



Editorial

As another year draws to a close, we extend our grateful thanks and appreciation to all our friends old and new, who have been with us during these challenging months of 2015. It is without doubt the result of all our efforts that the people of Camp Liberty have not just survived the year, but maintained such high spirits despite all the privations and dangers they face.

This year has seen the bonds of friendship and family extending and deepening around a world that grows ever more intimate as we experience the truth that freedom lovers, defenders of liberty, whoever they may be speak a common language of the heart and that those who care, though separated by thousands of miles, are, in that same truth, only a heartbeat away.

Peace and goodwill to all – a key message of the Christmas season. The heartfelt wishes of appreciation and gratitude – from Camp Liberty, Tirana, London, Paris – in this, our Christmas newsletter, speak to the powerful reality of this shared understanding and sense of purpose.

Christmas is also a time of poignancy and reflection, especially when the core message of love and joy to the world is challenged by harsh and brutal daily reality and so many seek redemption by the pages of history turning to a fresh New Year.

The reminder that this is the fourth Christmas that many of the people of Ashraf will be spending in the Temporary Transit Location of Camp Liberty spans space and time as it finds echoes in the memory of four Christmases spent in the trenches of WWI, each year with a more heart rending prayer that “the war will be over by Christmas”. These echoes grow louder in the context of this being the fifth Christmas since the ‘Arab Spring’ in Syria and the seventh

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The daughter of an Iranian political prisoner speaks out

Paria Kohandel, the daughter of prominent political prisoner Saleh Kohandel, spoke about her sufferings and torment in Iran as well as the hidden determination that exists in the hearts and minds of millions of Iranians like the flames of hope under the ashes of repression. She addressed

a meeting in Paris on the occasion of World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10 October. The keynote speaker of the meeting was Mrs Maryam Rajavi, and participants included Rt. Hon. David Jones MP, former Secretary of State for Wales in the cabinet of Prime

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US Senate hearing urges protection for residents of Camp Liberty

On Wednesday, 7 October 2015, the US Senate Committee on Armed Services held a hearing titled ‘Iranian Influence in Iraq and the Case of Camp Liberty’. The hearing was aired live on the Senate website.

Senator John McCain [right], Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, warned that residents of Camp Liberty have been constantly victims of harassment and rocket attacks by agents of the Iranian regime and Iraqi militia groups.

Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Democrat Member of the committee said: “The Iranian dissidents at Camp



Liberty are in an increasingly perilous situation, having repeatedly come under attack. These horrific attacks, which have killed more than 100 members

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Daughter of Iranian political prisoner speaks out *continued from p.1*



Minister David Cameron; Edmond Spaho, Vice President of the Albanian Parliament; Gilbert Mitterrand, former member of the French National Assembly, President of France Libertés (Foundation set up by Danielle Mitterrand) and son of the late French President François Mitterrand; Dr Phumla Makaziwe Mandela, daughter of the late South African leader Nelson Mandela; and many other prominent personalities from all parts of the world.

In her speech, Paria Kohandel said: I left Iran only a few months ago.

My father is political prisoner Saleh Kohandel who is imprisoned in the dreaded Gohardasht Prison.

On 8 April, 2011, my dear uncle Akbar and my beloved aunt Mahdieh were martyred in an attack [on Camp Ashraf] by Nuri Maliki's paid hands.

My dear sister Maryam, I bring you many greetings and hails.

The greetings of thousands of political prisoners in Iran prisons;

The cries of mothers whose tears rain down on the floors of prisons;

The greetings of the working children with calloused hands who are waiting to breathe the clean air that you represent; the air of liberty and emancipation;

The greetings of the trampled girls in the pus of mullahs' ruled society;

The greetings of those who kiss the noose in Gohardasht, Evin and Kahrizak.

My greetings have passed through the barbed wires of Gohardasht, the thick

walls of Evin, and the storehouses of Qarchak;

The prisons where during my childhood I used to run in their dusty visitors' halls.

I am the weekly voyager to Gohardasht and Evin prisons. As my father says, the Paris with a wonderful voice whose father lived only 20 minutes a week.

Twenty minutes from behind the dusty glass and my only hope was to see the shine in the eyes of my father when he talked about liberty. He was so energetic and I couldn't figure out where he brings all that energy from.

I go back to 4 March 2007 when I was an 8-year-old restless girl.

