



Editorial

Our Persian New Year, NoRuz, celebrates the release of the natural world from the cold, dark grip of Winter as the green shoots and colourful blossoms of early Spring burst into life.

But NoRuz literally means 'New Day' and, as the spirit of Ashraf has flown far beyond the place in Iraq where it was forged – to Camp Liberty and everywhere that men and women commit themselves to the cause of freedom, justice and humanity – so we choose to let the spirit of NoRuz infuse us not just in Spring, but every day of our lives.

The case of Safar Zakary, abducted from 'Liberty' at the end of the old Persian year and triumphantly returned at the start of the New, is a magnificent manifestation of the fact that working together we can and we do bring about change in the face of overwhelming odds

Rosa Conrad's story of commitment and achieving results by dedicated hard work is similarly inspiring. Reading her passionate words fills one with strength and resolve as she touches upon the most significant ingredient of our fabric, the love of humanity and the art of making connections.

Also in this issue, Maryam Rajavi's historic address to a Subcommittee of the US Congress shows how far we have come and inspires us all to greater efforts.

The setbacks, including the death of Jalal Abedini in Liberty, 25th victim of the medical siege, do not make us despair, as the torture and executions in Iran no longer intimidate the protesting workers and youth. The voice from Camp Liberty is strong.

So, with renewed commitment to the spirit of abundant life, we affirm that we can and we must save precious lives; we can and we

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Triumphant return of abducted Camp 'Liberty' resident

After one month detention Safar Zakary, the Camp Liberty resident who was abducted at a mock accident scene by forces close to former Iraqi PM, Nori al-Maliki, was returned to the camp after international pressure built up on the Iraqi government. His release showed once again that our campaigns are successful and together we can prevail.

On 16 March, Mr Zakary, driver of

a Camp Liberty black water tanker, was on his way back to Liberty after emptying the sewage when he was hit by a Humvee belonging to the Iraqi SWAT forces. The Humvee, travelling at the illegal speed of 60 km/hr, went off course to the left side of the road and hit Safar Zakary's tanker that was travelling at 20 km/hr on the extreme right side of the road badly damaging

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The Art of Making a Human Connection

The reasons behind the One Life campaign

By Rosa Conrad

Rosa Conrad explains how she made a difference by taking up a commitment, setting a goal and working hard to achieve it:

It's been an interesting process so far. I've realised that apart from the real difference this sum of money will make to one life in Camp Liberty, giving yourself a target which must be achieved (if we don't reach it, all the money will be refunded) forces you to get your message out there as far and wide as you can. It makes you rack your

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Triumphant return of abducted Camp 'Liberty' resident *continued from p.1*



the tanker. Once the traffic police saw the scene of the accident, he declared that the Humvee was the guilty party. Both the policeman riding in the Camp Liberty vehicle, as well as the policeman riding in the tanker that was following a short distance behind, confirmed that the Humvee was to be blamed. But Mr Zakery was detained and numerous attempts to gain his release were blocked by agents related to Maliki.

The international campaign to bring about his release gained momentum over time and demonstrations were held in capitals of major western countries including London and Washington DC.

A publicity advert was printed in the Washington Times 4 days before the Iraqi Prime Minister was due to meet President Obama in the White House. Demonstrations and picket lines in

front of the White House continued nonstop.

One day before the release of Safar Zakery on 14 April, Ad Melkert, former head of the UN mission in Iraq wrote to the US ambassador in Iraq and called on him to act for the immediate release of Mr Zakery who had already missed a long awaited medical appointment for surgery.

Various American congressmen and congresswomen publicly called for the release of Mr Zakery who was deemed as a hostage in the hands of Iraqi forces.

In Britain in a joint statement, Lord Tony Clarke, former chairman of the Labour Party, David Jones MP, former Welsh Minister, Sir Alan Meale MP, Deputy Leader of the Socialist group in the Council of Europe and Conservative MP, Brian Binley, recalled the responsibilities of the UN and the US government based on the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between them and the Iraqi government and asked for their intervention to free Safar Zakery.

The return of Mr Zakery to Camp Liberty on 14 April highlighted the

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Statement

Call for immediate release of Mr Safar Zakery, a Camp Liberty resident, from illegal detention

We express our deep concern about the continuous bizarre detention of Mr Safar Zakery for being involved in a car accident, when the black water tanker he drove was hit by a Humvee of Iraqi SWAT forces.

