

International Liberty Association Newsletter

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Editorial

It is our great hope that as you read this newsletter you will feel the same sense of season we did when preparing it. Although not yet free from the cold, dark grip of Winter, the lengthening days and occasional warm sunshine, the flowers that are pushing up from the bowels of the earth, bringing colour and scent to the bleak landscape, all herald a better world soon to come.

Good wishes for NoRuz, the Persian New Year, and Easter tumble over each other, with greetings from London, Camp Liberty, Tirana, each expressed with the love, high spirits and passion that epitomises the enduring spirit of Ashraf.

The core messages of Easter and NoRuz are very much aligned, the triumph of life, love, joyous good fellowship, over the cold, dark grip of death, or the death-like grip of a harsh winter. All the sentiments expressed in this newsletter leave no doubt as to the symbolism embodied within these two key festivals.

Many make a point that NoRuz and Easter are very close together this year. While NoRuz is aligned with the Spring equinox, Easter is a 'moveable feast', based on a complex algorithm involving a lunar cycle within a solar calendar. There will not be another Easter in March until 2024, by which time we have no doubt the world will be a very different and, we have every faith, a far better place.

It is true that there is still much harshness in our world. We see it in the oppression of the people inside Iran and the continuing privations in Camp Liberty, not to mention the horrors of Syria and the turbulence in the whole region and the wider world.

We also mourn and pay tribute to those who have not made it through this winter to share the joys of spring with us. Here we commemorate

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Happy Easter & NoRuz from Tirana



FARZANEH MADOMI: Your support in times of difficulty is always a source of hope and inspiration for me. I am glad that I have this opportunity, the occasion of Easter and the Iranian New Year, to thank you once again. I was thrilled to hear some of your voices over the telephone and with all my heart I send my greetings for this magnificent occasion and time of change in nature. With best wishes for you I hope happiness, verdure and prosperity

engulfs your life and your family in the coming year.

have met me in person in Tirana and know about the sweet and bitter parts of my life. I received many Christmas cards this year that affected me a lot and made me extremely happy. I thought to



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ISJ urging the UN Security Council to adopt binding decisions on the security and wellbeing of Camp Liberty residents

In a letter to members of the UN Security Council, Dr Alejo Vidal-Quadras, President of International Committee in Search of Justice (ISJ) and former Vice-President of the European Parliament, after highlighting all the difficulties the residents of Camp Liberty have endured during the 4 years since their forced eviction from Camp Ashraf and transfer to Camp Liberty which was supposed to be a Temporary Transit Location (TTL), and after highlighting the various agreements and commitments of various UN bodies and the United States and their broken promises, asked the UNSC to "adopt binding decisions on the security and wellbeing of Camp Liberty residents".

ISJ is composed of parliamentarians,



former officials and other dignitaries from across the world with an interest in promoting human rights, freedom, democracy, peace and stability. ISJ's campaigns have enjoyed the support of over 4000 parliamentarians on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the letter to members of the UN

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It would be naive to think Rouhani is a 'moderate'



Lord Tony Clarke of Hampstead, former Leader of the Labour Party told a meeting of a delegation of British

parliamentarians with Mrs Maryam Rajavi in Paris "it would be naive to think Rouhani is a moderate".

Lord Clarke told the meeting: "Rouhani and his ministers who wish to shadow their smiles and mount statements and suggestions that somehow they've become moderates. Moderates? Two recent reports from Amnesty International and United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child clearly expose the truth of how the mullahs treat their citizens, especially young people.

"Last month, on January 26 Amnesty International informed the world 'Iran continues to execute juvenile offenders in plain violation of the absolute legal prohibition on the use of the death penalty against people under the age of 18 at the time of their crime.'

"The report went on to list the 73 executions of juvenile offenders and

Lord Tony Clarke of how at least 160 are still on death row.

"What are the crimes? What are the crimes of these young people? Membership of an illegal organization. Participation in an illegal gathering. These measures, these threats, these sentences, are designed by a frightened and wicked government to prevent youngsters from enjoying the freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

"They are frightened because when youngsters start talking about the lives that they are leading, they will soon turn to find another alternative to the oppression they're suffering."