I was deep in my thoughts and was calmly weeping. My father embraced me and kept talking to me until I fell asleep. The morning of that day, elements of the Intelligence Ministry broke into our house, broke our windows, put a gun to my head and took my father with them.

My father was in prison for one and a half years before that as well and this time, because he said no to their demand that he speak against the PMOI in an interview, he was condemned to ten years in prison and sent to the dreaded Gohardasht prison, which was far from his family, consequently making visits from them very difficult.

The whole story was about these 10 years that led me to choose this path in my life.

A few months ago, exactly 20 days before the entrance test for universities, I left Iran.

I said to myself that Paria you now can have anything that you ever wanted that

was forbidden in Iran. All your dreams and your colourful wishes; to ride a motorcycle, that was my biggest dream, to exercise Parkour and gymnastics, and to study my favourite field which is physics.

However, what I had left behind in Iran would not let go of me. I found myself in a dilemma: should I follow my dreams or should I choose the path of resistance to bring about the dreams of all the children that are captive in Iran, such as the dreams of my dear friend and other girls like her?

In the last moments of making that decision, I remembered my last meeting with my father.

As I was going to visit him, a 9-year-old boy came along. He passed through the dark and horrendous 1 km tunnel of Gohardasht with me. He was carrying a drawing in his hand. When I looked at it, I wanted to cry. He had drawn a picture of himself and his father hand in hand.

I remembered my childhood when I was in his shoes. I was really moved. I told my father: Today, as I was coming to see you, I passed through the memories of my childhood.

That boy had a message for me which said: Paria, look! You are not the sole traveller of these tunnels. Before you, hundreds of children have travelled these tunnels and after you hundreds of other children are condemned to pass this path as long as this regime rules your homeland.

And the other moments that I had in making my decision:

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Daughter of Iranian political prisoner speaks out *continued from p.2*

I remembered uncle Ali, I am talking about Ali Saremi, the best uncle in the whole world; his last glance at me. Resting his head against the skewed bars of the visitors' cabin he smiled as he saw me, a lovely smile that was full of energy. It had a message for me. A few weeks later, I heard that he had been executed.

My best uncle was gone. It was as if I had to get used to see people that I love leave me; like uncle Abdolreza Rajabi that was martyred under torture. Or the sad moments that I again experienced when uncle Mohsen Dogmechi was martyred. These moments made me restless. I saw my solid and powerful uncle Mohsen who had become sick and feeble because he was deprived of medical care, but his love still penetrated the depth of my soul and his power still shook the guards.

All of them had a message for me in the last minutes of their lives. At that moment, I came to understand that I have to be their voice, to testify to their struggle, to be the interpretation of the glance of uncles Mohsens and Alis. This would be my responsibility and my great dream.

I understood that I cannot just think about my own dreams. My colourful dreams are just a small part of my life. I owe it to my family, to the prisoners, to my martyred uncles, and ultimately to my struggling father; because I am free now.

When the Iranian girls have so many dreams that look so far away, to pursue my own dreams would be selfish. And that was how I forwent my small interests, just like thousands of Ashrafis.

My big dream is to see the happiness of children so that they never have to pass through the tunnel of Gohardasht.



Pumla Makaziwe (Maki) Mandela, daughter of the late Nelson Mandela, compared her own childhood with the experiences of Paria and Farzad and told them: "Stay with hope and resilience...you will succeed in your fight against evil."



Edmond Spaho, Vice President of the Albanian Parliament, addressed the conference on behalf of a large delegation from Albania.



Farzad Madadzadeh is the brother of Mahdieh and Akbar, martyred in the 8 April 2011 attack on Camp Ashraf. He was tortured and jailed for 5 years and escaped Iran only a few months ago.

To make true the dream of girl petty sellers or the small boys that sell omens in our neighbourhood.

Dear sister Maryam,

It is difficult to become a Mahdieh. I was afraid of such great responsibility on my shoulders, but in your glance and in your trust and love I saw the message "we must and can".

I will carry the flag of Mahdieh on my shoulder. Here today, in front of everyone, I pledge to travel the path of my martyred aunt and uncle and to bring about the world of love to everyone, without any expectations for myself.

Now that I am among all of you who work for freedom, I can hear the echo of my father's call who said: Paria! I have drunk the pure wine that you have not even smelled. He was right!

From here, I say to all those resisting prisoners that I used to see every week from behind the cabin windows, that I have learned from all of you that perseverance and resistance is something that no one can take away from you.