Mr Zakery, a resident of Camp Liberty, is being held by Iraqi authorities for four weeks following that accident despite the fact that the Iraqi policeman accompanied inside his vehicle as well as the traffic police that had come to investigate the scene of accident both declared that the accident



importance of our campaigns for maintaining the safety and security of Camp Liberty residents and showed once more that together we can triumph.

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must end the cruel cycle of events in the Middle East; including the inhuman treatment of the Ashrafi in Liberty and we can and we must bring an end to the suffering of the Iranian people in Iran, tortured and executed by their so called leaders to prolong their stay in power.

We cannot tell you enough how much we value the role of each one of you who support us in this global battle for peace and justice and in being the voice of the voiceless. Thank you!

The Art of Making a Human Connection *continued from p.1*

brains to find different ways of reaching people. This concentrated effort at informing people is just what this cause needs, but it isn't easy. Apart from the disproven lies spread about the Ashrafi by the Iranian regime and often naively echoed in our press, the topic of the Middle East as a whole tends to turn people off. It appears in our minds as a huge mess of countless unimaginable tragedies that we can't possibly begin to solve. And also it is played out in a far away land, distant from ours in geography, language and religion.

I recently asked a friend who used to raise funds for the Tibet Society how the money was most successfully raised and he pointed out that it was when westerners started travelling to Tibet and meeting Tibetans themselves, visiting them and staying with them. They would come home with a passion to help the people they had met, and that passion would rub off on others.

It is having a connection to someone which makes you act. Since launching this campaign, I have observed my own

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The Art of Making a Human Connection *continued from p.2*

actions (or more likely inactions) to other causes. Let's face it, there are a lot of worthy causes about. I looked at lots of crowdfunder projects when creating my own. I saw plenty that I thought were great causes, some which almost had me pledging, but only one that I actually did pledge my money to. This was a woman who had come up with an initiative to help nomadic herders in Mongolia in a sustainable way. When I was 20 I travelled to Mongolia and spent a magical few days staying with a nomadic family. It had a big impact on me. This was the connection which made the difference between just reading the page, then passing on to the next and actually pledging some money and sharing it with my friends.

The vast majority of the pledges my project has received have been either from people who are involved personally with me, or are already involved with the cause.

This is the way it is, and this is why ILA reach out to the public in such a human way. Their visits to people who have expressed an empathy make that important connection. They share their stories about their families, their lives. It can't be easy telling these heart-rending truths over and over, but there is no other option. Without help from any government, they are on their own with their huge task. They have to try every avenue they can. Making a real human connection is the only way to make someone care enough to do something. ILA host regular social evenings where speakers discuss the latest developments. Sometimes an MP will come for Q&A. There is usually some musical entertainment and always delicious Persian cuisine. It is always engaging to talk to the other guests, and the members themselves are such warm and genuine people. After the last one I attended, another guest and I were just getting into our cars when one friend from ILA came running out and said 'wait there'. We waited and he duly came back with two large parcels of yummy food to share with our families when we got back home.

Their gentle, kind approach to their problem and my knowledge of them

over the years has made me feel a deep connection with this subject. This connection has galvanised me into action, and through this campaign I hope to be the link that engages more people with the plight of the people of Ashraf.

'There are millions of people suffering all over the world' is an observation that has been put to me countless times over the last few weeks! I always reply that I feel a connection with these people as they have reached out to me, so I will do what I can. There are some other pretty good reasons though:

