



Editorial

Welcome to 2017, Despite the gales blowing through our world, with the arrival of the new US administration, debate intensifying around Brexit and escalating crisis in Syria, we find ourselves walking into this new year emboldened and encouraged by the achievements of 2016.

Through our persistent effort, the last of the Ashrafiis were relocated from Camp Liberty, Iraq, to safety, making what seemed impossible a reality. Well done everybody who helped us achieve this liberating victory. Our 2016 Christmas Eve event was a truly inspiring dual celebration, for this success as well as the traditional welcoming of the birth of new hope.

There is no escaping the fact that life has become more bleak in Iran, with devastating news of grave sleepers, the collapse of a high-rise building and the state of the environment all pointing to Government negligence and incompetence.

But, as the light shines more brightly on this year, we see also wonderful examples of courageous endeavours in Iran and signs of increased awareness of the situation around the world.

We are particularly heartened by the fearless stance of prisoners of conscience as they openly challenge the injustices they face, and by the mothers of prisoners who demonstrate outside the prisons for justice for their loved ones, despite many forms of harassment.

And the escalating rate of executions, though horrifying, shows the world very visibly the desperation of the regime's need to oppress for control.

The continued focus of attention of the United Nations on the situation of human rights in Iran, the debates in British and European Parliaments and activities of our volunteers and supporters also keep our hopes high for further great achievements in 2017.

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IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE OF LORDS DEBATE

A debate took place in the House of Lords on 23 January 2017 requested by Lord Tony Clarke of Hampstead. Following are a selection of the comments made in the debate that lasted for about an hour.

Lord Clarke: "I and many others think this is a very pressing issue for us to address as a nation.

"The appalling human rights situation in Iran continues to deteriorate, with the authorities there increasing the pressure on political prisoners, prisoners of conscience and activists, and at the same time increasing the number of executions and public hangings. Reports during this last month include mention of continuing barbaric punishments, as has been the case for so many decades. The punishments include amputation of limbs, public hangings and public floggings. It is clear that the condemnatory resolution of the United Nations General Assembly adopted on 19 December is being ignored by the despotic rulers in Tehran.



"Two weeks ago, the United Nations special rapporteur for human rights in Iran, Ms Asma Jahangir, stated her alarm over the health of several prisoners of conscience in Iran who have been on a prolonged hunger strike contesting the legality of their detention. She also expressed deep concern over the continuous detention of human rights defenders in the country, who she said have been tried on the basis of vaguely

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WHY MRS MOGHERINI HAS FAILED TO ADDRESS IRAN'S APPALLING HR VIOLATIONS?

On the eve of Human Rights Day, European lawmakers held a conference at the European Parliament on Wednesday 7 December. They strongly condemned the violations of human rights in Iran and urged the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini and Member States to condition the expansion of



relationships with Iran to the halt of executions.

This meeting was held on the initiative of the Friends of a Free Iran intergroup at the European Parliament, which has the support of some 300 MEPs from different political groups.

A number of MEPs from various European countries spoke at the event. The following is an excerpt from the speech by the UK MEP, Mr Richard Ashworth:

"It's good that we have so many people here today on International Human Rights Day.

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Iran Human Rights House of Lords Debate *continued from p.1*

defined offences and who were heavily sentenced following trials marred by due process violations.

“The hopes of the international community that things would improve, raised when the so-called moderate Hassan Rouhani took over the presidency in 2013, were quickly dashed. The following year he was saying that executions were ‘God’s commandments’ and ‘laws of the parliament that belong to the people’. He quickly appointed Mostafa Pourmohammadi, one of the main perpetrators of the 1988 massacre of political prisoners in Iran, as his Justice Minister – a murderer.

“It is now 30 years since a young man came into my office in Clapham and showed me pictures of young men hanging from gibbets – impromptu gallows, cranes similar to those used four months ago in the football stadium when they executed those people. It is 30

years since he showed me those pictures and it stays in my memory and always will – to see young men dangling in the air because they had dared to speak out about that in which they believed.

