

# HAMBASTEGI

PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF IRANIAN REFUGEES



# 91

November 13, 2000

**Urgent Action Update**

## **Release Mahmood Salehi Now!**

The Islamic Republic of Iran arrested Mahmood Salehi on August 24, 2000 for his labour organizing efforts. Salehi is the President of the Bakers' Union. His health is rapidly deteriorating as his only remaining kidney has developed complications. The regime has refused urgent medical care.

International and local support for Salehi's release is growing. Recently, in Saqez, Iranian Kurdistan, members of the Bakers' Union held a special meeting and issued a resolution on his behalf, despite warnings by the regime's security not to do so. Several hundred people also joined a

demonstration demanding his release and the release of all political prisoners. Though riot police attacked the crowd and attempted to arrest six people, protestors managed to free them all.

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) is extremely concerned about Salehi's health and well being and calls on groups and individuals to send mass letters of protest to the Islamic regime. Mahmood Salehi must receive medical treatment and be immediately and unconditionally released.

His life depends on local and international efforts.

## **protest ends deportation**

IFIR's German Branch has successfully concluded three days of protest during November 1-3, in the city of Hagan, Germany to stop the deportation of Iranian asylum seekers. The protest was warmly received by asylum seekers and the public and was given good media coverage.

During the course of the three days, a local radio station broadcast hourly bulletins on the progress of the action and a press conference was called by the regional paper of the state, Hagen radio and the regional TV station to report on the protestors' demands, the social and political situation in Iran and the condition of asylum seekers in Germany. Moreover, a protest march was organised which passed through the town's centre. A large number of local residents joined the march, which criticised the anti-asylum policies and official racism of the German government. The march continued towards the

Foreigners' Department.

An IFIR delegation comprising of Nassrin Ramazanali and others met with several government officials. A Hagan reporter was present at the meeting and recorded the proceedings. The IFIR delegation demanded the cancellation of a deportation order served on an Iranian family, Soleimaninejad, and the reopening of several other rejected asylum casefiles. The protestors remained at the Foreigners' Department until it agreed to revoke the Soleimaninejad family's deportation order and reopen the rejected cases. The protest was hence successfully concluded.

This victory once again confirms that united action can end deportations. The IFIR – German Branch calls on all asylum seekers to join ranks and resist the anti-asylum policies of the German government.

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## Editorial

# when victims are not “friends”

By Maryam Namazie



The cases of Mahmood Salehi and Akbar Ganji may seem similar at first glance, as both are political prisoners in Iran. Salehi is a labour leader who has been imprisoned for his defence of workers' rights. Akbar Ganji is a “journalist” who faces charges for expressing his political opinions.

*Yet, this is where the similarity ends.*

As a former commander of the notorious Revolutionary Guards-turned journalist, Ganji has been given a public trial and lawyer and received mass media attention. Salehi, on the other hand, has been

tried in a secret court and without an attorney. He has been denied urgent medical attention, effectively sentencing him to death.

The regime's mixed response to Salehi and Ganji reveals different realities for political prisoners depending on their proximity to the regime. Yet, despite the contrast between Salehi and Ganji's cases, one thing is clear - the Islamic Republic of Iran is a regime of sham trials, torture, solitary confinement, and civil rights violations for both friends and foes alike.

Mahmood Salehi and Akbar Ganji must be released as must all political prisoners, yet Ganji and his friends in government may sooner than later face trials for their crimes against humanity when a third faction - the people - take power.

## sample letter of protest for mahmood salehi

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

# Against Vouchers in Britain

“Once we accept that anyone in Britain can be treated as inferiors, we damage our society and betray our values. Vouchers and closed reception areas are steps on the road to degradation.”

- John Edmonds, General Secretary GMB trade union

As a follow-up to the activities of the UK Civil Rights Caravan, and a national action campaign to scrap the voucher scheme, IFIR-UK has called on its branches to organise pickets at government offices in Leicester, London, Newcastle, Sunderland, Birmingham, Coventry and Nottingham.