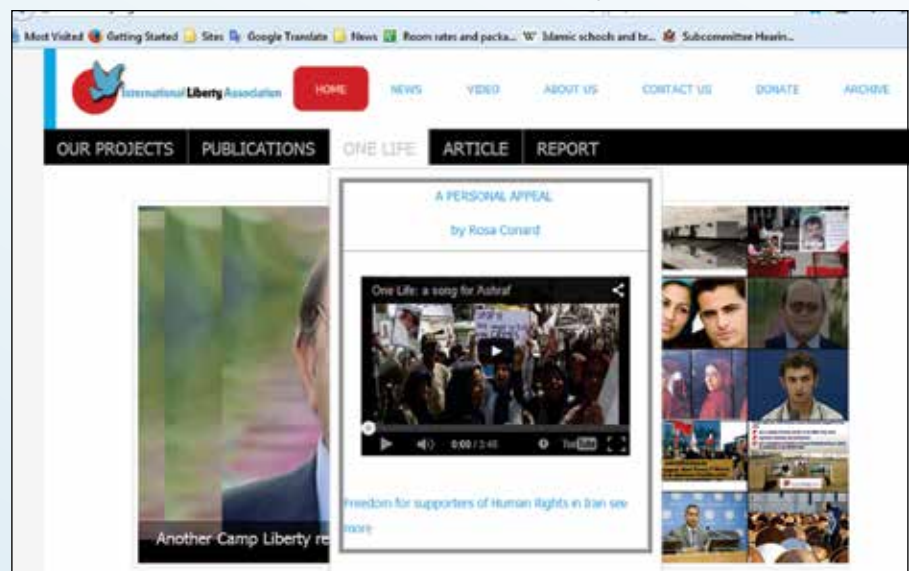
The Past: These countries may be far away geographically, but our past is interlinked, and not in a way that shows my nation in a good light. The fact that Iranians have spent the last 30 years

living under a brutal regime is down in part to the meddling of the US and UK governments acting in their own interests, and so it continues.

The Future: It doesn't take a psychic to see that the Iranian regime is an aggressor stirring up trouble across the globe, arming and training terrorist groups, exporting terrorism. This is a threat that affects us all.

The 2700 people in Camp Liberty are widely believed to be capable of bringing about change in Iran. I can't personally help all the millions suffering around the world. But wouldn't helping and safeguarding these people be an ideal place to start?

<http://songforashraf.com/>





MARYAM RAJAVI TO US HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE: REGIME CHANGE IN IRAN NECESSARY FOR COUNTERING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran told the U.S. Congress on Wednesday that in the “absence of a firm policy vis-à-vis the regime in Tehran, there will be destructive consequences.” To counter Islamic fundamentalists, democratic and tolerant Islam should be empowered, she explained.

Maryam Rajavi appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade via videoconference on Wednesday.

Rajavi referred to the Iranian regime as the “epicenter of fundamentalism” in the Middle East and she told the assembled Representatives, “We can and we must defeat Islamic fundamentalism, whether Shiite or Sunni.”

Maryam Rajavi outlined several practical steps that Western governments might take toward this end, one of which was to “recognise the Iranian people’s aspirations to overthrow the mullahs.”

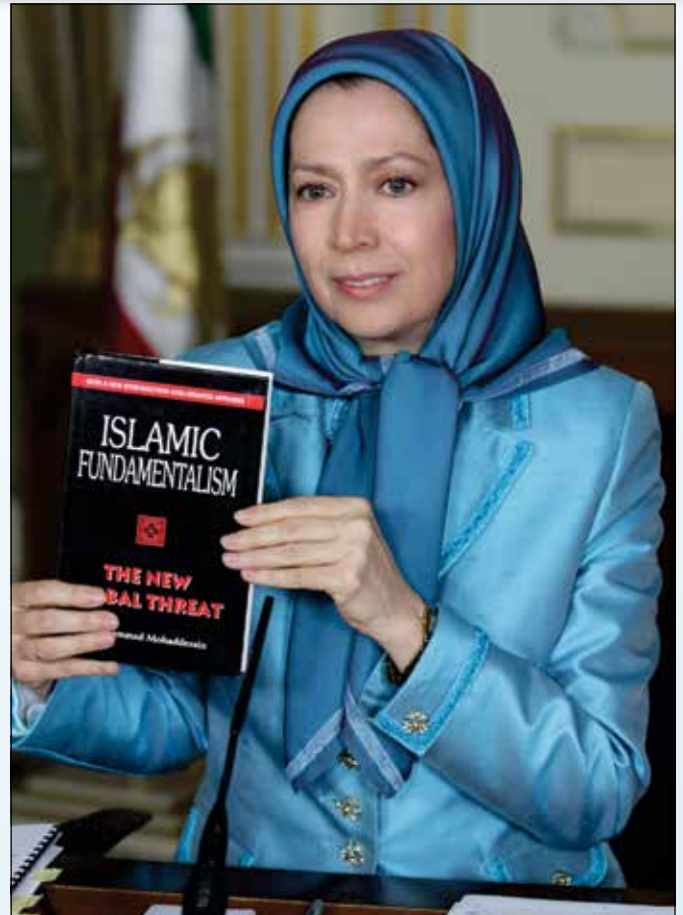
She told the hearing: “Today, Islamic fundamentalism and extremism, under the name of ISIS or Shiite paramilitary groups, have launched a vicious assault on countries in the region and beyond including America and Europe.”