“In asking the Government this Question, all I can say is: please, pursue those responsible for historic crimes against humanity. It may just have some effect on these people who rule by fear and oppression.”

Lord Judd: “I am a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights, and I was determined to get here to say a word in support of my noble friend Lord Clarke, who has been

a long-standing champion on this issue, and whom I salute without reservation in that context.

“I want to underline what has already been said. The human rights record remains deplorable.

“It is no good believing that we can have a lasting, effective relationship with Iran if we prevaricate.”

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Baroness Anelay of St Johns: “I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Clarke of Hampstead, for securing this debate. The fact that it is the second on Iran this year does not mean that there are too many. It is important that this House holds both the Government of this country and the Government of Iran to account on the issue of human rights and how we press the Government of Iran to improve their responses on human rights.”



FAMILY’S CONCERNS REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE POLITICAL PRISONER ALI MOEZZI

Political Prisoner Ali Moezzi has gone missing after family members visited him on 4 January 2017. He never returned to his cell and his cellmates have been worried about this unusual abduction. The prison authorities have given no indication as to what has happened to him and where he has been taken to.

Ali Moezzi was held in hall 12 of ward 4 in Gohardasht Prison of Karaj, west of Tehran. Around 10 am Tehran time, while returning to the ward after a short visit with family members, Mr Moezzi was taken to an unknown location and there is no information about his whereabouts ever since.

Mr Ali Moezzi is the father of two Ashrafis now residing in Albania. His daughters, Hejrat and Forough Moezzi

have called on the international community to get involved to find their father. They are worried that their father’s life is in danger as the Iranian regime is infamous for conducting extrajudicial killings to remove dissidents from the face of the earth.

Ali Moezzi spent time in prison in the 1980s for his activism and was last arrested in 2011. In December 2015 after his term was finished, he was

sentenced to an extra year in prison. Mr Moezzi suffers from various illnesses and has endured torture and solitary confinement during his prison time.

Hejrat Moezzi believes that her father has been taken for interrogation because of the positions he had taken inside the prison, particularly the letters he had written condemning the Iranian regime’s crimes in Aleppo against the Syrian people and others condemning the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988.”

International Liberty Association calls on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Rapporteur for the Human Rights Situation in Iran, Ms Asma Jahangir, to take urgent action to locate Mr Moezzi.



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More and more are calling for words to translate into concrete action and this is what will make the difference. This is what will end the desperate situation in Syria, free the likes of Nazanin, stop executions in Iran and bring the perpetrators of the 1988

massacre to justice.

So let’s start 2017 with a collective pledge, to stay active and do what needs to be done to defend human rights and the dignity of mankind.

We look forward to you continuing to be with us in support of our aims and helping with our campaigns; financially, attending events, writing letters to MPs,

signing petitions, etc.

In this volatile world, our activism defines the boundary between good and evil. Human rights, democracy and rule of law are preserved only if we remain actively involved.

Thank you for your help in the further successes we are sure will come if we all play our parts together.



Why Mrs Mogherini Has Failed to address Iran's Appalling HR Violations? *continued from p.1*

"We as Europeans hold dear our values of promoting the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law. And so as parliamentarians, it's our duty to demand justice over the massacre of more than 30,000 political prisoners.

"Particularly we send that message to the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini. We would expect of her that she represents those very values of democracy, rule of law and human rights that we hold so dear. So therefore, we want to know why Mrs Mogherini in the past year has failed to condemn the appalling human rights abuses taking place in Iran. She should know that the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights situation in Iran has reported that last year executions in Iran surged to nearly 1,000. And that is the highest level in more than a quarter of a century.

"According to Amnesty International, 60% of all registered executions in the world took place in Iran last year. Iran holds the infamous title of Top State Executioner per capita. And it has consistently held the hideous record of Top Executioners of Minors. "Actually, Mrs Mogherini should know that Iran hanged 10 prisoners, including three

women, during the period of her visit to Tehran in April this year. I think it's a matter of deep regretting shame that she chose to remain silent on those appalling human rights violations while she was there.