"It would be naive in the extreme to think that Rouhani has become a moderate," he said.

Lord Tony Clarke also said that the nuclear agreement between the Iranian regime and the West "has nothing to do with the freedom of people or the respect of human rights. It was done for trade reasons, and for money. And those billions of dollars really ought to be going to help the welfare of the people.

"If the West really believe they

can bring about change they should demand an end to the executions and the barbaric amputations, bring an end to the tortures, and release the political prisoners, as well as Tehran stopping his murderous move against the residents of Camp Liberty."

Lord Clarke of Hampstead praised Maryam Rajavi's 10-point plan for the future of Iran saying it "provides a clear, articulated democratic platform that would not only serve the Iranian people, but also the entire region in the long run."

He told Mrs Rajavi: "I commend your courage as a Muslim woman, to put forward such a modern vision for your country, which to the best of my knowledge is the only public platform from an Iranian opposition group about what their goals are for the future.

"I will continue to support it and urge my government and colleagues to do the same. And I'd like to close by saying the words that the late Lord Robin Corbett said on more than one occasion: Iran will be free."

ISJ urging the UN Security Council to adopt binding decisions on the security ... continued from p.1

Security Council ISJ specifically asked for:

- The Security Council should commend Albania for its generosity in accepting a large number of residents and encourage this country to accept all Camp Liberty residents while offering this country the necessary political, security and economic assistance in this regard. Moreover, the Security Council should encourage other European countries to admit more residents;
- The Security Council should obligate Iraq to facilitate the sale of

residents' property in Ashraf or have the Government of Iraq reimburse the residents for that property so that they can finance and accelerate the resettlement process;

The Security Council needs to obligate Government of Iraq to provide the necessary provisions for security and protection of Camp Liberty and to have the file of Liberty and its management removed from Faleh al-Fayyadh and Colonel Sadeq Mohammed Kadhim and see to it that impartial people not previously

involved in previous crimes against the residents take over these tasks and ensure provision of the minimum security requirements such as the return of all T-walls;

- The United States and coalition forces should provide and ensure the aerial protection of Camp Liberty;
- Camp Liberty ought to be recognized as a refugee camp under UNHCR supervision and residents should be recognized as refugees;
 - The Security Council should ... continued on p.3

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three of these special people as tribute to them all.

But, in truth, this edition of our newsletter is about love, life, laughter, the joy of shared commitment and shared purpose. The knowledge that in Tirana the spirit of Ashraf and a new beacon of hope is shining brightly, while the pulse of Camp Liberty also still beats strongly, and the infectious spirit of both, ignite our spirit here in London, urging us on to greater efforts.

And so we too, the editorial team, would like to wish you a very happy and joyful NoRuz and Easter and encourage you all to keep that spirit alight. We are

put in mind of the poem that begins "To everything there is a season – a time for every purpose under Heaven"

There are so many signs that, united as we are in truth and love, love of justice and freedom, our unified spirit is indeed unquenchable and unstoppable and our season may indeed be nearly upon us. Thank you one and all.

Happy Easter & NoRuz from Tirana continued from p.1

send my greetings for the occasion of Easter which coincides with our New Year celebrations and salute you from the deep bottom of my heart.

NoRuz is the harbinger of Spring, of new life, light and verdancy on the one hand and an end to Winter, frigidity and darkness on the other. With most sincere greetings I wish you a happy and successful New Year that starts with flourishing Spring.

MORAD: Hello and greetings to you all for Easter and NoRuz. The occasion is an opportunity to send you my best wishes but also to talk to you with a few words. I have met many of you, the magnificent guardians and supporters of Liberty residents and us in Albania, since I came to Tirana. You



are like angels who have encircled and comforted us with their wings of passion and mercy. I had heard about you for years and always wanted to see you in person and

fortunately it happened in my lifetime and for that I thank God.

Please allow me to once more thank you all, those who I had the privilege to meet in Tirana and those who I have not yet seen in person, to thank you and say how grateful we are all for the reviving support you have given us, whether in Ashraf, Liberty or here in Tirana. Your backing is inspiring and I thank you on behalf of all of us in Tirana and send my best greetings. Happy Easter and NoRuz.