To my dear brother Massoud I say that I, Paria Kohandel, have chosen to remain steadfast until the very end. I am ready!

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since the 2009 uprisings in Iran and first attack on Ashraf.

We take great heart from the words of Paria Kohandel. They show so clearly the futility of Khomeini's claim that, given the indoctrination of the young people of Iran for a generation, they would be

loyal to the principles of velayat-e faqih. For every one of the 120,000 martyrs to the cause of freedom for Iran there is a son, daughter, niece, nephew, who, like Paria, gladly follows in their footsteps with the same courage, perseverance and selfless dedication to the goal of freedom for their country and its people.

And so let us all celebrate this Christmas with peace and joy in our hearts secure in the clear knowledge that the eternal flame of freedom will never be extinguished and love will conquer all. Iran will be free and all our friends are invited to celebrate next Christmas with us in Tehran.



Maryam Rajavi: "We want an Iran without the death penalty"

Excerpts from Maryam Rajavi's speech at the Paris conference on World Day Against the Death Penalty:

Your invaluable presence here today demonstrates a powerful solidarity with the people of Iran who are subjugated by the mullahs' daily hangings of their children.

The clerics hang young men under the name of Islam, despite the fact that according to the holy books, killing one person is akin to killing the entire humanity.

While a single execution is enough to torment everyone's conscience, world powers have remained disgracefully silent over the situation in Iran. Sacrificing human lives at the altar of commercial interests has never been a good investment for anyone.

If Western governments had stood up to the abuse of human rights in Iran, the mullahs could have never expanded their barbarity to Syria and Iraq.

Benefitting from the policy of appeasement, the mullahs have easily occupied large parts of Iraq. They also continued their deadly intervention in Syria to prop up the tyrant of Damascus. The outcome has been the death of 300,000 people in Syria, and the flight of refugees abroad and the emergence of ISIS.

Now that the mullahs have failed in Syria, Russia has stepped in to save Bashar al-Assad or at least safeguard its own interests in that part of the world.

The massacre and repression of the Syrian people must be stopped. Some people misconstrue the fall of the Syrian regime as opening the gates of Damascus to ISIS. But this is a misleading argument manufactured by Iran's ruling mullahs in a bid to save their puppet regime.

To the contrary, it is supporting Assad and his continued rule that empowers ISIS to continue to survive and expand. By the same logic, the only way to overcome ISIS is to evict the Iranian

regime from Syria and Iraq.

We say to Western governments:

Stop your silence and inaction vis-à-vis executions and other atrocities of the religious fascism ruling Iran and, instead, respect the Iranian people's resistance for freedom.

Now look at the annual rate of executions during Rouhani's tenure compared to his predecessor. It has tripled. As Rouhani acknowledged, the regime's activities for the manufacture of weapons have increased five folds. The budget for security and military affairs and export of fundamentalism, has considerably increased.

Violation of human rights has jumped in every respect, targeting all Iranians: from human rights defenders to women, youths and teachers



who staged a nationwide protest just two days ago, and from Christians, Baha'is and the Sunnis to our Arab, Baluchi and Kurdish compatriots. I must also point to the enraged workers.

Indeed, why does the world remain silent when Iranian political prisoners are tormented to death or hanged?

Why is the world silent when juveniles are executed in Iran?

Why is this barbaric tyranny not pressured to publish at least a complete list of names of those it executes?

Today, a large number of our defenceless countrymen are secretly executed in prisons across the country. Several thousands more are on the death row.

We think of their parents, and of their wives and children who spend nights and days under stress.

Shame on those who turn a blind eye to so much abuse of human rights in Iran!

Those who seek to wash the stain of these crimes off the hands of the regime's president must know that this policy will open the way for more atrocities and genocide in the region and the world.

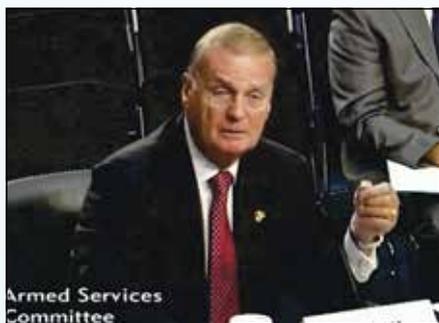
Our plan for the future is an Iran without the death penalty and devoid of torture and all forms of human rights abuse.

The sacrifice of those executed, the suffering of those imprisoned, and the sacrifice and endurance of pioneers of freedom in Liberty, are all calling on every one to rise up to create such a bright future.