“Islamic fundamentalism emerged as a threat to peace and security when Khomeini stole the leadership of a popular revolution in 1979 and established a religious dictatorship,” she added.

The Iranian opposition leader also said: “For 36 years, we have resisted a religious tyranny and fought for democracy in Iran. The Iranian regime has served as the main source of this ominous phenomenon in the region and across the world. The primary objective of Islamic fundamentalists, including ISIS, is to establish an Islamic Caliphate and enforce Sharia law.”

The Islamic fundamentalists “recognise no borders,” she said. “Aggressiveness and violence are two common features of Sunni and Shiite extremists. As such, searching for moderates among them is an illusion.”

Rajavi said her movement had warned that the mullahs sought to acquire nuclear weapons to export fundamentalism



and guarantee their own existence, but little, if anything, was done to prevent this export.

“Unfortunately, failure to stop the Iranian regime’s post-2003 meddling in Iraq enabled it to gradually occupy that country, driving the unprecedented spread of fundamentalism. Similarly, crimes committed by the Quds Force and Bashar Assad in Syria and the massacre and exclusion of Sunnis in Iraq by Maliki, coupled with Western silence, empowered ISIS,” she said.

Rajavi emphasized that the mullahs’ regime is not part of any solution to current crises; it is indeed the heart of the problem.

“The people of Iran, indeed, call the mullahs’ regime as Godfather of ISIS and other fundamentalist groups. The ultimate solution to this problem is regime change by the Iranian people and Resistance,” she said.

“This regime is extremely fragile and vulnerable. As evident during the 2009 uprising, the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people demanded regime change. The regime’s show of force is hollow and a result of weak Western policy.”

“Owing to the pivotal role of the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) as a democratic Muslim movement, the Iranian Resistance has established itself as the antithesis to Islamic fundamentalism.”





MARYAM RAJAVI TO US HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE: MULLAHS' REGIME IS GODFATHER OF ISIS AND OTHER FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS

Rajavi outlined the following practical steps necessary for defeating Islamic fundamentalism:

- 1) **Expel the Quds Force from Iraq and end the Iranian regime's influence in that country;**
- 2) **Enable full participation of Sunnis in power sharing and arm Sunni tribes to provide security for their communities;**
- 3) **Assist Syria's moderate opposition and people to end Assad's regime and establish democracy in that country;**
- 4) **Recognise the Iranian people's aspirations to overthrow the mullahs and end inaction vis-à-vis the gross human rights violations in Iran.**
- 5) **Provide protection for, and uphold the rights of, members of Iran's organized opposition, the MEK, residing in Camp Liberty in Iraq.**
- 6) **Empower the true, democratic and tolerant Islam to counter fundamentalist interpretations of this religion; and**
- 7) **Block all pathways for the Iranian regime to acquire nuclear weapons.**

Tom Tancredo: I commend my former colleagues for doing the right thing

Tom Tancredo, former Member of the US Congress and a presidential candidate in 2008, in an article published on The Hill website on 29 April wrote:

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has scheduled for Mrs Maryam Rajavi, the Paris-based Iranian opposition leader to address a subcommittee hearing, "ISIS: Defining the Enemy" via satellite, as the first witness. I commend my former colleagues, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce and chair of subcommittee on Terrorism, non-proliferation and Trade, Judge Ted Poe for doing the right thing and affording the U.S. Congress the opportunity to examine facts and hear from those in the field, rather than relying only on experts within the beltway. Rajavi's testimony before Congress is long overdue.

Stevenson: Appeasement of Iran regime in nuclear talks a 'huge mistake'



European Iraqi Freedom Association president Struan Stevenson has warned that the lifting of sanctions when the deal is signed on June 30 – as demanded by the Iranian regime's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is a 'great compromise which

fundamentally affects our ability to ensure that Iran doesn't cheat', Mr Stevenson told a live Q&A on the Iranfreedom.org website on 27 April.