AZAM HAJ HEYDARI: Many salutes to you all. NoRuz is a symbol of change for us Iranians, a change in nature, a change of hearts, and a change of our attitudes towards and treatment of others. We pray to God to change us in all these directions for the better. So let me also use the opportunity to wish the best of everything for you, my dearest friends who played a significant role in saving my life and the lives of my fellows.

Happy Easter and NoRuz and may you remain happy and lively forever.



... and Happy Easter & NoRuz from London

JAMSHEED: Greetings, Greetings, Greetings – Many of you will remember me, I am sure, as you have seen me at time of arrival of the NoRuz celebrations each year dressing up as 'Amo NoRuz' (Uncle NoRuz) who is the symbol of kindness, grace, warmth and forgiveness. I (Amo NoRuz) am in fact at that moment, the twin brother of 'Father Christmas' who brings you the same benevolent message each year at Christmas time.

I am very grateful to have this





opportunity to send you my kindest and warmest wishes for the New Year (1395). I am sincerely grateful to you as you have always been beside us as a member of our grand family, you have rejoiced with us at times of joy, and you have been the source of strength for us at times of hardship. I therefore take the opportunity to wish you happy Easter and to express my deepest wishes for your happiness in the coming Persian year.

REZA: My Dear Friends, over 300 million people around the world celebrate the arrival of spring on 21st of March every year. It is a turning point

for Mother Nature.

Any time I visit you I feel Spring in your eyes, in your inspiration and in your great support and friendship. May light triumph over darkness, may Peace transcend the earth, may freedom come to Iran and the world, may NoRuz bring good fortune for our heroes and heroines in Camp Liberty, and finally may our friendship last forever and be an example for everybody in the world.

Happy NoRuz, Happy Easter, Happy Spring.



ISJ urging the UN Security Council to adopt binding decisions on the security ... continued from p.2

obligate Government of Iraq to terminate the restrictive conditions imposed on Camp Liberty; end the siege on the camp, particularly its medical blockade; and give the residents free access to purchase all their necessities:

By convening an impartial international delegation, the seven massacres of residents in Ashraf and Liberty, especially the September 1, 2013 massacre in Ashraf and the

October 29, 2015 slaughter in Camp Liberty, and the 7-year siege of Ashraf and Liberty, should be investigated and the perpetrators of these atrocities should be identified and brought to justice.

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Farewell

Britain's outspoken voice of conscience and champion of human rights, Lord Avebury, has died

The longest serving Liberal Democrat Peer, Lord Eric Avebury, 87, died of cancer on Valentine's Day, Sunday, 14 February 2016 and left a legacy of honourable defence of human rights in a variety of countries and in particular Iran.

Humanity has lost one of its most noble and gracious members and the people of Iran have lost one of the



most honourable advocates of their rights.

At a time when indifference and moral apprehension rules in the face of the

bloodbath in Syria and the incessant and countless number of executions in

Iran, the world desperately needs voices like Lord Avebury to defend humanity and justice without being hindered by political and commercial considerations

While saluting and honouring his radiant memory and incredible life, we extend our condolences to his esteemed family, especially to Lady Lindsey Avebury.

Former UN chief who supported rights of Camp Ashraf has died

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a veteran Egyptian diplomat, the first UN Secretary General from the African continent and a supporter of the rights of the residents of Camp Ashraf, died on Tuesday 16 February. He was 93 years old.

Boutros-Ghali stepped into the post of UNSG in 1992 at a time of dramatic world changes, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

In his farewell speech to the UN, Boutros-Ghali said he had thought when he took the post that the time was right for the United Nations to play an effective role in a world no longer

divided into warring camps.

In a letter to the United Nations Secretary General on 9 July 2011 he warned the UN about impending massacres against the residents of Camp Ashraf and described their forcible

displacement as "illegal," "a prelude to another massacre" and "a gift to the Iranian regime and its proxies in Iraq."

