

# HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



# 90

October 30, 2000

## Labour Leader and Political Prisoner needs Urgent Medical Care Mahmood Salehi must be immediately released

Mahmood Salehi, a labour leader and political prisoner, is at serious risk. Though his health is rapidly deteriorating and his one remaining kidney is in need of attention, he has been denied urgent medical care by the Islamic regime. In order to place pressure on the regime, 180 workers signed a petition demanding immediate medical treatment for Salehi on October 24.

Salehi, the President of the Bakers' Union of the city

of Saez, Iranian Kurdistan, with a membership of 700 bakers, was arrested on August 24, 2000 by the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is the fifth time that Salehi had been arrested for his labour organizing efforts. He was previously imprisoned in 1983, in 1985 (for three years), in 1995 (for 8 days) and in 1999 along with 3 others (for two months).

Mahmood Salehi, born in 1962, married with two

children aged 9 and 11, is a fearless advocate of labour rights despite the regime's repression. On May 1, 2000, International Workers' Day, Salehi was banned from giving a speech. He stated this fact to a crowd of 3,000 workers, read a poem instead, and received a lengthy standing ovation.

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) is extremely concerned about his health and well being and demands that he immediately receive medical attention. Also, IFIR demands his immediate and unconditional release and the release of all political prisoners in Iran. IFIR also condemns the repressive Islamic Republic of Iran for its denial of rights.

## Campaign Against the German Government's Anti-Refugee Policies Continues

In continuation of its campaign against the German government, the IFIR-German Branch has carried out numerous activities in defence of asylum rights.

In early October, the IFIR German Branch organized several days of protests on behalf of Mehdi Khodabakhsh who was detained at Frankfurt airport to be deported to Iran. IFIR members met with him in detention and compiled a report on his situation. They were interviewed by numerous local press and many protest letters were faxed to the German authorities. The Hu-

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# A Glance at Sangatte Camp for Asylum Seekers in Northern France

By Farshad Hussein

*Recently, the IFIR Secretariat sent Farshad Hussein on a mission to Sangatte Camp in Calais, Northern France after receiving numerous calls from asylum seekers regarding its horrendous conditions. The following is a report prepared by Farshad Hussein in Persian and translated by Javad Aslani.*

Sangatte camp or more precisely "the emergency refugee reception centre" is situated near a village by the same name, 20 kilometres away from the port of Calais, France. The camp has been set up by the French Red Cross to provide for asylum seekers living without any other means in the north of the country.

The camp itself is a dis-used industrial warehouse measuring 1000m by 20m and was initially set up to house 200 to 300 people.

The actual living accommodations consist of 15 containers measuring 40 square metres, 5 toilets and 12 bathrooms. According to the Red Cross official in charge of the camp, the population of the camp varies from 700 to 1300 residents. Despite large increases in the number of camp residents, facilities and resources have remained unchanged. At the time of my visit, the Red Cross official reported that there were some 700 to 800 people staying in the camp and that the only addition to the facilities was six tents and a few beds. The number of beds available in the camp consisted of 387 in the containers and tents and a further 50 beds in the main hall, totalling 437 bed spaces. Many were forced to use the beds alternatively or share them with other asylum seekers. The overall management of the camp is with the Red Cross. Three meals a day and an hour of urgent medical service are all the Red Cross offers to the inhabitants of the camp.

Most of the asylum seekers living in the camp have arrived via Italy, Greece and the former Yugoslavia. Most intend to move on. The majority of asylum seekers, at the time of my visit, were Iranians numbering between 300 to 400. Iraqi Kurds and Afghans made up other large groups of asylum seekers residing at the camp.

Every evening, groups of up 150 asylum seekers head towards the port and parking bays in the hope of finding a hiding place inside a freight container or above a truck axle bound for England. The smugglers were charging the equivalent of £500 to £750 for assisting a departure to England. Since the tragic death of the 58 Chinese asylum seekers earlier this year, crossing the border has become much harder and the security checks have made it almost impossible for anyone to cross the channel. This new development has prolonged the length of stay at Sangatte camp. A stay of between two to three

months is now common. An asylum seeker disclosed that he had attempted to escape to England 60 times in the space of 70 days.

Failure to reach the UK, particularly after accumulating debts of up to £2000 and being conned by smugglers and crooks and lack of information and the hardship of life in the camp have demoralised the asylum seekers. The despicable conditions of the camp and the lack of the most basic facilities have made life unbearable for its inhabitants, especially for children.