"So I urge the EU High Representative, I urge the UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, not to allow the mullahs regime to get away with such atrocities as the 1988 massacre. Let us not degrade and devalue our founding principles. We're proud to support the millions of Iranians demanding democracy and humanity. We should press the United Nations to establish a commission of inquiry in order to bring the perpetrators of the 1988 massacre to justice."

Ms Anthea McIntyre, MEP and UK Conservative Party's Deputy Chair said: "For years we have been told that there are moderates and there are hardliners in Iran and that we should support the moderates in order to improve human rights situation in Iran.

"The EU policy has encouraged the mullahs to continue their internal repression and to carry on crimes in Syria in support of Bashar Assad.

"The current minister of Justice in Rouhani's cabinet was a member of the 'Death Commission' which was responsible for thousands of executions.

"It is totally unacceptable for the EU to remain silent and continue business as usual with such a regime.

"Our High Representative Mrs Mogherini must condemn the 1988 massacre as a crime against humanity. The EU should put firm conditions on its future relations with Iran. We must demand a stop to the executions of children. We must demand justice for women. We must demand respect for human rights. The people of Iran expect us from Europe to stand up for them, and not to ignore their suffering. We should side with the people of Iran and not with the brutal dictators in Iran. And that I think is the clear message that should go out from us here today."



IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD CONDEMNED BY THE UN FOR 63RD TIME

On 19 December 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted its 63rd resolution condemning human rights violations in Iran.

This resolution, adopted with 85 votes in favour, expresses "serious concern at the alarmingly high frequency of the imposition and carrying-out of the death penalty [by the Iranian regime]... including executions undertaken for crimes that do not qualify as the most serious crimes, on the basis of forced confessions or against minors and persons who at the time of their offence were under the age of 18..." It also called on the Iranian regime "to abolish, in law and in practice, public executions," and demanded the regime "to ensure, in law and in practice, that no one is subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

The UN resolution urged Tehran "to cease enforced disappearances" and "address the poor conditions of prisons,

to eliminate the denial of access to adequate medical treatment and the consequent risk of death faced by prisoners." It further urged the regime "to end widespread and serious restrictions, in law and in practice, on the right to freedom of expression, opinion, association and peaceful assembly, both online and offline, including by ending the harassment, intimidation and persecution of political opponents, human rights defenders, women's and minority rights

activists..." and "to release persons arbitrarily detained for the legitimate exercise of these rights, to consider rescinding unduly harsh sentences, including the death penalty and long-term internal exile, for exercising such fundamental freedoms" and "to eliminate, in law and in practice, all forms of discrimination and other human rights violations against women and girls," as well as against "persons belonging to ethnic, linguistic or other minorities."





GRAVES FOR THE LIVING

SHOCK AT HARROWING IMAGES OF THE HOMELESS LIVING IN A CEMETERY

BY VICKIE OLIPHANT (EXCERPTS FROM EXPRESS)

At least 300 pre-prepared graves have been built inside the burial plot, with around 20 of them being used as shelter by rough sleepers – sometimes by one person but often by families of up to four, who squeeze into the cramped holes for shelter at night.

In one of the shocking images, an ash-covered man is seen rising from out of a grave as smoke from a fire he had lit to keep warm billowed around him.

Inside his makeshift home, which he had covered with a tarpaulin sheet thick with dirt, the unnamed man rolls a cigarette over a ring bound journal as he sits crouched beside a filthy backpack.

The shocking images were taken to highlight poverty in Iran. At least 20 graves are being occupied.

Other images showed people gathered together and smoking for warmth, while one woman crouches under the remains of a derelict building.

Some are believed to have lived in the cemetery for as long as 10 years.

A guard at the graveyard said: “The first days they came here, we forced them out, but the number of them is high, and they have no other place to go.

“Some of them were taken to a drug rehabilitation centre, but many of them escaped and returned here.”



Some are believed to have lived in the cemetery for as long as 10 years.

