



International Liberty Association Newsletter

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Editorial

The Grand Gathering on 9 July was an especially powerful and clear statement of solidarity and also a demonstration and celebration of a truly global community, peoples of all Nations United by mutual respect and understanding, regardless of race, colour, creed, or gender.

Coming in the midst of tumultuous world events, the size of the audience and the array of over 600 speakers and dignitaries gathered in one place from all corners of the globe to support the Iranian people's goals – of human rights and freedom for Iran and to protect the men and women who espouse and epitomise this freedom, beleaguered in Camp Liberty, Iraq – was immensely inspiring and uplifting.

With bright colours abounding, unfailing good humour and spirits that rose higher as the day unfolded, the event appeared like a rainbow that suddenly shines bright through the stormiest weather and draws all eyes to it as it renews and refreshes that eternal hope for a better world.

We thank every one of you who made the journey with us and all who were not able to come, but joined with many others there in spirit, swelling the throng to a multitude. We trust this newsletter gives a good flavour and hope many of you will be able to attend one of our forthcoming events when we will show more special moments and discuss the impact and progress.

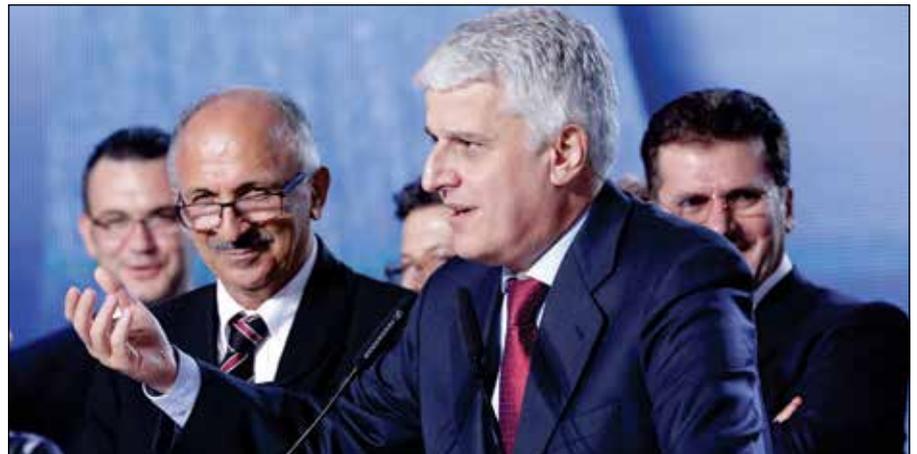
Reflecting on all the events of the past month, it seems to us that 4 key ingredients are emerging as worthy of note and indicative of this being indeed a powerful time of change.

First, the absolute clarity with which the supporters from the International community, let down by the myths, of Rouhani's 'moderate Presidency', of the 'safer world' to be created by the nuclear deal and of the 'economic stability for Iran' to be achieved by the sanctions

... continued on p.2

United Call For Protection of Camp Liberty Residents – Paris 2016

Albanian delegation received warm reception during freedom rally in Paris



Albania received warm applause from a crowd of over 100,000 people who care for freedom and human rights and support the cause that people in Camp Liberty espouse. The warm reception was heightened when the former Albanian Prime Minister, Pendeli Majko, announced his country's readiness to take in the remaining Camp Liberty residents. The Albanian delegation composed of many members of the Albanian Parliament as well as other

'We have one heart ... open for friends like you'

professionals, lawyers and musicians acted as ambassadors of humanity and lifted the spirit of the crowd who are very worried about the fate of their loved ones in Camp Liberty facing rocket attacks and medical and logistical blockade.

Mr Majko expressed hope that all remaining residents in Camp Liberty would be relocated safely and stressed that the people of Albania, having had a history of dealing with repression and

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Attack on Camp Liberty

The Iranian regime's cowardice

In yet another outrageous and unprovoked attack on the defenceless Iranian refugees in Camp Liberty, near Baghdad Airport, on 4 July over 50 missiles were fired into the compound from within the tight government-controlled security zone surrounding the camp's perimeter. Over 50 residents, including 14 women, were seriously injured and large parts of the camp were destroyed.