In his letter he wrote: Based on my experience of the region and given

the risk of another imminent human tragedy, the current situation of Ashraf

requires immediate action. In this context and due to the US Administration's role in the Iraqi process since 2003, also given the obligations that are subsequent to such a role at the legal, political and moral levels, I

would consider relocation of all 3,400 residents or Ashraf to US territories as the most appropriate transitional and reliable way to ensure the protection of the Ashraf population.

UN officer who documented Camp Ashraf massacre assassinated

On Tuesday, 16 February, the UN Assistant Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) announced that the death of its representative in Diyala Province, Amer al-Kaissy, had been confirmed. He was abducted by the militias affiliated with the Iranian regime in April 2015.

Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, stressed: "For more than nine months we have sought the intervention of the Government on the local and national levels to ensure his safe return to his



family ... I am deeply disappointed that our efforts and appeals went unanswered." UNAMI called on Iraqi officials to conduct a comprehensive and transparent investigation and bring the perpetrators of this brutal assassination to justice.

After learning of the massacre of Ashraf residents on 1st September 2013, Amer al-Kaissy went there and through sending documented reports began disclosing this horrific crime.

The militias who killed the UNAMI representative are under the command of Hadi al-Ameri, Commander of the Badr Organization, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, Commander of al-Hashd al-Shaabi, both close allies of the Iranian regime. They slaughtered more than one hundred civilians in Meqdadiya in January this year.







Women's rights in Iran are systematically denied

At an online conference on Friday, 19 February, prominent women's rights activists and lawyers from the United Kingdom discussed the appalling situation for women in Iran and called on the UK government and international community to not stand silent in the face of state-sanctioned violence against women in the country.

The conference was moderated by Dowlat Nowrouzi, the UK Representative of the National Council of Resistance

of Iran and participants included Linda Lee, former President of the Law Society of England & Wales, Lady Val Corbett, prominent women's rights activist, and Margaret Owen OBE, the director of Widows for Peace through Democracy, a UN Consultant NGO.

In their remarks, the speakers condemned the Iranian regime's appalling treatment of women and lack

of minimum protections for them. They emphasised that women in Iran are being denied their fundamental rights including the right to choose their clothing.

"Rouhani is depicted as liberal, but it is the Supreme Leader Khamenei who is pulling the strings", Lady Corbett said, adding, "Since Rouhani came to power, the Iranian parliament has passed a legislation to protect those attacking women with acid under the pretext of combating 'mal-veiling'. Rouhani will not change the women's rights situation in Iran; it would be naïve to think that."

Margaret Owen agreeing with Lady Corbett's remarks added, "The terrible violence against women and youths in Iran is sickening. The Iranian regime is against religion because thugs that attack women with acid are not punished. This regime executes juveniles and forces girls at the age of nine into marrying older men. At least 73 juveniles have been executed during the last decade, and according to Amnesty International, 160 are now on death row. Iran has signed up to the conventions on children rights but they do not care."

Linda Lee, the former President of the Law Society of England & Wales, said: "The laws in Iran are not just, especially those laws against the women. We must work through government and use our right at the UN to force the Tehran regime to change its appalling behavior. This complete silence is shameful."

The speakers also praised the brave Iranian women for challenging the regime's misogyny with great personal

sacrifices. They pointed out that there is a huge potential among women for change in Iran.

"The change will come from women; punitive sanctions are a way to push for change but women are the true power for change in Iran. As we approach International Women's Day, I urge the younger women in the West to get involved and stand with their sisters in

Iran and spread their cause in social media," Ms Lee said.

Dowlat Nowrouzi concluded: "The regime ruling Iran justifies its brutal suppression of women through so called Islamic laws and culture, which has nothing to do with the essence of Islam and Iranian people's culture as one of the world's oldest civilizations. These laws are also in clear violation of international law. These are medieval ideas pursued by the misogynist mullahs and forced on women and girls through various repressive armed forces affiliated with IRGC (Revolutionary Guards). The international community, UK, EU, US and UN must impose punitive actions including sanctions on the ruling religious dictatorship to effectively pressure the regime to stop executions; to abolish these inhumane so called 'Islamic laws' and comply with international laws and conventions; and to make upgrading political and economic relations of the western governments contingent upon major improvement of the human rights situation in Iran."