The first such picket was organised in Leicester on November 10 at a government office. A delegation, including the Civil Rights Caravan Support Group and Afshin Molagan, the IFIR Leicester representative, met with Jim Marshall, a Leicester parliamentarian, to discuss the voucher scheme as well as other issues. During the meeting, tens of asylum seekers who had fled from Middle Eastern and African countries picketed outside. The action and meeting was covered by local press. Marshall agreed to bring up the issues discussed at a parliamentary meeting on November 13.



The UK Branch is organising another picket on Tuesday, November 13 in London at a government office distributing vouchers (261 Harrow Road, London W2 5XF, Hammersmith Line) at 1:00pm.

The voucher scheme discriminates against, stigmatises and deprives asylum seekers of a decent living standard. Asylum seekers in Britain are forced to live on £34 a week,

which they get in vouchers for designated shops. Ten pounds alone can be converted to cash. Supermarkets do not give back change to asylum seekers and are therefore profiting from their deprivation. The total value given asylum seekers is 70% of what a citizen on welfare benefits would receive.

IFIR calls on all groups and individuals to join the national protests calling for an end to

the voucher scheme and for full rights for asylum seekers.

**The Next Issue  
of Hambastegi  
will be  
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Monday,  
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2000**

## Online Petition

You can join the national action by signing the 'Online Petition' against the Voucher scheme by clicking on the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns' (NCADC) link: <http://www.ncadc.org.uk/letters/newstuff/form.html> which will allow you to send a protest message to the British government in just few seconds.

## Weekly Radio Program

IFIR has once again begun its weekly radio programs, discussing refugee and civil rights issues as well as international organizing efforts. The program is broadcast on Saturdays from 9:00pm to 9:30pm Tehran time on 41 meters short wave (7520 kilohertz). The program is broadcast via Radio International that can be heard in Iran, surrounding countries as well as in Europe. Radio International broadcasts daily programs from 9:00pm to 9:45pm Tehran time.



## International Refugee News

A report endorsed by prominent human rights groups condemned the British government for keeping asylum seekers in Northern Ireland in jail while their future was decided. Britain's Home Office and Northern Ireland's Prison Service were urged to end the practice of detaining asylum seekers alongside convicted offenders. (Report attacks jailing of asylum seekers in N. Ireland, The Irish Times, November 10, 2000)

The Emnid institute said that a survey of 1,000 Germans found that 62 percent of eastern Germans and 47 percent of westerners believe there are too many foreigners. Sixty-three percent of Germans want tighter controls on who is allowed into the country. Some 54 percent of the easterners said they would feel more comfortable if only Germans lived in their region compared to 42 percent of westerners who shared that sentiment. (Poll - Germans fear too many foreigners, survey finds, Reuters, Novem-

ber 10, 2000)

The Greek police and coastguard seized hundreds of "illegal immigrants" in three recent incidents. On Thursday, 67 "illegal immigrants," including seven children, and three Greeks said to be smuggling them, were arrested on a boat off the south-western coast of the island of Evia near Athens. Another 57 immigrants including four children were also arrested off Evia on Thursday. The nationalities of the two groups were not yet known. On Friday, 81 "illegal immigrants" from Kashmir were found in two trucks south of Athens. So far this year, authorities have detained 3,673 "illegal immigrants" and 140 people involved in smuggling them and have seized 40 boats. (Greek authorities arrest 205 illegal immigrants, Reuters, November 10, 2000)

Asylum-seekers and refugees should have the same rights to health and social care as Irish and EU citizens, the main trade union representing staff delivering such services has said. The IMPACT national secretary for health, Mr Kevin Callinan, said a false impression that resources were being diverted from Irish citizens to asylum-seekers could fuel intolerance. The principles state

that asylum-seekers and refugees should not be put into separate care provision and adequate resources should be made available to asylum-seekers, Irish, and EU nationals. They also recommend that all asylum-seekers be allowed to work. (Parity of treatment sought for refugees, By Nuala Haughey, The Irish Times, November 9, 2000)

A 27-year-old Romanian stowaway was found hidden inside the undercarriage of a passenger jet that was forced to return to Munich after the pilot could not retract the landing gear. The asylum seeker was unconscious and suffering from hypothermia when he was found by a mechanic. Prosecutors were considering filing charges of endangering air traffic. (Stowaway found inside German jet, The Associated Press, November 9, 2000)