US Senate hearing urges protection for residents of Camp Liberty *continued from p.1*



since 2009, clearly indicate the threat to this group from Iran and Iranian-backed militia seeking to eliminate and silence these dissidents”.

The Senate committee heard from General James Jones, former National Security Advisor to President Obama; former Senator Joseph Lieberman; and Colonel Wesley Martin, former Commander of US forces based in Ashraf.

Senator Lieberman urged the US government to live up to its responsibility in terms of protection of the residents of Camp Liberty.

General Jones told the committee that the residents of Camp Liberty “are exiles from Iran who have lived in Iraq since the mid-1980s. They oppose the regime in Tehran which has helped facilitate a campaign of harassment, intimidation, and murder against their

encampment with the complicity of Iraqi authorities – despite America’s promise to protect the men, women, and children of Camp Ashraf, now residing at Camp Liberty.

“You know the grave implications of Iranian efforts to shore up the Assad dictatorship and to prosecute the malignant Shiite-Sunni conflict in Iraq and foster its reach in Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen. What is not as well known is that part and parcel of Iran’s subversive program in Iraq has been the persecution of nearly 3,500 Iranian objectors to the regime housed first at Camp Ashraf in Diyala Province and now at Camp Liberty in Baghdad.

“The United States promised to ensure the refugees’ protection.

“As the timeline shows, what followed these commitments has been a litany of bloodshed and mistreatment at the

bidding of the Iranian regime complicit with elements of the Iraqi government all too eager to accommodate Iranian wishes.”

General Jones listed deadly attacks on Ashraf and Liberty and added that: “The primary problem, however, has been our government’s exceedingly slow and seemingly indifferent response to our commitments and the refugees’ dangerous situation”.

Col. Martin gave a first-hand account of his experiences with the residents from the time he was stationed at Camp Ashraf as well as his discussions with US State Department officials on the need to ensure protection at Camp Liberty.

He added that the residents of the camp each carry a “protected person” ID card issued by the US military which requires Washington to take action to prevent harm to them.

At the Paris Conference

David Jones MP former Welsh Secretary in David Cameron’s cabinet:

My Parliamentary colleagues and I condemn the death penalty in Iran. Hassan Rouhani’s government has carried out some 2000 executions in the past two years. There is a policy of death in Iran. We urge support for Mrs Maryam Rajavi’s 10-point platform for a future free Iran.



Mark Williams MP:

I condemn the death penalty in Iran. Iran has the highest number of executions in the world per capita. Since Rouhani took office human rights have got worse in Iran and there have been rocket attacks on Camp Liberty. The PMOI is



the legitimate voice of the Iranian people. It is time for the international community to support the Iranian Resistance.

Tahar Boumedra former UN Human Rights chief in Iraq:

The reality about the fundamentalist regime in Iran is that it has deprived the

civil society which aspires for freedom and justice to reach their hopes and their standards. The clerical leadership poses a serious challenge to the establishment of democracy in Iran. NCRI’s 10-point plan opens a gateway to democracy.



Time for EU to speak out on Iran

by Gérard Deprezof, ‘Friends of Free Iran’, in the European Parliament



Together with 115 other MEPs this week, we wrote to Mr Schulz and reminded him: “While Iran is boasting about improved ties with the West, the European Parliament, which represents half a billion European citizens with common democratic values, has a duty to put human rights as a top priority for any expansion of relationship with this regime, setting an example for our EU governments.”

Note: Schulz cancelled his planned visit to Iran.





YOUR PAGE

For the occasion of World Day Against the Death Penalty we had an event in our community centre in North London.



RETIRED LAWYER DAVID HARRIS WAS MC AND HE SAID: “What we know is what goes on in Iran, which is, people who have been condemned for all sorts of spurious offences, including their sexuality or other sexual offences, which Islamists in the mullahs’ regime

believe to be wrong, they are executed in public. We’ve all seen the pictures of people suspended from cranes, and of course the whole point of it is not to promote justice but to promote terror; and that is what is so evil about the method of execution in Tehran, it is done in public, not simply to punish someone for wrongdoing but to terrorise the others. It’s a particularly barbaric practice which I absolutely abhor, even more than I abhor the use of the death penalty in other circumstances. So, well, that’s a thought, it’s an appropriate day to make that comment because it’s the international Day Against the Death Penalty, and I think I’m right in saying that some 82 percent of the world’s states now either have completely abolished the death penalty or have at least put a moratorium on it. This shows you how out of step Tehran

is with world opinion and, somehow, that must be brought home to the world.”