He added: “Almost all of them are addicts.”

Around 50 men, women and children were living in the graves

The haunting images spread quickly on social media, where both activists and celebrities reacted with expressions of alarm and sadness.

A spokesman from the International Liberty Association said: “It was very disturbing, the news about the people sleeping in the graves.

“So much money is being used in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, but obviously the money would be better spent to improve lives of Iranians.

“Iran is one of the richest countries for natural resources but most of the money is being plundered by the officials.

“The people in Iran are suffering. They need our help. The international community needs to do more.”

The images are a rare glimpse into the lives of the homeless in Iran, which has been accused of shocking human rights abuses during Mr Rouhani’s reign.

Poverty has also worsened in Iran in recent years.

While the official unemployment rate has risen to 12.7 percent his year, from 10.6 percent in 2014, the number of jobless teens and young adults reached 27 percent.

TEHRAN’S ICONIC HIGH-RISE (PLASCO BUILDING) COLLAPSED AFTER A FIRE

The 15 story building caught fire on 19 January and collapsed when fire-fighters were trying to put out the fire with hopelessly inadequate equipment.

At the time of construction in the 1960s Plasco was the tallest building in Iran and considered an iconic landmark of Tehran.

The fire started on the ninth floor at around 7:50 am local time. The building was heavily occupied at that time by residents and local shop workers, plus visitors and tourists.

Dozens of fire-fighters were in the building at the time of collapse as well as many other people who were there trying to salvage their belongings.

The owner of the building, Mostazafin Foundation, a state run embezzlement agency, is accused of neglect for ignoring warnings about inadequate safeguards in the building. The Mayor of Tehran is also accused of failing to provide the fire-fighters with up-to-date equipment. Rumours have also been spread with regards to a deliberate destruction of the building for financial purposes.





POLITICAL PRISONERS CALL ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS RAPPOREUR FOR IRAN TO INVESTIGATE THE ABUSES OF PRISONERS' RIGHTS



In a letter to the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, Ms Asma Jahangir, Gohardasht political prisoners urge her to address their situation and investigate violation of prisoners' rights by the Iranian regime.

The following is the letter by Gohardasht Political prisoners:

Ms Asma Jahangir, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, Re: New tricks used by Iranian regime for violations of human rights:

As you are aware, the pressure and insistence by international community and human rights organizations have had no effect on the criminal and inhuman behaviour of the Iranian regime's Judiciary and Intelligence Ministry towards political prisoners.

We continue to witness not only more executions, torture, and abuse of prisoners in broader dimensions by the regime officials, but also they have been using new methods recently for suppression of the prisoners which in the first place have not much external aspect or appearance but enough intimidation effects on the prisoners and in particular the prisoners' families to prevent them from any protest action in an intangible form.

These methods, which have been reported to you previously, include abduction and disappearance of prisoners inside the prison in which the prisoners are kidnapped during normal commuting inside the prison.

A newer case includes refusing to release prisoners on a set date after their prison terms ends which not

only frustrates the prisoners and their families and causes disappointment and loss of any hope of freedom and implementation of the law, but also the families anxiety and concern does not end as the release date comes because they are then faced with missing and disappearance of the prisoners.

More importantly, even the prison authorities are not happy and satisfied with these inhuman measures, or at least not explained or informed about the new acts.

Mr Saleh Kohandel, after tolerating 15 years imprisonment was taken to an unknown location one day before his release date and no one is accountable. However, after his mother due to this shocking measure almost had a heart attack and protests by prisoners escalated, they then returned him to the prison instead of releasing him. And naturally right now even according to their absolutely discredited law which has no executive backing, Mr Kohandel is held in prison illegally.

Another newer measure taken against

prisoners is that the prisoners are threatened on the eve of their freedom against any political activity outside prison and their families are prevented from embracing and welcoming the prisoner in front of the prison as they are released. And the [released] prisoners are also denied the right to have their friends and acquaintances visit them at their private home, otherwise new cases would be formed against them.