Six white policemen from a dog unit near Johannesburg appeared in court following the screening of a video earlier this week which showed them setting their dogs on three black men and assaulting and insulting them in a 40-minute ordeal. The officers have been charged with attempted murder. There are estimated to be between 2 and four million "illegal immigrants" in South Africa and some 70,000 asylum-seekers. In 1999, South African authorities expelled some 35,000 "illegal aliens" from Zimbabwe alone. (Immigrants say police dog atrocities common in S. Af-

rica, Agence France Presse, November 9, 2000)

A joint tour of the Indian Assam border is being undertaken to find out ways to stop "illegal immigration." (Team to visit Assam border areas, The Times of India, November 9, 2000)

Police in Iran's island of Kish are planning to deploy coastal forces to stop Afghan refugees from landing on the island. Some 2,470 Afghan refugees had already been expelled from the island, and the fate of another 300 is expected to be decided on within the next month. It said the "deportations" had been carried out with "low-cost and unprecedented ease," and that a "coastal patrol unit" would be set up "in order to ward off" any attempts to return to the island. (November 9, 2000, AFP)

The immigrant population in France remain stable at 4.31 million, almost the same as that registered in 1975, said a report on the 1999 census by the state statistics institute. (Immigrant population in France remains stable, Xinhua News Agency, November 8, 2000)

Britain rejected calls from the president of the European commission to abandon its veto on key areas of immigration policy in the interests of streamlining decision-making to cope with the planned enlargement of the EU. (Britain rejects EU call to drop veto,

By David Gow and Larry Elliott, The Guardian (UK), November 7, 2000)

The Italian coastguard guided into the southeastern port of Otranto a rudderless ship carrying some 1,000 "illegal immigrants" which was left adrift in rough seas. The ship was thought to be carrying Turks, Palestinians, Kurds, Eritreans, Sinhalese and Chinese. (Ship with 1,000 migrants towed to safety in Italy, Reuters, November 7, 2000)

A Malaysian holding camp at Semenyih in the central state of Selangor for "illegal immigrants" is so overcrowded that detainees have hardly any space to lie down. The camp's five blocks hold more than 2,000, mostly Indonesians, who are awaiting deportation. Each block has a capacity of 150 detainees but now houses more than 300. "They were all sitting on the cement floor, especially the women who did not even have enough space to lie down or stretch their legs." There were no beds, just the cement floor. (Malaysia camp for illegals badly overcrowded, rights group says, Agence France Presse, November 7, 2000)

Assisting asylum seekers find work could help alleviate Ireland's current labour shortage, the Irish Deputy Prime Minister said. Those eligible to work - currently 4,000 people - must have applied for asylum before July 1999. There is a growing backlog of 13,000 asylum applications.

**End  
Deportations**

(Asylum seekers 'Could solve labour shortage', By Nick Sommerlad, Press Association (UK), November 6, 2000)

Seven people are missing after a boat carrying nine Turkish migrants capsized overnight on the Sava River, while trying to cross illegally to Croatia. Three Turkish survivors managed to reach the riverbank. Thousands of Asian immigrants, mainly Iranians, Kurds and Chinese, have used Bosnia in recent months as a transit point to Western Europe. (UN: Turkish immigrants feared drowned in Balkans, Reuters, November 6, 2000)

The Germany economy requires a minimum of 200,000 immigrant workers a year to compensate for a growing shortfall in the labour market, a leading German economic analyst firm said in an interview. That figure represents only a "minimum threshold" that will not fully cover the future personnel needs of firms, in short supply given the steadily diminishing working population. "Even with 200,000 foreign entries a year, the German working population will fall by three million by 2001," said the economic analyst. Consequently, it is "necessary to raise the retirement age, lower the minimum working age and shorten training programs." (German economy needs 200,000 extra workers per year: economic analyst, Agence France Presse, November 5, 2000)