The health and hygiene of the camp are deplorable. Mattresses and blankets are not washed for months and are used by different people creating a breeding ground for communicable diseases. Children are particularly vulnerable. The state of the toilets and bathrooms can only be described as despicable. Five toilets are shared by

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## Successful Campaign for Asylum Rights in Sweden

The IFIR – Swedish Branch led a successful weeklong campaign in defense of asylum seekers, which included several demonstrations in a number of Swedish cities, including a 300-strong demonstration at the Swedish parliament in Stockholm. IFIR representatives also met with members of parliament on the status of Iranian asylum seekers. Earlier, the Branch, led by the Campaign in Defense of Women's Rights in Iran – Stockholm successfully prevented the deportation of Farideh, a 38-year-old woman threatened with stoning in Iran. The Campaign gathered over 20,000 signatures on her behalf and received much public support.

As a follow up to the campaign, Maryam Namazie and Keyvan Javid visited Sweden and spoke at several large public meetings in Stockholm and Gotenborg. They also visited Gimo camp where nearly 100 asylum seekers had organized a demonstration against conditions in the camp. Namazie, Javid and the IFIR repre-

sentative in Gimo met with migration officers to explain the repressive situation in Iran and put forth the asylum seekers' demands, including access to recreation and psychological care. The migration officers agreed to address the demands.

Namazie also met with ABF, a coalition of parties, labour unions and organisations. ABF will translate Hambastegi English into Swedish and distribute it to member organisation and agencies. ABF also invited Namazie to a debate on refugee women in 2001. The Persian press in Sweden covered the visit.

**The October 16 Issue was not Published due to the Swedish Campaign**

**The Next Issue of Hambastegi will be Published on Monday, November 13, 2000**

## An IFIR Representative Interviewed on Dutch Television on the Islamic Republic of Iran's Torture Methods

Dutch National Television interviewed Farshad Hosseini, an IFIR Secretariat member, for a program on torture.

The program was one of many other planned activities organised by Amnesty International for its Campaign against Torture. Husseini spoke of the Islamic Republic of Iran's

widespread use of torture. The program was aired on October 15 and 18 on channel one.

Husseini will also be speaking at future meetings, demonstrations, the Dutch parliament and the UN Human Rights Commission, and with various Dutch ministers throughout the Campaign.

## UK Civil Rights Caravan Ends Campaigning Tour

The UK Civil Rights Caravan continued its campaign against racism and for full rights for asylum seekers. On October 6-8, the Caravan traveled to Exeter, Plymouth and Bristol where hundreds joined anti-voucher pickets, demonstrations, a press conference, anti-racist concerts and public meetings. Several media outlets covered the events. Suresh Grover,

Chair of the National Civil Rights Movement and Maryam Namazie, were interviewed live on a BBC regional talk show.

On October 14, over 800 people joined the national demonstration against racism in London. Sam Azad and Dashty Jamal spoke on behalf of the Iranian and Iraqi Federations.

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**Campaign against  
German  
Government's  
Policies Continues  
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man Rights Commission in the German parliament was contacted and asked to intervene on his behalf. On October 3, the Branch organised a three and a half hour demonstration at Frankfurt airport, handed out flyers, and spoke to passengers about Khodabakhsh's reasons for flight and the intolerable situation in Iran. The airport security forces threatened IFIR activists and seized their flyers. They remained steadfast in their protest until airport security declared that Khodabakhsh had been removed from the flight "due to ill-health." On October 5, Khodabakhsh was released from Frankfurt detention and his deportation stopped.

On October 15, the Branch along with a network of organisations held a demonstration against deportations and police violence and racism in Zwickau, which had earlier been the scene of a brutal attack by the police on the asylum seekers' camp. 200 people joined the demonstration, which passed by a detention center for asylum

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# Sample Letter of Protest for Mahmood Salehi

IFIR calls on groups and individuals to send mass letters of protest to the Islamic regime.

Mahmood Salehi's life depends on local and international efforts.

Date

Mohammad Khatami  
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue  
Azerbaijan Intersection  
Tehran, Iran  
khatami@president.ir  
Fax: 0098- 216 464 443

Mahmood Salehi, a labour leader and political prisoner, is at serious risk. Though his health is rapidly deteriorating and his one remaining kidney is in need of immediate attention, he has been denied urgent medical care.

Salehi is the President of the Bakers' Syndicate of the city of Saqez, Iranian Kurdistan and has been imprisoned numerous times for his labour organising activities.

I am / My organisation is extremely concerned about his health and well being and demand(s) that he immediately receive medical attention and that he be immediately and unconditionally released. All political prisoners in Iran must also be released.

I / my organisation condemn(s) the Islamic Republic of Iran for its repression and denial of workers' rights to strike and organise.

