months,

250 foreign citizens were arrested for illegally crossing the border with Croatia. The Bosnia-Herzegovina Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly were advised to re-evaluate the "behaviour" of citizens from some foreign countries and impose an adequate visa regime. It is the Romanies, citizens of Iran, China, Iraq, Bangladesh, Turkey, Albania and Pakistan who are most often caught on their way to Western Europe. (Bosnian Serb Television, Banja Luka (via the BBC), September 21, 2000)

Australian refugee groups are angry that a former detainee has been ordered to repay more than \$63,000, or \$139 for each night he was in detention. The Department of Immigration said he must arrange to pay back the debt to the Department of Immigration by this Friday. (The Australian Associated Press, September 21, 2000)

South African Home Affairs Minister yesterday said: "if they are good patriots, I would hope that they would know that it is in their interests to report '(illegal immigrants)'." (Daily Dispatch (South Africa), September 22,

2000)

Parliament member Angela Marquardt of the Party of Democratic Socialism said Interior Minister Schily was "giving cues to neo-Nazis." "His differentiation between 'good' foreigners, whom we Germans can use, and the 'bad' who only incur costs, is the foundation of racism on which Nazi thugs base their acts of violence," she said in a statement. Marquardt pointed to a series of incidents over the weekend, including a firebombing of a home in the western German city of Wuppertal for immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. Two children, ages 2 and 3, were injured. (The Associated Press, September 25, 2000)

The leader of Austria's far right, Joerg Haider, said Germany badly needs a party similar to his own Freedom Party to champion anti-immigration policies and articulate people's fears. Haider's underlying message was that, because Germany has no mainstream right-wing party willing to voice widely held fears about immigration, worries become pent up and are expressed through violence. (The Daily Telegraph (UK), September 23,

2000)

63.7 percent of Swiss voters rejected the so-called 18 percent initiative, which was aimed at creating an 18 percent cap on foreigners. Asylum seekers would have been included in the 18 percent quota if they remained in Switzerland for more than a year. The Swiss vote comes at a time when immigration and asylum issues are a hot issue all over Europe, not least because countries are grappling with an aging population and increasingly racist trends. (CNN, September 24, 2000)

The UK Government is ready to back down over its voucher scheme for asylum seekers in an attempt to prevent a damaging row at the Labour Party conference. Tony Blair is understood to have helped to broker a compromise that includes the promise of a full review of the policy within months. Labour officials have been concerned that a revolt on the issue led by Bill Morris, the general secretary of the TGWU, could result in defeat for the Labour leadership on Thursday. Morris has condemned the voucher scheme as degrading and inhuman, saying: "It stigmatises the victim

International Refugee News
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and creates targets for racist attacks.” (The Times (London), September 26, 2000)

Otto Schily, federal interior minister, said Germany had an “interest in immigration, but in line with our own political, economic, cultural and demographic interests”. (Financial Times (London), September 26, 2000)

A boat carrying 47 people believed to be of Middle Eastern origin has been intercepted by Customs officials off the West Australian coast. Customs Minister said arrangements were being made to transfer the suspected “boat people” to the mainland, where they would be handed over to officials. (The Australian Associated Press, September 28, 2000)

New Zealand’s amnesty for overstayers would allow unwanted people into Australia, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said today. Ruddock was concerned overstayers granted amnesty could freely move into Australia under open-door arrangements with NZ and the two nations needed uniform

migration rules. “For Australia and New Zealand to maintain free movement of our peoples we need to have arrangements for migration which are closely integrated.” “It essentially means that you have to have a common border, if you like, whereby people who meet selection criteria in New Zealand are the same sorts of people who would meet selection criteria here.” “Otherwise all people have to do if they want to migrate to one country or the other is to simply meet a lower selection criteria and then move on as soon as they’ve become residentially qualified.” “*Why would you want to bring people who have skills that are not recognised, don’t have language capacity to communicate effectively, and that’s what happens when you degrade your selection criteria,*” Ruddock said. (The Australian Associated Press, September 28, 2000)

The Mayor of Limerick, Ireland has called on the Government to issue work permits to the city’s asylum-seekers as a matter of human rights. Ryan has drawn up a list of people with skills after he was approached by a delega-

tion from the 120 asylum-seekers staying at two hostels in Limerick. (The Irish Times, September 29, 2000)

The United Nations mission said the interior ministries of Bosnia’s Muslim-Croat federation and Serb republic agreed this week to create a force, which would deal mainly with “illegal immigration and organised crime.” This year we have had 18,718 Iranians and Turks entering Bosnia-Herzegovina legally...with only 3,795 exiting from the country, leaving 15,000 unaccounted for, U.N. spokesman Douglas Coffman said. Turkish and Iranian citizens do not need visas to enter Bosnia. “The creation of this task force will hopefully stem the increasing problem of illegal immigration,” Coffman told reporters. (Reuters, September 28, 2000)

Slovenian police arrested 54 “illegal immigrants,” mostly Iranians, over the weekend. A group of 27 Iranians, 14 Afghans, 6 Romanians and 4 Bangladeshis was apprehended Saturday at the border with Hungary. Another three illegal immigrants from Yugoslavia were caught near the border with Croatia. According to of-

ficial figures, 18,147 would-be immigrants attempted to cross the border illegally in the first eight months of the year, 36 percent more than in the same period in 1999. (Oct 1 Agence France Presse)

The Malaysian Immigration Department is working with the police to identify the international syndicate involved in transporting Iraqis, Iranians and Afghans to Indonesia before they migrate to Australia illegally. Immigration director-general said there had been an increase in the activity in the past two to three months. He said most of the cases had occurred in Johor and Malacca. “The department at the same time will take immediate measures to monitor visitors from these countries closely, and any suspect will be sent home,” he said.

He added that the department had identified Iraqis, Iranians and Afghans as the most likely to use Malaysia as a transit point on the way to Australia. (New Times Straits, Malaysia, October 1, 2000)

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