This is the new meaning and concept of "security and authority" in Rouhani's government that even with mass executions in Iran does not have the courage to announce the whereabouts of political prisoner Ali Moezzi, and the place of his detention. Or in case they have already killed him, they don't dare to announce it.

We, political prisoners in Gohardasht prison in Karaj, ask you as the last resource, to address and investigate this situation.

*Political Prisoner in
Rajaei Shahr (Gohardasht) prison
13 January 2017*

RAFSANJANI AND ME

'The Diplomat' on 19 January published a real story from a victim of state-sponsored terrorism after the death of Akbar Rafsanjani, a leader in the Iranian regime. The following are excerpts from the article:

The minute I heard about the death of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the number two man in the theocracy ruling Iran for decades, I had a flashback to Istanbul, Turkey, on 14 March, 1990.

No, Rafsanjani was not in Turkey on that day. But his henchmen were. And that is when I encountered them directly.

It was mid-afternoon and I was sitting next to the driver taking me to the Istanbul airport. As the driver and I were discussing ways to evade the traffic jam that was caused by an accident, a car carrying four men suddenly blocked our path. And then came a bang. Another car pinned us in from behind.

Seconds later, two strange men, one from the front car and one from the car behind, jumped out with automatic weapons. As the assailants approached, I had a few seconds to decide how to avoid becoming sitting ducks. I opened the car door and rushed at them carrying only a small Samsonite briefcase. One of the men fired nine bullets; the other man's gun jammed. I was shot in the chest and stomach and gravely wounded. The assailants fled. I fell unconscious, my battle for survival had just begun.

All this took place while Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was the clerical regime's president.

The assassination of Iranian dissidents abroad and the regime's terror attacks skyrocketed during Rafsanjani's tenure as the president and as the head of the Supreme National Security Council, a body that oversees and authorizes the regime's terrorist operations.

Make no mistake, Rafsanjani had no impulse toward moderation.



OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY IN LONDON



Our Christmas Party in London was well attended and turned out to be a very inspiring event. Here are some excerpts from participants' feedback:

BERYL: William and I would like to thank you and all those who worked so hard to make the Christmas Eve celebration such a success. We thank you all for a delightful evening.

So much has been achieved this year with the liberation of Camp Liberty. Now we join you all in looking forward to the liberation of Iran from tyranny.



MARIE AND JOHN + AVRIL: Thank you all so much for the wonderful Christmas Eve celebrations, I had a most enjoyable time. The food was delicious, great company and the hall looked really lovely ... and thank you for all the hard work!!

ROSALIND: I am writing to express my thanks and deep appreciation for the wonderful Christmas Eve party on 24 December.

It was again such an occasion of joy and love. Thank you for all the excellent arrangements, the brilliant decorations, delicious food, and most of all the warmth of your unparalleled hospitality.

I consider the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with my Muslim brothers and sisters to be an honour. I wish you all peace, health and happiness in 2017. May it bring us the realisation of our dreams.

FRANCES: Thank you so much for the wonderful party you gave us on the 24th. It was a celebration for the achievement of rescuing ALL the inhabitants of Camp Liberty to a settlement in a friendly country! And celebrate we did with Father Christmas or should I say Father Christmases who showered us with presents, delicious food, beautiful decorations, entertainment and the sound of those happy people in Tirana!

The warmth of those people and the dedicated Iranians here is something not to be forgotten so THANK YOU.



CHRIS: I'd just like to say thanks to all at ILA for a very warm and fun Christmas Eve celebration.

It was a Christmas high point, impressively organised and thoughtfully detailed as ever.

LORI, PAUL, TED, AND WILL: Please share our thanks for a wonderfully uplifting afternoon with all our friends in the ILA family.

As Ted said he couldn't think of anywhere he would rather have been and it was a joyful way to start the festivities. A welcome reminder too that some good things have come out of this year and there is plenty of hope for more in the coming months. Our fondest good wishes.

HELEN: Thank you very much for the wonderful party yesterday. Nick and I were overwhelmed by your generosity! With very best wishes for 2017.