When asked whether the nuclear deal would stop Iran from acquiring the bomb, he stressed that Iran had cheated on international agreements before and will cheat on them again.

He said the world should not be taken in by the 'good cop, bad cop' routine employed by the Ayatollah Khamenei and Hassan Rouhani, whose 'smiling exterior' has fooled the West.

Mr Stevenson also stressed the importance of supporting the Iranian opposition in Iran, and expressed deep sadness and shock at the West's 'betrayal' of the people in Camp Liberty who were individually guaranteed safety by the United Nations, the European Union and the United States.

He said that the only way to end human rights violations in Liberty was for the international community – especially the U.S – to honour its pledge to the 2600 residents.

Iranian opposition leader: Tehran is driving force behind extremism

AP Associated Press WASHINGTON

A top Iranian opposition leader told a House subcommittee Wednesday that Iranians have dubbed their government the "godfather" of the Islamic State militant group.

Maryam Rajavi, president-elect of the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran, also said Tehran wants nuclear weapons to foster Islamic extremism.

"The ultimate solution to this problem is regime change," Rajavi said.

Testifying before a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee via videoconference from France, Rajavi discussed international negotiations underway to get Iran to curb its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions crippling its economy.

She warned against giving Iran too many concessions, saying it would embolden its leaders to be more aggressive in meddling in other nations.

She said the U.S. and five other nations in talks with Iran must demand that it completely stop enriching uranium and shut down its nuclear sites, missile programs and other programs. While there is no final deal yet, emerging details of an agreement fall short of her demands.

"None of the sanctions should be lifted before an agreement has been signed that effectively and definitively denies the mullahs the bomb," Rajavi said. "Otherwise, the regime will spend billions of unfrozen assets to buy weapons, including advanced missiles from Russia."



OUR EVENTS YOUR COMMENTS

Chris: It's really a quick note to thank you all for the very happy NoRuz Celebration I enjoyed on Saturday here in Edinburgh. Tell Jamshid he prepared a beautiful tasty meal!

Mary: I was very moved to hear the first hand accounts of experience in Camp Liberty. I admire so much the strength and devotion to great ideals which people have shown.

As always I was impressed by the generous hospitality and the unique dignity and grace of Iranian culture.

Janet: there I'm sending you my Easter card – with another poem!

*The rising sun
renews our lives
and warms our hearts.
But times are hard
And days bring sorrow.
Pain and anguish tempt
us to despair.
Yet confidence in life
and hope in death
come from the risen Son.*

Lamar: It was my first experience celebrating Noruz which I found enchanting to learn so many wonderful things about your culture, traditions, music and warmth to all guests. But the most impressive part was to hear about all the bravery and courage the Iranians have exhibited over these hard years. It is an inspiration to us all and I wish all

the people at Camp Liberty and in the ILA great success for the future.

Chris (another):It was lovely to celebrate Noruz together. How beautifully the room was set out, a good programme was put together, and thanks to those who prepared the excellent meal.

I join you in sincere hope that the direction of history lifts the honourable people of Iran and that the influence of the oppressors fades.

Moya: *We have chosen Spring*

The human mind has a way of seeking the light and once a chink is found, no matter how slight, it will follow it to its source.

We have learned about choice and we have heard of the sunshine, the soaring of the soul, the freedom of the dance and the song and the goodness of those things and we are rising from the blackness

*Not winter, not dark
In a world where choice abounds
We have chosen Spring.*





• NEWS FROM IRAN •

70-year-old hanged in Iran after 14 years of imprisonment

On Thursday 23 April, a group of nine men were hanged in Iran including a 70-year-old who had been held in prison for the past fourteen years. The hangings took place at the main prison in the city of Bandar Abbas in the southern province of Hormozgan.

The local judiciary office confirmed the executions but did not identify victims. Human rights activists reported that Heydar Mardani, 70, was among the executed prisoners. He was serving his 14th year of incarceration.



Anti-regime protests held in Ahvaz

Residents of the Iranian city of Ahvaz expressed their rage and loathing against the suppressive and discriminatory policies of the clerical regime in the southern province of Khuzestan by chanting anti-regime slogans following a soccer match on Friday (3 April 2015).