The Italian birth rate has fallen

to less than 1.2 children per woman, the lowest in the industrialized world. Because the birth rate is now lower than the death rate, Italy is not replenishing the population. At this rate, the population will fall nearly a third in 50 years, from about 57 million to about 41 million. It threatens to destabilize the state pension system. In the 1950s, there were eight workers to support every retiree. Now there are four; soon there will be less than two. If Italians are not producing enough children to keep the place running, immigration offers an obvious solution. A recent United Nations study estimated that to maintain its current work force, Italy would need about 370,000 immigrants annually. (Italians shying away from big families, By Bert Roughton Jr., The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, November 5, 2000)

The Immigration Minister says accommodation that is good enough for Australians should be good enough for "illegal immigrants" in detention. A detention centre being criticised was originally used to house single men working in the mining industry, before being bought by the Immigration Department. "This is accommodation that was seen to be fit for Australian workers," he said. (Ruddock defends standard of detention centre, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, November 3, 2000)

Thirty-five members of the "Olympic family" have

sought political asylum in Australia and are among 145 people in the country illegally after overstaying visas. (Olympics: Thirty-five seek post-games asylum, Reuters, November 3, 2000)

Greece seized 41 "illegal Kurdish immigrants" in two separate operations. The coastguard arrested 10 men, a woman and five children on the island of Kos in the Aegean, and two Turks said to be smuggling them into Greece. Another 25 Kurds were arrested in Vari, near Athens, after having been dropped off on the coast. So far this year, the Greek coastguard has arrested 3,504 "illegal immigrants" and 133 people involved in smuggling immigrants. (Illegal Kurdish immigrants held in Greece, Reuters, November 3, 2000)

Three men and a woman were arrested and charged after a "rowdy" protest last night outside a Brisbane public meeting addressed by Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock. About 50 university students were demonstrating against the federal government's handling of people seeking asylum in Australia. (Four charged after protest outside Ruddock's public meeting, The Australian Associated Press, November 3, 2000)

A lorry driver has been fined GBP 14,000 for delivering seven "illegal immigrants" (Afghans) straight into the hands of the authorities after finding them inside his truck

on a ferry bound for Dover. (This driver turned in seven illegal immigrants. His reward?, A GBP 14,000 fine and his lorry impounded, By Neil Sears, Ray Massey, The Daily Mail (UK), November 2, 2000)

Two men were convicted Thursday and sentenced to eight months in prison for attacking an African immigrant at a bus stop in a north-eastern city, the latest verdict resulting from rising neo-Nazi crime in Germany. A third defendant also was convicted in the July 1 assault on a 33-year-old Togolese man, but the Rostock district court said it was considering probation for him. (Two sentenced in attack on immigrant, The Associated Press, November 2, 2000)

In Italy, in order to combat "illegal immigration" and human trafficking, a meeting was held to analyse the entry of "illegal immigrants" into the Friuli Venezia Giulia region via the border crossing with Slovenia. It was reported that 1,600 "illegal immigrants" have been picked up in Trieste in the first 10 months of this year, while expulsion orders in Gorizia have totalled 12,000, of which 2,500 have been served in October alone. (Italian, Slovenian police agree on common action to curb migration, ANSA news agency, November 2, 2000)

Residents of a northern town sued Greece's culture minister for slander on behalf of

residents of a suburb outside of Thessaloniki. He had called parents at a high school "stupid" and "primitive" after they stopped a 15-year-old Albanian boy from carrying the Greek flag at a local parade. A recent EU survey found that Greeks have the highest rate of xenophobia fear or hatred of foreigners in the 15-member body. According to the survey, 38 percent of Greeks are xenophobic compared with the EU average of 15 percent. (Culture minister sued in bitter dispute over immigrants, By Costas Kantouris, The Associated Press, November 2, 2000)

Twenty-six Chinese mainlanders held after being found hidden in a US-bound container last month, appeared in court to face charges of attempting to stowaway and remaining in Hong Kong without authorisation. Twenty-three of the 26 mainlanders were sentenced to 18 months imprisonment at Tsuen Wan magistracy, after pleading guilty to the charges. A 16-year-old "illegal immigrant" received a "reduced" sentence of nine months. (Hong Kong charges 26 stowaway mainlanders with illegal entry, Agence France Presse, November 2, 2000)