MALCOLM FOWLER: “When you see cross party parliamentarians upsetting their governments, sticking their necks out, putting themselves out,



when you see them, let us not forget that there is no career track there for them; they are doing it, whatever their political persuasions, they are doing it because they believe it is right. And that should, frankly, hearten us.”

Merry Christmas everyone



ROSALIND TOPPING: At this time of year, Christmas, we celebrate God’s immense gift of love and hope to all of mankind. While all new life is a cause for joy and celebration, Christians see the birth of Jesus Christ as God’s greatest expression of love, given freely and without reservation. Love gives life; it shines in the darkest places and will ultimately overcome. This is the message of Christmas. The International Liberty Association sends this message of peace to all its supporters, those here in the UK, and our dear sisters and brothers in Camp Liberty and elsewhere. We wish you all the joy and peace of Christmas, in the full and confident hope of seeing the love that you all demonstrate help to bring about the birth of new life for the freedom-loving people of Iran in their beloved country.

About volunteering



KATHLEEN WRIGHT: It is always fascinating to see behind the scenes with any organisation. The main ILA room functions variously as community centre, news room, advertising studio, campaign headquarters, restaurant, florist’s and a tour operator’s office. If one is averse to open plan offices, though, you will be glad to know that you will probably be working in one of several side rooms; think of all those doors! When I started volunteering in August 2014, after seven years acquaintance with the organisation, Iranian courtesy made me feel rather like a minor royal on a visit! With time and with greater familiarity, although the Iranians are no less respectful, no less appreciative of my presence, and just as prompt in meeting my needs, I have come to feel, instead, a valued friend of the family. One thing you will be encouraged to do as a volunteer, is to think of the ILA as ‘us’ rather than ‘them’.

So come and join us.



**MERRY
CHRISTMAS
FROM
TIRANA**



~
**THE HAVEN
FOR
'LIBERTY'
RESIDENTS**
~

Dear Friends,
I wanted to take the time to send you my most sincere wishes for a wonderful Holiday Season and New Year.

May your life be filled with joy and happiness and each new day bring you moments to cherish.

Farzaneh (Madomi)



Dear Friends,

My name is Houri Seyedi I came from Camp Liberty a few months ago. It is my pleasure to extend to you my warmest greetings and best wishes for a Happy Holiday season. You are always in my prayers. I hope to see you in person soon.



Dear Friends,

New Year is a time for celebration of Love, of Life, of Friendship.

Therefore, it is the time to thank God for the wonderful friends that we have. I pray to God to bring to your lives as much magic as you bring to ours.

I wish you a wonderful holiday season and a New Year full of happiness and health.

Hajar (Shaho's grandmother)



My Dear Comrades,

Please allow me to extend the best wishes of every one of us who have come from Camp 'Liberty' to real liberty in Tirana, for the occasion of one of the greatest events in history of mankind, the birth of Jesus Christ, the ultimate symbol of love, life and sacrifice.

I used the word 'comrade' intentionally. I feel together we are battling to preserve the essence of humanity.

As the world is falling apart, wars are taking their toll, suffering of refugees become daily news, and death and destruction a common occurrence, humanity needs people like you for survival. You are radiating the messages of life, love and sacrifice that define the boundaries of humanity. Without such values what are we living for? Without such values how can we take pride in our humanity? What would be our difference from wild creatures in the wilderness?

I think of you and your efforts everyday. I feel in my fight for preserving humanitarian values, for liberty, for justice and for love and peaceful coexistence, I and my colleagues here in Tirana and out there in Camp Liberty and further out in Iran and Iranian jails, are not alone. We have you on our side. No doubt victory will be ours. No doubt the day will come when there is no sign of torture and execution. No doubt the day will come when the message of Jesus will be our lifestyle – love your neighbour like yourself. I love you all.