RICHARD: Thank you for the appreciation and accolade! Let's hope and work for more progress in the coming year.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Outrage at 5-Year jail sentence for London mother

Confirmation of the five-year jail sentence for Nazanin Ratchliffe has been condemned as 'outrageous' by Struan Stevenson, a lecturer on Middle East politics and former member of European Parliament. Speaking in Scotland Mr Stevenson said: "[Nazanin] was sentenced to five years imprisonment by Iran's revolutionary court on 'secret charges', apparently relating to an alleged attempt by her to organise the 'soft-overthrow' of the Iranian regime, whatever that is supposed to mean. Reports from the regime's media suggest that this sentence has now been finalised by the Tehran prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi."

Nazanin has told her husband that Revolutionary Guards officials said she must choose between having her daughter, Gabriella, stay with her in Evin prison for up to 3 days a week, or sign a document basically relinquishing custody of her daughter. Both options were clearly unacceptable.

Nazanin's husband has branded her sentence as "a punishment without a crime".



Mother of victim arrested for activism

Shahnaz Akmali, the mother of Mostafa Karim Beigi who was shot dead during the 2009 uprising in Iran, was arrested by Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and no



information about her whereabouts was given to her family.

Shahnaz Akmali was arrested at her workplace on 25 January 2017 and then taken to her home for a house search. The agents confiscated her property.

Mostafa Karim Beigi was shot in the head in Tehran on 27 December 2009. Although Tehran is the place of residence of his family, the security agents did not permit his burial in Tehran.

Every year, before Mrs Akmali holds a memorial service for Mostafa, she has been summoned by the security forces and warned against having a ceremony for her son.

Prisoner Executed before his trial ends

Nasrollah Khazaei, was sentenced to death for "carrying and keeping drugs". He was hanged in Qazvin prison before dawn on Monday 2 January while several Judiciary officials in Tehran said that he should not have been executed.

Nasrollah had no previous criminal record and at the time of execution his case was under review in the upper court in Tehran. In an interview with a Persian language news agency his brother explained: "I called the prosecutor and requested an answer in this regard. They said your brother's case is still under review and told me to call back next month. I said they have executed my brother and today is the seventh day of his memorial ceremony. They answered why did they execute him? His case is still open here [in Tehran] and is not transferred to Qazvin".

At least 78 people have been executed in Iran since the beginning of January.

12,000 Die in Traffic Accidents in 9 Months

Iran's coroner's office in a report published on 24 January said that 12,751 people have lost their lives in traffic accidents in the first nine months of the Iranian calendar year that began on 20 March.

According to the report published by the state-run IRNA news agency 263,904 people have also been injured



during the same period.

The number of traffic deaths in Iran is 25 times that of Japan.

The number of traffic accidents in England is 322 times less than that of Iran, despite the fact that there are three times more vehicles in England compared to Iran.

According to scientific studies, Iran's high number of traffic deaths is due to two major factors; poor road conditions, and poorly manufactured vehicles. 73.8% of fatal accidents in Iran have happened due to narrow and poorly maintained roads. 24% of road accidents are attributed to domestically produced very low-quality vehicles.

Ranked 189 among 190 countries in road accidents, Iran faces a growing disaster due to the incompetence of the authorities.

Iran's Water Crisis

Berlin was hosting a summit on 25 January to discuss Iran's critical water situation.

In their 160-page joint report two science foundations, 'Heinrich Boll' and 'Small Media,' have warned that "ever more regions in Iran are becoming uninhabitable."

According to the report "Lake Urmia, the biggest lake in the Middle East, has lost 12 percent of its area in recent years. This amount is equal to the area of Lake Constance (Bodensee)" with an area of 240 square kilometres, bordering Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

According to this report the main cause of the crisis is the indifference and inaction of the regime's officials and incorrect exploitation of the country's water resources. The report also stresses the "oppressive restrictions" for environmental activists.