In solidarity with Ashrafis in Albania

At our event on 18 February we had a chance to talk to the Ashrafis in Tirana and be inspired by their steadfastness and high spirits. The event was enhanced with participation of musicians and speakers from 3 generations. We would like to share with you now the wonderful words spoken by the representative of the elder generation, Frances Radford:

I have known the International Liberty Association for several years. It is a pleasure to see you here and to know that you would like information about the ILA.

I became involved when I heard about the dissident Iranian group living in Camp Ashraf in Iraq. A place of beauty made entirely by their own effort and skills. Photos show an attractive place, well organised and cared for ... but, alas, in short – outside agents made trouble for the residents who were forced by the authorities to transfer to Camp Liberty. 'Liberty' in name but nothing else and certainly nothing to do with freedom!

However, undaunted these courageous people worked hard, men and women, to lessen the harsh conditions of their stay there. They have endured much, including terrible rocket attacks followed by the frustration of being unable to obtain medical help when urgently needed, and necessary supplies. One is filled with admiration for their courage and tenacity - and HOPE – in the face of all these events. What an example! I have felt involved, chiefly from a humanitarian point of view - not political - simply because these are suffering human beings.

















Their present position amid all the violence and chaos that surrounds them has made it vitally important to rescue the residents of Camp Liberty. To this end their Iranian friends of the ILA have increased their determination to liberate these heroic people.

Through these Iranian friends the rest of us have been kept informed of developments such as news of those rescued, those still in the Camp, photos and even a telephone link to Liberty Camp where one could listen in or ask questions.

I have had the pleasure of meeting a few of those men and women who have been released – heroes in my mind! Lovely people and what joy it must have given their liberators.

It is often not realised how much work goes on behind the scenes to enable these people to be settled elsewhere. It takes time, ingenuity, patience and above all FAITH that it can be done. A country has to be found to take them, then there is transport to get them there and once there, living accommodation and support. I know that these Iranians who give their services freely deny themselves many things to support their cause.

I have great admiration for the Iranian community members who carry out all this work. They seem to have endless patience and good will. When coming here you are received with kindness and courtesy which conveys a sense of harmony and peace. And I may say through their huge generosity us friends were given a delightful party at Christmas time – such a surprise treat – much fun and laughter and delicious food. Thank you once again.

The latest – two pieces of good news. 700 residents of Camp Liberty have been relocated in Albania last year. Great work! Secondly the International Liberty Association has been accorded charity status which means that donations from tax payers receive a boost.

But more to come – I hope you will join us in the celebrations of Persian New Year and Easter on 23 April.



Brief News From Iran

Political prisoner continues hunger strike



Mohammad Ali Taheri, a prisoner of conscience in the notorious Tehran Evin Prison, has been on hunger strike since

30 January and has vowed to continue until he is unconditionally released after serving his term of 5 years behind bars.

Mohammad Ali Taheri, founder of a new spiritual group in Iran called Erfane-Halgheh, was arrested on 4 May 2011 and sentenced for obscure charges like "insulting sanctities" and "writing misleading books and articles".

Degrading public punishments before sham elections

In the run-up to the sham elections in Iran, the clerical regime in Tehran intensified carrying out cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment in public including parading young men and boys under the age of 18 while blindfolded and with their hands tied wearing prisoners' clothing.

The Iranian regime's repressive State Security Forces (police) in the northwestern city of Tabriz on Tuesday 16 February cruelly pulled four men out of their cars in a crowded street and paraded them while they were blindfolded and their hands were tied to each other.

In one such incident in Iran, last year, a young man who had been accused of 'offering a water pipe and running a teahouse' at his home, while paraded agonizingly cried: "I am hungry. I have a family. Give me a job. If I have a job, I will not serve water pipes."



On February 10, security forces paraded two Iranian youths in Farhang Street of the city of Sari who made a living by collecting trash on the charge of breaking the glasses of a shop.

Iran's state media put new bounty on head of British author

Iran's 40 state-run media outlets have jointly offered a new \$600,000 bounty for the head of British author Salman Rushdie. The announcement was made



to coincide with the anniversary of the fatwa issued by Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic.