Struan Stevenson, president of the European Iraqi Freedom Association

... continued on p.3



United Call For Protection of Camp Liberty Residents – Paris 2016 *continued from p.1*

despots, feel the pains of Ashrafi and are very glad that they have been able to host these brave people who have not given up hope. He wished freedom and human rights for the people of Iran and expressed willingness to celebrate a free and democratic Iran with Ashrafi in Tehran.

The former Albanian Prime Minister told the gathering: “I have come today with friends of mine from the Albanian Parliament, from the right and left wing...

“We have one heart, one heart that is open for friends like you.”

Mrs Rajavi in turn thanked Mr Majko and the people of Albania for their hospitality and gave each member of the Albanian delegation a rose which is a symbol of friendship and respect.



EDITORIAL *continued from p.1*

relief billions, are now stating their determination to make human rights the centrepiece of any future negotiations with Iran.

Second, the words of the Albanian former Prime Minister, “We are one heart ... open for friends like you.” sum up very well the sentiments of the global community of freedom lovers that the 9 July event epitomised so well. This community is growing all the time, becoming a powerful catalyst for change.

Third, when Maryam Rajavi speaks of the Iranian people’s long legacy and personal experience of resisting oppression and tyranny and their absolute determination to continue to resist whatever the obstacles until their goal of democratic freedom is achieved, it provides a very stable and clear rallying point for freedom lovers everywhere to gather around.

And last, but by no means least, the people, young and old, from all walks of life, inside Iran itself are losing their fear of reprisal and speaking out ever more clearly against the human rights violations perpetrated by the Mullah’s regime. This completes the circle of hands holding firm for freedom around the globe.

It is this global solidarity, the ‘1,000 Ashrafi’, that will ensure that one day soon, Iran will be free and the region and the world a truly safer place. We look forward to greeting that day with you by our side.

House of Commons debate on the Human Rights situation in Iran



On Tuesday, 28 June a debate was held at the House of Commons on the human rights situation in Iran. The Parliamentarians discussed the lack of progress on the matter since last year’s nuclear deal.

Hendon MP, Dr Matthew Offord, said:

“I regretted Her Majesty’s Government’s decision to decouple Iran’s human rights abuses and support for terrorism from the nuclear negotiations. I believe that that was a lost opportunity, and that doing so sent the wrong message to Iran.”

He stressed that in fact the suppression of free speech and political dissidence has risen with a wave of arrests of human rights activists, union leaders, opposition supporters and journalists. They were held on bogus national security claims and some still remain in prison, where they are subject to torture.

The MPs discussed the fate of political prisoners like Jafar Azmizadeh, Saleh Kohandeland, and Narges Mohammadi, who has been denied access to her medication.

Mike Freer, the MP for Finchley and Golders Green, said: “Many of us

were encouraged to support the lifting of sanctions in order to see a thaw in the repression of the regime. Given the acceleration in the use of the death penalty, the continued persecution of women and minorities, and the crushing of the opposition...we have been duped.”

Members of Parliament who participated in the debate quoted Amnesty International’s former deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa programme saying that the “staggering execution toll” painted a “sinister” picture of the state and accused them of carrying out “premeditated, judicially-sanctioned killings on a mass scale.”

Margaret Ferrier MP and Dr Philippa Whitford MP, reminded the Parliamentarians of the harsh realities for women and girls in Iran who can be lashed for not wearing the hijab correctly.

Dr Offord rejected the idea that human rights abuses are the result of hardliners as it implies that Rouhani is unable to stop them. He said: “Neither Rouhani nor his Government have ever publicly condemned and distanced themselves from executions and the use of public hanging. On the contrary, Rouhani has explicitly supported the use of the death penalty.”



Attack on Camp Liberty – The Iranian regime's cowardice *continued from p.1*

(EIFA) and former Head of EP Delegation for Relations with Iraq, strongly condemned the attack and demanded immediate action by the UN and US to safeguard the residents and expedite their resettlement in European countries. In a statement published on the EIFA website Mr Stevenson said:

“This was a horrendous and cowardly attack. But I am forced to ask, what on earth are the United Nations and United States doing? While they had repeatedly given assurances regarding the safety and security of the residents in writing, they kept their silence and did nothing while Iranian agents, with the full connivance of the Iraqi government, undertook repeated surveillance missions to the camp, under the pretext of being family members of the refugees, while in fact they hurled abuse at the residents and took detailed photographs of the camp's layout.