Merry Christmas,
Azam (Hadj-Heydari)





MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM CAMP LIBERTY

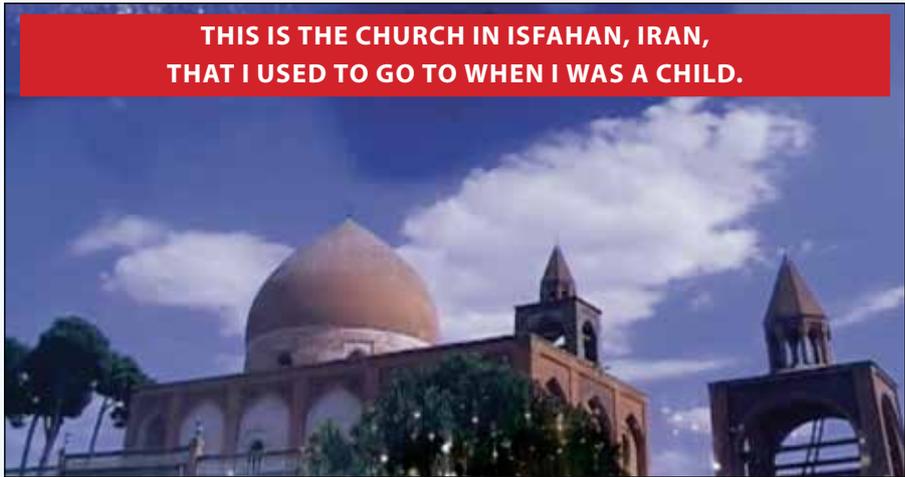
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I am Shahram, half Christian living in Camp Liberty for the 4th consecutive Christmas. When we came here in 2012 the UN and the US government promised us that the stay in 'Liberty' will be short and we will be going to safe third countries soon. Now I am preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in Camp Liberty for the 4th time.

You are probably aware that during

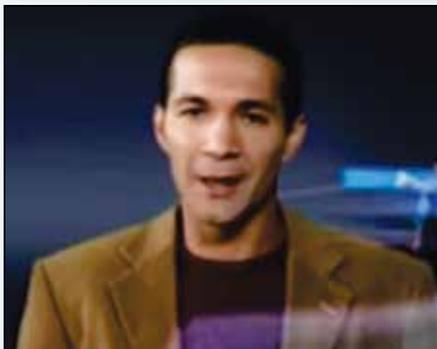


this period we made many changes to our environment. The Iranian regime wanted to bring sadness and despair to us. We were forced to abandon our home, Ashraf, to come here, a garbage dump. But we did not despair because we were not alone. We are inspired by your presence alongside us and I pray

this Christmas that we will be in our beloved Iran by the next. I hope to host you in Iran in my beautiful city, Isfahan. I am sure you have heard a lot about it. I miss it a lot too and dream about it. I am sure you will like it. Until the day that I will host you in Isfahan, may God bless you all.



A story from Liberty prison to the friends who are our voice



Hello. My name is Farhad, a singer. I often ask myself if there is anyone who will hear my voice. Nima always told me that there are friends out there who are "our voice".

Today with the help of ILA, I managed to speak to some of them and sang for them. After that I was so encouraged I decided to write this letter.

Today is 11 October 2015. From yesterday when Ahmad got into a state of shock and was transferred to the clinic I did not get any sleep. I stayed by his side all night long, and despite the fact that the doctors said he had suffered a stroke and that it was an emergency case, he was not given permission to go

to the hospital. It was almost midday. I was going back to my room, feeling hopeless and that there was nothing more I could do, when I saw Nima and he prompted me to write this note to you.

In the past week we have had several seriously ill patients who were prevented from leaving the camp by the committee that is designated by the Iraqi government to harass us, first at Ashraf and now at Liberty.

This is happening while we are reaching the end of the 4th year of our presence in this so-called "temporary transit camp", from which we were all promised to be sent to Europe within a short period of time. But it has now been transformed into a "slow death camp". Twenty-seven of our friends have lost their lives owing to the medical siege. Hundreds of patients are being denied access to proper medical care and hospital visits, and among them some are expecting death at any time.

Maybe I should elaborate more about the case of my friend who entered a state of shock last night. It was about

10 pm. I was just going to bed when I heard a lot of noise from next door. When I rushed in, I saw Ahmad, whose face was totally red and he had become unconscious with the pain. With the help of another friend, we put him on a stretcher and ran to the Iraqi clinic. But because there was neither a doctor nor a respiration device there we quickly moved him to our own medical staff and they managed to bring him to consciousness again.

This is just an example from yesterday which gives you a glimpse of all our pains and difficulties. Nevertheless, despite facing all these difficulties every day and all the betrayed promises of the UN and the United States, we manage to create an atmosphere of hope and creativity.