Mansour Amini, the head of the Saraj Cyberspace Organization and the Secretary of the Third Exhibition of Islamic Revolution's Digital Medias announced on February 17 the names of the outlets that contributed money to the fund. The state-run Fars News Agency, which is closely affiliated to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), was among the largest contributors. Amini said that Fars has devoted one billion Rials, or nearly \$30,000. Cyberban also allocated one billion Rials, while Tehran Press News allocated 300 million, or nearly \$10,000 and Saraj Cyberspace Organization and the Headquarters for Advocating Virtue each allocated 500 million Rials for the potential assassination.

The mere fact that even the media outlets in this regime allocate a budget for terror manifests that terrorism is intertwined with its very existence.

Farcical elections

Sham elections in Iran on 26 February ended with chaos. The emergence of Rafsanjani as the top man in the

Assembly of Experts (the assembly of mullahs who select the next supreme leader) is indicative that the current leader, Khamenei, has lost support even among his repressive forces (the only ones who voted with their families). The general public boycotted the elections and the videos of empty polling stations put on YouTube by activists is revealing enough. Good news is that each election farce makes this medieval dictatorship weaker.

Omid Alishenas was released on bail

Children rights activist, Omid Alishenas, was released on a bail of 700 million tomans (nearly £160,000) after 16 months of detention.

Omid's mother and her brave friends who staged months of demonstrations in front of Evin prison celebrated his release.







HAPPY EASTER AND NORUZ FROM CAMP LIBERTY

NARGESS DOKMECHI: I heard about the beautiful Christmas Cards that you sent to us. It has been very uplifting for us. Please let me take the opportunity of this festive season to send my best greetings to you for the arrival of Spring and Easter. You are always in our thoughts during happy times and during hard times. I hope to be able to see you in person soon. With my best and most sincere wishes for the New Year.



ZEYNAB: Warm greetings from afar to every one of you the guardian angels of Camp Liberty, warm greetings for the occasion of Easter and Persian New Year.

Even though we are very far but I feel your presence since our hearts are so close. I am very grateful of what you have been doing for us and look forward to the day that I see you in person. The New Year is arriving and I am sure you know that for us Iranians it is an indication of the coming of Spring and end of Winter. That is why we celebrate



and as we celebrate we pray, pray that the dark wintery climate that has encompassed my country for so many years be gone soon and replaced by the verdure associated with

Spring. I think of you as a member of my family and send my best greetings for NoRuz and Easter from here, Camp Liberty. May angels of God keep you protected and happy all year long. HAMOON: As Spring is arriving and seasons change, I hope and pray for the big change for my people and the arrival of the awesome Persian Spring. I wish each and every



one of you health and happiness and greet you from the bottom of my heart for the occasion of Easter and NoRuz. Your presence alongside us, the support you have given us all these times, gives me and my friends hope and makes us more resolute in our path and quest for freedom. I love you all.

NORUZ & EASTER CELEBRATION

Please join us for the celebration of Persian New Year and Easter.

We have organised an event on 23 April at Hammersmith Town Hall.

It will be an opportunity to meet friends and enjoy Persian hospitality, cuisine and music.

Saturday, 23 April 5:00 – 8:30 pm

Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, Hammersmith, LONDON W6 9JU

Entry fee: £10 (payable at the door)
Please let us know if you are able to come and if you
are bringing family or friends.

RSVP: email – event@iliberty.org.uk or call 020 8452 3481



SPONSORED RUN ON BEHALF OF LIBERTY RESIDENTS

My name is Kevin Lawler and I have been an ILA supporter for approximately four years. During that time, I have been deeply moved by the plight of the residents of Camp Liberty and I was particularly distressed by the rocket attack on the camp last October. This heightened my determination to take positive action to raise further funds to expedite the release and safe passage of the interns.

To that end, I have entered the Eastleigh 10km run on Sunday, 20 March, and I am seeking sponsors for this event

Please respond generously.

To sponsor email: info@iliberty.org.uk or call 020 8452 3481

Thanks in anticipation of your kind support for my efforts.

To the left is a photo of me resting after the Great South Run in 2015 where I ran on behalf of CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.