“We repeatedly warned that this was a clear precursor to another missile attack, as we have witnessed this happening again and again in the past when dozens of Camp Ashraf and then Camp Liberty residents have been brutally murdered. Despite our warnings the UN and US did nothing.

“For the past 8 days food, fuel and medicines have been blockaded by the Iraqi government's agents again acting on orders from their Iranian sponsors. This blockade has caused untold suffering to the residents during RAMADAN while temperatures have soared to over 50 degrees and they have no fresh food, or any means of fuelling generators to provide air-conditioning



and no vital medicines for the sick. The residents and their representatives and supporters had repeatedly warned that all of these measures were leading up to another attempted massacre. This is a pattern that has been repeated again and again and our warnings to the UN and US have simply been ignored. Their ineffectiveness and incompetence has been quite breathtaking.

“And now that 50 missiles have been launched into the camp causing horrifying injuries and destruction, we all know that the missile attack could not have happened without the active collusion of at least some parts of the Iraqi government and their Iranian patrons.

“The EIFA demands the immediate intervention of the UN and the US embassy in Baghdad, firstly to hold the perpetrators of this crime accountable and bring them in to justice and secondly to guarantee the safety and security of the camp until the last person can be airlifted to safety. Thirdly the UN and US must immediately demand that the Iraqi Government stops any further suppressive measures against the camp's residents, in particular preventing the entry of fuel, food, medicine and service trucks to the camp. Fourthly, the Government of Iraq must be prevented from allowing



Iranian Intelligence (MOIS) agents, under any pretext whatsoever, from mounting further reconnaissance and surveillance missions at Camp Liberty.”

British lawmakers condemn the rocket attack on Camp Liberty

In a press release on Monday 4 July 2016 the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom which enjoys the support of over 400 lawmakers, condemned the rocket attack on Camp Liberty and said: “Today's attack is the fifth missile attack on Camp Liberty and its residents since 2012. According to reports, Iraqi militia forces supported by Tehran's terrorist Quds-force are behind Monday's attack. The residents' peril continues as the Iraqi forces have

reportedly imposed a siege on the camp and prevent entry of the fuel, food and medicine.

“The British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom (BPCIF), in two statements last year, warned of new efforts by Tehran to use its political influence and proxies in Iraq to attack Camp Liberty in an effort to eliminate its opposition. The statements called on the UK government to take urgent actions with the EU, the US

and at the UN Security Council to secure adequate protection for these defenceless refugees.”





UNITED CALL FOR THE PROTECTION OF CAMP LIBERTY RESIDENTS—PARIS 2016

Over 600 personalities from all corners of the world attended the Paris gathering calling for protection of Camp Liberty residents. Included in the list were José Manuel Barroso, former President of the European Commission; Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the US House of Representatives; Howard Dean, former Governor of Vermont and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee; John Baird, former Foreign Minister of Canada; and Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud, former Saudi Ambassador to the US who addressed the meeting. Also among the speakers was Pastor Saeed Abedini who had spent nearly four years in jails in Iran for converting to Christianity. He said to the gathering: “My presence here shows that if we resist we will be victorious. Amen.”

Excerpts of Maryam Rajavi’s speech at the gathering follow:

“In the year since the nuclear accord, many of the sanctions were lifted and oil exports increased. But the generated revenues were poured into the inferno of the Syrian war. Dozens of political and business delegations visited Tehran, where they found a bankrupt, unstable and totally corrupt system.

“The country’s economy was supposed to be fixed, but it plunged into recession more than ever before. The banking system went bankrupt and factories closed down like autumn leaves.

“They wanted to improve their relations with the rest of the world, but instead expanded their intervention in neighbouring countries. As a result, at least six regional and neighbouring governments severed their relations

with the regime. In the end, they staged a sham election and resorted to massive propaganda about the victory of illusory moderates.

“Today, Iranian workers say that Rouhani’s administration has imposed the most repressive policies against workers. Artists say that the scale of restrictions and pressures in the three years of Rouhani has been unprecedented since the revolution.