Signed:  
Name  
Organisation

CC: ifir@ukonline.co.uk

**Campaign against  
German  
Government's  
Policies Continues  
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seekers awaiting deportation back to persecution. The detainees joined in the slogans from the detention center. A representative of the IFIR - German branch spoke out against the treatment of asylum seekers and the abysmal situation in Iran. Other speakers included representatives of the Party of Democratic Socialism and Amnesty International. The Zwickau branch of the DGB, the national labour union, and IG-metal, a steel workers' union participated in the demonstration.

The IFIR - German Branch is currently organising a sit-in on November 1, 2000 at Arche Gemeinde und Sozialwerk Hage, Emilienplaty 16, 58097 Hagen at 10am to oppose the German government's denial of asylum rights and racism. For those interested in supporting the sit-in, contact Nasrin Yosefi, nyosefi27@aol.com, Tel: +49 172 402 8563.

**End  
Deportations**

## **A Glance at Sangatte Camp in France**

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over 700 people. Lack of toilet rolls and soaps and the sheer number of people using these toilets have rendered them useless. The medical service is practically non-existence and the emergency service is only available during official hours.

The situation of asylum seekers in France, like those at Sangatte is complicated. The cases of those applicants arriving from a third European country are not even considered and the rest are dealt with summarily and a large number are rejected. Furthermore, the social and economic protections are so inadequate that people are forced to leave France.

The French government pursues a policy of discouraging asylum seekers from staying in France and in doing so does not obstruct the attempts of asylum seekers to leave the country. The Red Cross stationed at the camp facilitates the implementation of this policy.

The UNHCR is implicated in the creation of such a

situation as it practically refrains from offering any assistance. It has been shying away from its responsibilities under the pretext that some have not applied for asylum or have been rejected and therefore are "illegal immigrants."

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) is outraged at conditions at Sangatte camp and condemns European governments, the UNHCR, and the Red Cross for creating this inhumane situation.

Fortress Europe is ensuring that more and more asylum seekers are denied the right to seek and enjoy asylum. IFIR holds Western governments fully accountable for the lives and security of asylum seekers in Sangatte.

IFIR demands:

- \* improved conditions in the camp
- \* access of asylum seekers to fair determination hearings
- \* full rights for all asylum seekers.

**UK Civil Rights  
Caravan ends  
Campaigning Tour  
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On October 20-22, the Caravan traveled to Margate and Dover. Given that many asylum seekers in Margate do not have access to attorneys, the Caravan went with an attorney to assess the situation and agreed to return on a regular basis to provide legal advice. A vigil was held in Dover for the 58 Chinese who were found suffocated because of Fortress Europe.

On October 27-29, the Caravan traveled to Coventry and Manchester. Given the rise in racist attacks on asylum seekers, representatives of the Caravan provided asylum seekers with information on filing grievances against such attacks. Rather than assist the asylum seekers and arrest those responsible, the police have advised the asylum seekers to stay home after 6pm. A support group was established in Coventry to deal with racist attacks. In Manchester, over two hundred people attended a public meeting and a support group was established. Speakers at

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## UK Civil Rights Caravan Ends Campaigning Tour Cont. from Page 5

the public meeting included Sam Azad and Dashty Jamal of the Iranian and Iraqi Federations and Janet Alder, the sister of a black man killed in police custody. Though the Caravan's month-long tour has ended, the practical support created for asylum seekers in various cities will continue. The Caravan is already planning trips with attorneys and translators to assist asylum seekers in their asylum applications in Margate and will return to Coventry to assist asylum seekers in developing a strategy for challenging racist attacks.

## Why am I on the Civil Rights Caravan? By Jamal

'I fled from repression in Iran. Many of my family members were executed or killed by the regime. I was in danger myself. The Islamic Republic of Iran stones people to death for consenting sexual relations, lashes women for improper veiling and youth for listening to the "wrong" music. People are executed for organizing strikes or just for their political opinions. De-

spite conditions in Iran, the British government is rejecting Iranian asylum seekers and deporting them. The Home Office rejected my asylum application saying that it had been handed in too late, although I personally took it there myself on time. By rejecting me and other asylum seekers on false pretenses, the government is hoping to reduce my chances of gaining my right as a human being to live a freer and safer life. Unfair laws, detention, deportation, mistreatment and abuse, expedited procedures and discriminatory practices facilitate the government's attack on asylum seekers. By providing others and myself with substandard and inadequate housing, unsanitary conditions, poor and insufficient food at hostels or vouchers that cannot reasonably feed any human being, the government hopes to dehumanize us so that the public will more easily accept its violations against us. I know the government is unleashing the fascists and racists on us in order to deter us from coming or remaining. Their attacks on us is a continuation of the attacks on us by regimes the UK and West have supported. I also know, however, that there are many people and organizations, like those

organized in the caravan, who will fight for full rights for asylum seekers and against racism and racist violence.'