THANK YOU FROM TIRANA

A LETTER FROM TIRANA

With greetings, may God give you strength, I am a former resident of Camp Liberty. Our group was the last that left Camp Liberty and came to Albania. Many of us including myself needed medical attention and various surgeries. But the main obstacle was the high level of expenses as we did not have a refugee status and our treatment was halted.

When we were told that ILA has accepted to pay for this round of our medical treatment I thanked God and was waiting for my turn.

Let me tell you a bit about myself. While in Ashraf and after the protection was transferred to Iraq [government], my eyesight was diminishing by the day. Doctors said that both my eyes needed operation. But Iraqi mercenaries did

not allow me to go to specialist doctors outside the camp. I used to play for the basketball team. I had to abandon the sport altogether as I was not able to see properly any longer. After a while, in the evenings, after dark, I could not even see the front of my steps. In Camp Liberty too, the intimidations and harassments continued and there was no medical facility either.

After we arrived in Albania, the question of medical expenses was like a tall wall in front of us, but your continuous and tireless efforts removed all these barriers.

Three weeks ago my turn for medical treatment arrived. I went to ophthalmologist who then operated on one of my eyes. The surgery was very successful and I can see now very clearly with one eye. I really thank you from the bottom of my heart for this.

I am sure you have done many good things in your lives and supported many good causes, but this is different. You are giving sight to an endeavourer, a person who would use all his might to change the world for others. When my organ is cured I can work harder and more effectively in the campaign. So this time it is really different. Just to let you know that by now many of my fellows who needed medical treatment have also been cured and every passing day someone's surgery is done and becomes healthy and active again.

I am now waiting for the operation on my other eye and look forward to your continued efforts.

I wish you success in everything you are doing and may God bless you all and give you more strength.

Hamid (from Tirana),
January 2017

OUR TRIP TO TIRANA

RUTH: Thank you for organizing the wonderful visit to meet the Ashrafi in 'Ashraf 3' and their other temporary homes in Albania.

What a joy to shake hands with Hajar and the other courageous women. They gave us such a warm welcome with their beautiful radiant smiles. It's good to know that they are able to sleep without the threat of rocket attacks.

TONY: I was impressed by welcome and progress. When I got off plane back at Gatwick I could not understand why no one was clapping!

JANET: I really enjoyed my trip to Albania and meeting so many courageous people who are once again rebuilding their lives – this time in Albania. The hard work and optimism of everyone was infectious and so admirable!



Shaho's grandmother laughed when she was introduced as "Shaho's grandmother" and not by her own name! Anyway she was amused when I told her I was Shaho's "auntie"!

PETER: As always, the Ashrafi's inspirational, selfless and sacrificial commitment to winning freedom and justice for their fellow Iranians and their skill and resourcefulness in meeting their own needs was vividly and overwhelmingly brought to life for us.

MICHAEL: I found the welcome we received rather overwhelming and

sometimes a bit embarrassing they were all so enthusiastic at seeing us. I felt like royalty with all the hand shaking.

MALCOLM: It was very impressive to see the number of activities and locations and the amount of work achieved since my last visit. The amount of new building surprised me.

CYNTHIA: Warmest thanks, from Michael and myself, for giving us the wonderful opportunity and privilege of visiting and meeting with the brave Ashrafi in Tirana. We were quite overwhelmed – and greatly honoured by the very kind welcome and friendship that we received.



JOHN KERRY VERY PROUD OF THE EFFORT TO GET THE RESIDENTS OF CAMP LIBERTY TO SAFETY

On 19 January 2017, John Kerry, then US Secretary of State, in his farewell remarks praised the representatives of families of Ashrafi "in those yellow jackets" at hearings in US Congress, as well as his special envoy for Camp Liberty, Jonathan Winer, and expressed how proud he was of the effort that

resulted in the relocation of all the residents of Camp Liberty to safety. He said: "We got 3,000 of them out of Camp Liberty and to places where they are safe and their lives are saved from being attacked regularly, as they were. I thank our special envoy and others for that kind of effort. It's been enormous."