“Our Kurdish, Arab and Baluchi compatriots as well as the followers of other religions, especially our Sunni sisters and brothers, say that they have been subjected to repression and discrimination as never before. One can cite the arrests and executions in Ahwaz, the shelling of Kurdish villages in Iranian Kurdistan, and the resumption of production and testing of ballistic missiles. The number of executions each year is two to three times the figure during Rouhani’s predecessor.

“In other words, neither the deception about moderation nor the hoopla about the JCPOA succeeded in opening any doors for the regime. The fact is that even if the international community had provided the regime with the best opportunities, it would still remain feeble and incapable of resolving the crises engulfing it. Owing to explosive public discontent, the regime is continuously gripped by fundamental instability.

“On October 29 last year, eight days after Khamenei wrote a letter to his president to approve the retreat from the nuclear program, he ordered the largest-ever missile attack on Camp Liberty in Iraq, home to Iranian dissidents. As a result of this crime, 24 residents were killed.

“Since two weeks ago, the regime’s Iraqi proxies prevented fuel, medicine and food from entering Camp Liberty. And five days before your major gathering here in Paris, he [Khamenei] ordered the missile attack against Camp Liberty. This was a reaction to Iranians welcoming this gathering. It

was also a reaction to the courageous and commendable support expressed by political prisoners across the country for this gathering. Yes, again the moment of the Supreme Leader’s fear.

“Our nation’s workers are flogged and teachers are given long prison terms, but they refuse to give up and fight on. Our nation’s young women and men are being arrested and humiliated every day, but they continue to defy the mullahs’ impositions. Mothers are imprisoned and endure a multitude of pressures but they continue to demand justice. The combatants of freedom in Camp Liberty are shelled, and face death by attrition because of hardships and a crippling siege, but they refuse to surrender, symbolizing resistance against the ruling regime.

“Our nation has arisen to secure its liberty even if it means plucking it from the dragon’s mouth.

“To achieve a free and just republic, we do not expect any miracles to happen. Nor do we expect any coincidental or chance occurrences in our favour. Our entire asset is the Iranian nation and its vanguard children. And this is indeed the greatest power in the world.

“This is why we must establish 1,000 Ashrafs. The symbolism of establishing 1,000 Ashrafs really speaks to an attempt to unearth repressed potentials; it means joining together the countless individuals who are currently scattered and disconnected, and it means encouraging people to invite the real hope in their hearts and minds that the beast can be brought down. Yes, we can and we must.

“So, let me borrow from a poem by Bertolt Brecht, “Resist, person in exile!





UNITED CALL FOR THE PROTECTION OF CAMP LIBERTY RESIDENTS—PARIS 2016

Resist, person in prison; Resist wife sitting in your house; Resist displaced person; Resist, you who are shivering in the cold; you must prepare to take command now.”

“The mantra of 1,000 Ashrafs offers both the blueprint for freedom, and the motivating force for the general uprising. It is the heavy hammer that will descend upon the ruling theocracy.

“We are full of hope because we have a history that has supplied the backbone needed to achieve freedom; because our nation has within it the capacity for major change, and because we have an organized movement that has built a bridge to the future through its sacrifice and resistance.

“As you are aware, international stakeholders assumed that the nuclear deal would bring tranquillity to the region. But it rained down barrel bombs and 70,000 Revolutionary Guards on the people of Syria. It resulted in ethnic cleansing of Sunnis by the terrorist Quds Force in Iraq. And it led to the spread of extremism under the banner of Islam in the whole region.

“The mullahs and Daesh are reading from the same script. Both espouse a similar reactionary ideology, which is diametrically opposed to the pristine teachings of Islam. They have a similar modus operandi when it comes to barbarity and savagery. They need to rely on one another to survive. For this reason, so long as the regime’s occupation of Syria, Iraq and Yemen continues, we cannot confront Daesh effectively.

“Regrettably, the notion of practical coordination with the terrorist Quds Force is being justified on the pretext

of confronting Daesh. I warn that any silence vis-à-vis such an approach or any collaboration with the mullahs enables them to commit genocide and to infringe upon the national sovereignty of countries in the region.

“Let me remind everyone that since the days of the great Dr Mossadeq, US policy on Iran, and consequently on the Middle East, has jumped from one mistake into the next: From the notion of empowering bogus moderates to blacklisting the PMOI, thereby blocking the path to change in Iran, to remaining silent vis-à-vis the 2009 uprising, thereby enabling the religious dictatorship. This policy has brought calamity to our nations and crisis to America.