## International Refugee News

\* **The bodies of two "illegal immigrants," were washed up on a beach in Sicily, Italy overnight and a third body was later retrieved from the sea.** They were all men in their forties. (Agence France Presse, October 30, 2000)

\* **A boat carrying 133 Iraqis and Iranians, including 14 women and 9 children, attempting to enter New Zealand by sea was stranded** in a village in Indonesia's province of Irian Jaya. (Agence France Presse, October 30, 2000)

\* **Four youths went on trial charged with arson, wounding and attempted murder for a firebomb attack on a hostel for asylum seekers,** which injured three children from Kosovo in Ludwigshafen, Germany on the night of July 15-16. (Agence France Presse, October 30, 2000)

\* **Far-right youths tried to storm a Turkish family's house in north-western Germany,** sparking a fight in which one of the family members was

injured. (The Associated Press, October 30, 2000)

\* **Up to 30,000 demonstrators have rallied against neo-Nazi groups** in Dusseldorf, Germany. About 20,000 people last weekend gathered in the western city of Dortmund in solidarity with foreigners. (CNN, October 28, 2000)

\* **A boatload of 30 "illegal immigrants" was detected trying to enter Australia.** (The Australian Associated Press, October 26, 2000)

\* **Italian authorities brought to shore the body of man found aboard a Greek ship** where he and three others, all apparently Iraqi Kurds, had been hiding in a container. (The Associated Press, October 26, 2000)

\* Austria's leading far-right politician, Jorg Haider said, **"There are far too many illegal immigrants, crimes and drug dealers – none of them have a place here in Austria. This has to be our priority, to eliminate them uncompromisingly."** (The Guardian (UK), October 25, 2000)

\* **The captain and six crew of a cargo ship detained last week on the Greek island of Khios for transporting 655 "illegal immigrants" were each sentenced to 57 years and**

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**nine months' jail.** They were also each fined 19,500 euros (16,322 dollars) by a court. (Agence France Presse, October 24, 2000)

\* **According to a survey of 2,118 people, two-thirds believe there are "too many" immigrants in Britain and almost the same proportion felt "too much" was being done to help them.** The poll for Reader's Digest discovered that many of these opinions were based on ignorance of the facts about immigration. Respondents to the survey grossly over-estimated the financial aid asylum-seekers receive, believing, on average, it to be £113 a week when in fact, a single adult seeking asylum receives £36.54 a week in vouchers to be used at designated stores. Just £10 may be converted to cash. (The Independent (UK), October 23, 2000)

\* **Indonesia has rejected an Australian proposal to use an island in its archipelago for an Australian-funded processing center for "illegal immigrants."** (Agence France Presse, October 23, 2000)

\* **The Italian police "repatriated" over 90 "illegal immigrants" today, while over 200 were detained** in a number of separate operations throughout the country, including one

operation in the Gorizia area in which 160 "illegal immigrants" - 48 of whom were Kurdish - were picked up along the border between Italy and Slovenia. (ANSA news agency database, Rome (via BBC), October 20, 2000)

\* **Italian police found the body of an elderly "would-be immigrant" and picked up 88 other refugees, including children, all apparently Roma from Kosovo stranded on a beach near a southeastern town.** (The Associated Press, October 20, 2000)

\* **Slovene police detained 118 "illegal immigrants," mostly Iranians, in the northeast.** (Agence France Presse, October 19, 2000)

\* **8,148 Afghan refugees "returned" within the six-month period of the "voluntary repatriation programme" for Afghan refugees,** which were worked out in cooperation with the UNHCR. During the same period, 35,500 Afghans filed applications with the joint office set up by the provincial bureau and the UNHCR for permission to stay in Iran. Of these applications, only 4,200 were accepted. (IRNA news agency, Iran (via BBC), October 18, 2000)

\* **The bodies of six "illegal immigrants," be-**

**lieved to be of Kurdish origin, were found near a road not far from the southeastern city of Foggia.** The six, who carried no personal documents, were said to have suffocated before unidentified human traffickers transporting immigrants on a truck dumped them in the area, near a motorway exit. Five of the half-naked bodies were discovered by the side of the road by a motorist, and the sixth, with severe head injuries, in a nearby field, possibly after being run over by a vehicle. (Agence France Presse, October 18, 2000)