There have been calls to close the Australian Port Hedland Detention Centre following the release of 16 Kosovar Albanians. The refugees were released after "new information" was presented to the Minister for Immigration. Migration agent, Marianne Le,

has called for the Port Hedland Detention Centre to be closed, claiming it is a disgraceful facility. "That place is hell, it should be closed down..." (Calls for closure of detention centre, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, November 2, 2000)

The Home Office and Department of Health will outline plans to integrate thousands of successful asylum seekers into communities across Britain. All refugees will be provided with English-language training and assisted in finding jobs of a similar stature to those they held in their countries of origin. (Ministers pledge aid to settle refugees, The Independent (UK), November 2, 2000)

Foreign homosexuals are not automatically entitled to asylum in Britain because of "hostility" to their sexual orientation in their homeland, the High Court ruled today. A judge decided that "uncaring and cruel" treatment suffered by gay people did not necessarily prove persecution and entitle them to refugee status. He rejected an application for judicial review by 25-year-old Gabi Ragman, a Romanian teacher who suffered insults and ridicule after it became known that he was homosexual. The judge said: "The right protected by the Convention is not a right to practise as a homosexual - it is the right not to suffer persecution for doing so." (Homosexuality 'Not an entitlement to asylum,' By John Aston, Press Association, November

1, 2000)

Greek police shot dead an Albanian who tried to cross into Greece illegally through the mountainous border dividing the two countries. The other seven Albanians, who had been expelled from Greece the day before, were arrested. Police said a thermal camera had picked up the group as it tried to enter the country near the northern Greek town of Florina. (Greek border guards shoot Albanian dead, Reuters, November 1, 2000)

Computerized registration of foreigners coming to Moscow and control over the time of their stay in Russia is to be introduced next year. The database will include information about the granting or extension of a Russian visa and the date the state border was crossed. Should a visa be overstayed, the computer will automatically alert the authorities to the transgression, providing all the relevant data. There are some 1.5 million "illegal migrants" from 60 countries on Russian territory. (Computers to stop visa regime violations, By Anastasia Kornya, Moscow News, November 1, 2000)

More than 150m people worldwide are living in a foreign country, double the number in 1965, the International Organisation for Migration says in a report published. (Flows of immigrants up, By Frances Williams, The Financial Times (UK), November 2, 2000)

An "illegal" Chinese "immi-

grant" was seriously injured when she jumped from the second storey of a hotel in the northern Bosnian city of Tuzla where she had been detained by the police. Li Dony Lan, 31, suffered a spinal fracture and ankle injuries when she and her husband jumped from the hotel room in an attempt to escape. Li and her husband were among 59 Chinese and Iranian "illegal immigrants" deported from Croatia last Friday. (Chinese immigrant woman seriously injured in escape attempt, Agence France Presse, October 31, 2000)

The Cyprus government has taken a series of new measures to combat "illegal immigration." The Justice Minister announced that he had agreed to set up additional lookout posts along the coastline of the island, to allow police to intercept and turn back boats before they land. (Cyprus takes new measures to curb illegal immigration, Xinhua News Agency, October 31, 2000)

The perception of Ireland as an "easy" country for asylum-seekers is not borne out by official figures, according to a report. The study concludes that asylum seekers seem less likely to gain refugee status in Ireland than in many other European countries, even if they come from regions of well-documented strife. The study shows that when Ireland received fewer asylum-seekers, its recognition rate was high. In 1995, when 424 people claimed asy-

lum, 57 per cent of applicants were recognised by either being granted refugee status or temporary leave to remain. By 1998, when 4,626 people sought asylum, the recognition rate fell to 13 per cent. (Study finds record on refugees compares badly, By Nuala Haughey, The Irish Times, October 31, 2000)

Immigration authorities have refused to say where more than 100 "illegal immigrants," of Middle Eastern origin, found near Ashmore Reef, are to be accommodated when they reach Australia. (No site named to house suspected illegals, The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, October 31, 2000)

Angola deported five Iranians on Wednesday after they tried to enter the country without visas, the customs office said. The five men had taken an Ethiopian Airlines flight to Luanda, the customs office said. (Angola deports five Iranians, Oct 4 AFP)

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**End  
Deportations**