“How could this policy be corrected? We offer a solution that is the only effective option, and the most indispensable and attainable solution: the right of the Iranian people to overthrow the religious dictatorship and attain freedom and democracy must be recognized.

“This solution does not merely benefit the Iranian people. It also amounts to a breakthrough for the region and for the world. Many elected representatives of people throughout the world as well as senior US, European, Australian, Canadian, Asian and Middle Eastern personalities and dignitaries – who support freedom and democracy in Iran and the security of, and protection for, the residents of Liberty – proudly attest to this reality. I hail all of them and all of you present here today.

“But the last word, yes, the last word, is the very first word for which we have risen up, namely resistance for freedom. Of course, we were not the first to take on this responsibility. This is the evolutionary extension of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, of the national movement of Dr Mossadeq and the July 21, 1952 uprising, which restored him as Prime Minister; it is a response to the stolen dreams of the 1979 Revolution and the blood-stained

extension of June 1981 uprising. Indeed, we were not the first to take on this responsibility, Prophets and great peacemakers were the pioneers.

“In the Old Testament, God told Moses, ‘I have called upon you to liberate the enchained and those who live in darkness.’ The Bible quotes Jesus Christ as saying, ‘For someone who believes, everything is possible.’ And the Quran has said, ‘So, Resist with a magnificent resistance. Surely they see it far off, and We see it high.’

“Throughout history, no obstacle and no barrier, however impenetrable and fortified, has succeeded in hindering this mandate. And in this light, the ruling religious dictatorship cannot withstand the power of the Iranian people’s resistance.

“Indeed, a new era will dawn in Iran; a society based on democracy, separation of religion and state, and gender equality will blossom.

“To achieve this glorious objective, we have chosen to resist. We have chosen to resist anywhere and in any form to bring the ideal of freedom to fruition.

“We have chosen to resist so long as oppression and tyranny persist. And we are honoured to have made this choice.

“We will not relent until the day when freedom, democracy and equality roar like a powerful torrent from Azerbaijan to Baluchistan and from Khorassan to Khuzestan.

“We will not relent until the day when Iranians of all persuasions and divergences can join hands to hoist the flag of victory, the flag of a free and democratic Iran.

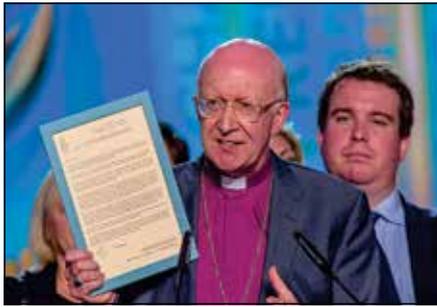
Hail to Freedom!

Hail to all of you!





"IT'S GREAT TO BE HERE TODAY"



BISHOP JOHN PRITCHARD was one of the members of the British delegation in Paris who spoke to the gathering. He said:

It's great to be here today. In this quite extraordinary event. I didn't know what to expect. I shall be having amazing memories of this day. So thank you for making it so memorable.

I think it's unfortunate that every time I come here, it seems, – I come to Paris that is – it seems there's been an attack on camp Liberty.

Last time I met Mrs Rajavi in the NCRI headquarters that was in January, there had been another of those attacks in October last year and 24 people had been killed there. That was the occasion when I presented Madame Rajavi with this particular letter. It was signed by myself, by the Archbishop of Wales and by over 50 Bishops. To get 50 Anglican Bishops to agree on anything is remarkable and we got them to agree on this.

And we were calling on the British government to intervene and put pressure on the government of Iraq, on the United Nations, on the United States, so that we could actually have some urgent and decisive action that would put an immediate end to these attacks on the Iranian refugees in camp Liberty.

And we also supported the British MPs all those 400, an extraordinary



number, who said this, and I quote: 'failure to do this, to put an immediate stop to this, would only embolden the Iranian regime to plot even more deadly attacks against these refugees in an effort to annihilate the main and most organised Iranian opposition objecting to its theocratic rule.' Absolutely!

And I'm afraid not enough action has been taken in response to our calls and that led to another attack. Fortunately this time no loss of life, but nothing seems to deter these gallant refugees from standing tall and seeking to bring freedom and justice to Iran. Keep doing it!