\* **The head of a High School in Greater Manchester, England said that he would rather put his job in jeopardy than allow immigration officials to deport two pupils to China.** (The Daily Telegraph (UK), October 17, 2000)

\* **An unknown assailant tried to set a home for asylum seekers in Germany ablaze.** None of the home's four inhabitants from Iraq and Montenegro was injured. (Agence France Presse, October 17, 2000)

\* **An African immigrant was beaten and kicked at a streetcar stop by four young men in the eastern city of Magdeburg, Germany.** (The Associated Press, October 17, 2000)

\* **The Canadian Ottawa Solicitor General's Department asked Quebec Superior Court for permission to inject two "illegal immigrants" with tranquilizers in order to deport them from Canada.** (The Associated Press, October 17, 2000)

\* **An Australian report says research shows detention of refugees not only worsens mental health problems like post-traumatic disorder also but also causes disorders.** (The Australian Associated Press, October 16, 2000)

\* **Another boatload carrying 33 "illegal immigrants," including 26 men, two women and five children of "Middle-Eastern appearance" has been caught at Ashmore Reef off Australia's north coast.** (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, October 16, 2000)

\* **Asylum seekers detained at the Elizabeth detention center in New Jersey, the United States, are staging a massive hunger strike to protest their long incarceration in a converted warehouse while awaiting asylum hearings.** Detainees were threatened with deportation or the cancellation of their asylum hearings if they did not start eating. (October 15, 2000, The Bergen Record)

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*International Refugee News*  
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**\* European Union leaders are developing plans to set up a joint European border force to fight organised crime and "illegal immigration"** when the community accepts former Eastern Bloc nations as members. The German and Italian governments are preparing an exchange of border troops at the beginning of next year. (The Daily Telegraph (UK), October 12, 2000)

**\* The German interior ministry reported 1,112 rightwing-motivated incidents in August - compared with an average of 668 a month in the previous seven months.** (The Financial Times (UK), October 12, 2000)

**\* Border officials deported nine Afghans, who were discovered on a train in southern Russia to Dushanbe, Tajikistan.** (The Associated Press, October 11, 2000)

**\* Sailors from the Italian navy piloted a Turkish vessel carrying up to 600 immigrants, mostly Kurds, to the southern port of Otranto Wednesday after its crew abandoned the ship.** (Agence France Presse, October 11, 2000)

**\* The Canadian federal political appointees who sit on the Immigration and Refugee Board are too often ill-qualified**

to make the vital rulings that determine the fate of asylum seekers here, a study said. (The Montreal Gazette, October 11, 2000)

**\* In the US, Mrs. M has been granted political asylum by arguing she fears being killed for making a political statement against a male-dominated society.** Since in 1999 the Board of Immigration Appeals — in a case about a Guatemalan woman who fled 10 years of brutal domestic abuse — contended that her husband did not abuse her for being a member of a social group, Mrs. M sought asylum on the grounds of political opinion. (The Recorder (San Francisco legal paper), October 11, 2000)

**\* Interior ministers from Greece, Italy and Albania said they had agreed to set up a centre in Albania to combat all types of trafficking.** (Agence France Presse, October 10, 2000)

**\* The Libyan government has launched an inquiry into more than six weeks of violence between Libyans and black African immigrants, which began in late August, and is reported to have claimed more than 130 lives.** (Agence France Presse, October 9, 2000)

**\* Seven Iranians - 4 adults and 3 children - and five Syrians were ar-**

**rested at the international airport in Mexicali, Mexico,** near the US border. (Agencia EFE, October 9, 2000)

**\* Bosnian border police have arrested 37 "illegal immigrants" from Iran and Turkey who attempted to cross the country's western border with Croatia.** (Agence France Presse, October 9, 2000)

**\* The Movement against Intolerance announced it would lodge a formal complaint after the Spanish government reportedly sent hundreds of "illegal immigrants" back to Morocco locked up in prison vans aboard ships.** (Agence France Presse, October 8, 2000)

**\* Italian police detained 105 "immigrants," mostly Iraqi Kurds, after they crossed the border from Slovenia near the northeastern city of Gorizia.** Many of the 40 women and children among the "immigrants" suffered from colds and exhaustion. Two people were arrested on suspicion of helping eight other people cross the border illegally. (Agence France Presse, October 8, 2000)

**\* A ferry was detected off northwestern Australia carrying about 90 people "believed to be of Middle Eastern origin."** (The Age (Australia), Oc-

tober 8, 2000)

**\* The US Justice Department is investigating complaints from women held at Krome immigration detention center near Miami who said they had witnessed or were victims of sexual assaults by Immigration and Naturalization Service guards.** (New York Times, October 5, 2000)

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