The Iranian regime's suppressive forces engaged with the protesting



people around government institutions. The sound of shots being fired could be heard in these places from a distance. In an earlier demonstration the angry crowd carried signs reading "We are all Youness" referring to Youness Asakereh, a street vendor who set himself on fire protesting repressive measures by regime agents.

He died on 22 March due to severe burns.

Funeral for street vendor turns into anti-regime protest

Youness' self-immolation provoked rage in the people in cities across Iran, particularly in the Khuzestan Province.

Participants at the funeral chanted "We are all Youness", "Freedom, freedom".

Several of the participants at the funeral were arrested afterwards – either in their homes or while returning home from the funeral.



115 executions in two weeks across Iran

The murderous mullahs have sharply increased executions to terrorise the population

The wave of executions across Iran is continuing unabated. The anti-human regime sent another 30 prisoners to the gallows between 22 to 26 April.

On 22 April nine prisoners were collectively hanged in Vakil Abad prison in Shiraz. Sixteen other prisoners were executed in Bandar Abbas, Kerman and

Jiroft on 23 April. Further executions on 25 and 26 April in Rasht, Zanjan and Abhar brought the execution toll of the week to over 30, hence the number of executions in Iran in the two weeks between 13 to 26 April reached 115.

Of course the real number of executed prisoners is much higher than this. According to reports from inside the country, a large number of prisoners have been executed secretly in Arak in recent weeks.



Miners protesting layoffs and low wages were sentenced to flogging and prison

A so-called court in Iran sentenced five protesting mine workers to one year in prison and lashes for 'disturbing public order' during last year's massive protests against layoffs.

Workers at Chadormalu iron ore mine, near Yazd, have been protesting layoffs and low wages. The employers at the mine company introduced the five workers as leaders of the protests and had demanded that they be dealt with harshly.





• FROM CAMP LIBERTY •



Hello, my name is Sahar and it's a pleasure to speak to you from Camp Liberty. I know each and every one of you is part of our large family in the Iranian Resistance, and in this celebration of the Persian New Year,

I would like to send you my greetings on behalf of all of the people in this camp. Of course, at this time of the year my people in Iran want to celebrate and have a great time, but because of the dictators in Iran they can't, and they are tortured and executed and they are oppressed, just as they are oppressing us here in this camp, and they have turned it into a prison imposing all sorts of sieges on us, the medical siege, the logistical siege and also the harassment and torture just to make us silent. But we will not stop, we will keep on rising and with your help we will stand up to them and bring freedom to our country.



Hello, everybody. My name is Sudeh. It's an honour for me to have the chance to talk to you. I want to wish you a very happy New Year, a New Iranian Year. Throughout all our hardship one could

never dream of better times than this. You have given us hope in hard times and happy times. One year has passed and we have all seen the effect of your endless efforts for us in Liberty. Indeed, the dictatorship in Iran and those who put us under a medical siege and make our dear ones suffer to death would have never imagined that these limitations would be fought back with a beautiful force of humanity just as the love that you truly represent. I am sure that this year will be the year of victory for you and us. Again, I wish you a very happy New Year, and thank you for all your support for us in Liberty.

25th victim of medical siege at 'Liberty'

Jalal Abedini is the latest victim of the medical blockade at Camp Liberty. He is the 25th Ashrafi to pass away due to the medical blockade after the transfer of protection of Ashraf to the Iraqi forces in 2009. Many other residents of Camp Liberty suffering from refractory diseases are also in critical condition due to this criminal siege and their lives are in danger. Based on the written commitments of the U.S. government and the United Nations regarding the security and wellbeing of Liberty residents, immediate action is needed to end this inhumane siege.



Invitation to The Grand Gathering Paris – 13 June 2015

This event is a very powerful way of keeping a spotlight on Camp Liberty and the plight of its residents, suffering in the increasingly hostile environment of Iraq.

The grand gathering, the presence of people like you who care, the presence of so many committed dignitaries from around the globe, and their individual pledges, works as a protective shield for the brave residents of Camp Liberty.

The grand gathering will be held at Villepinte conference centre near Paris on Saturday 13 June. Please contact us by email or telephone for details and to reserve your place.