This recent attack just demonstrates to me that the Iranian regime is doing everything it can to prevent the relocation of those residents of Camp Liberty to other countries outside. Thank God for Albania. Well done!

But I call on our government again, and the United Nations, and the United States to guarantee the safety of these residents and expedite their relocations outside Iraq.

I want to end with one just last note but it's really important.

The maltreatment of religious minorities in Iran, including Christians, is well known to everybody. I want to stress that in clear opposition to what the Iranian regime is doing to Christians, we have Madame Rajavi, a Muslim leader who symbolises interfaith harmony between Muslims and Christians and this represents a major change, a crucial change for religious minorities in Iran. So I wish you Madame Rajavi every success in your struggle. I'm absolutely with you.

STEVE MCCABE:

It's a real pleasure to be here today.

We know that things in Iran are pretty awful these days. It's not just the disgusting and barbaric way that despotic regime treats its own people but it's the way it exports its terror to other parts of the region.

Today it is active in Yemen and Syria and Iraq. Murdering innocent people



slaughtering the hostages at camp Liberty and promoting a campaign of terror against Sunni Muslims thus providing the perfect environment for Daesh to thrive.

As Madame Rajavi said, there is almost a symbiotic relationship between ISIS and the Revolutionary Guards; they are opposite sides of the same coin.

This export of terror is what is causing Iran's economic wounds, and what's stifling its economy. This is where the resources that the west decided to release when it lifted sanctions and unfroze bank accounts, are going. This is what is causing Iran's economic difficulties.

If we want peace and stability in the region we need to listen to Madame Rajavi. We need to make clear that Iran will face punitive sanctions if it doesn't cease its activities in Syria.

We need to ensure that the Security Council Resolution 2231 is enforced and that we put an end to the export of arms and terrorism from Iran to other countries in the region. And we need to stop companies who decide to do business with those groups associated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, and we need to cease all activity with Iranian banking groups who launder money and support terrorist activities.

That's the only way we will make a difference. Let's stand up for a free Iran.





NEWS FROM IRAN

Union activist released from prison after more than two months on hunger strike

The mullahs' regime was forced to release Iranian workers' rights activist Jafar Azimzadeh, who carried out a hunger strike for more than 63 days, on Friday 1 July under intense social and international pressure.

Mr Azimzadeh's health had considerably deteriorated after more than two months of a continuous hunger strike. His supporters had been holding daily acts of protest to force the regime to release him.

On Wednesday, June 29, hundreds of workers, teachers and youths rallied outside the office of Hassan Rouhani in Tehran in support of Mr Azimzadeh, demanding urgent action to save his life.

Gathering from different cities across Iran, protesters were seen chanting, "Workers don't belong in prison. Workers' wages is not lashing," "Jailed workers must be freed," "Political prisoners must be freed," "62 days have passed and Jafar remains in jail," and "Plunderers are free, workers are in jail." The repressive intelligence agents and police prevented anyone from taking any video footage or still images of the rally.

A day prior to this gathering Rasoul Boddaghi, Ismail Abdi and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi, jailed teachers who were recently released, were joined by 180 other teachers and workers issuing a statement announcing a hunger strike from Thursday, June 30, to Saturday, July 2 in support of Mr Azimzadeh.

Mr Azimzadeh had gone unconscious many times in the last few days.

Azimzadeh was on hunger strike



protesting the "violation of the fundamental rights of teachers and workers," "their detention and prosecution for bogus reasons" and raising charges such as "acting against security" against labour activists and teachers.

Mr Azimzadeh, who was arrested on 8 November 2015, was serving a six-year prison sentence in Ward 8 of Evin Prison for engaging in peaceful and legitimate trade union activities.

On 27 May 2016, Mr Azimzadeh sent an open letter to the International Labor Organization (ILO) from prison in which he lambasted the Iranian regime's mistreatment of workers.

A key demand of Mr. Azimzadeh and other workers' union activists is for the authorities to drop the charge of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and other national security charges in cases of union activities.

Mr Azimzadeh sent a statement out of Evin Prison following the release on bail of fellow political prisoner Ismail Abdi, Secretary General of Iran's Teachers' Trade Association (ITTA), vowing to continue his hunger strike until the "demands of millions of teachers and workers" are met.

Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action appeal in his support on 29 June saying: "Iranian trade unionist Jafar Azimzadeh, the Chair of the Free Union of Workers of Iran, lost consciousness on 27 June following a two-month-long hunger strike. He has been hospitalized since 18 June due to his deteriorating health, but is at risk of being returned to Tehran's Evin Prison, where his life may be at risk. He is a prisoner of conscience."

His health deteriorated after he started an indefinite hunger strike.

Baha'i woman arrested for selling wedding gowns

A Baha'i woman was arrested in Iran on 16 June 2016, after one month of harassment, intimidation and the shutdown of her business.

Sara Akhlaghi is a Baha'i residing in Shiraz, southern Iran. She was summoned to court on 16 June to sign papers in order to have her shop unlocked and then arrested instead.

Ms Akhlaghi advertised her wedding gowns on Instagram and internet 'security' agents hacked and blocked her account for "dissemination of indecent photographs and inciting and encouraging others to breach public decency."



UN rights experts call on Iran to free jailed artists

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs on cultural rights, Karima Bennouna, and on freedom of expression, David Kaye, called on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to release musicians Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi, and filmmaker Hossein Rajabian, who were imprisoned and heavily fined in June 2016.

"These three artists were sentenced for exercising their right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, which in turn results in unjustifiable restrictions on the right of all persons in Iran to have access to and enjoy the arts," Ms. Bennouna said. "Artistic expression is simply not a crime."





MY FATHER AND I THANK YOU

My name is Hanif one of the volunteers of ILA. Some of you may have heard about the good news that my father was saved and resettled to Albania from Camp Liberty a few months ago. Some of you contacted me to congratulate me. I thought to share this happy news with all the others who have not heard it yet and to take the opportunity to thank each and every one of you.

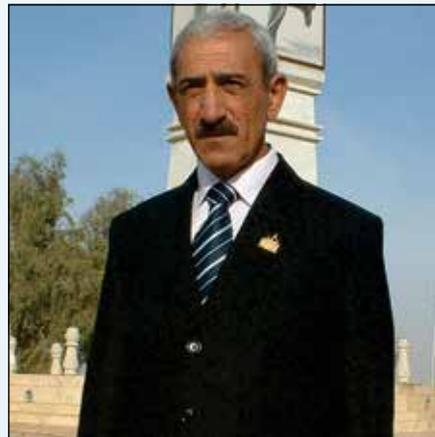


My Dad, Abbasali Abbasi has been one of those brave souls who entered the path of endeavouring to bring freedom for the people of Iran. Shortly after the revolution he realized danger of the Iranian mullahs and saw their inhumane acts against the people. He, as many others, couldn't stand the suppression so he stood up and participated in peaceful rallies against the regime. He was arrested and imprisoned when I was just born. My sister and I were smuggled out of Iran with the help of people in the UK. Fortunately my dad managed to escape prison and together with my mother they fled Iran to Camp Ashraf where we spent years together.

In 1990 when the first Gulf War started my parents decided to send me and my sister out of Iraq to protect us. Though my parents could have come with us they stayed behind in Ashraf.

It was really hard for me to be separated from my parents and I had a hard time understanding the reason as I was growing up with my Iranian foster family. I kept asking myself why they didn't come with us? They always wanted to be in contact but it was hard

for me to face them. When I turned 18 I decided to answer one of their phone calls. My dad talked to me whilst I could feel sadness and happiness in his voice. After a few minutes I gave myself the courage to ask. I asked why he and my mother decided not to come with us whilst they could? He said many things but a few words stuck in my mind ever since then. He told me "Hanif we could have and it was the most difficult decision we made in our lives to leave you two. But there are thousands of children like you Hanif currently in Iran suffering because of the suppression in Iran. Who will try helping them? We loved you two so much we decided to send you to safety even if it meant you two wouldn't understand us. Nothing in life is achieved without a sacrifice."



My Dad back in Ashraf

This made me think and to study Iran more and more until I one day realized how brave they were and how hard it was for them.

Something unexpected happened on March 2016. I had a phone call. On the screen it said Albania. As I could feel my heart beat I answered and heard my father's voice. It's very difficult for me to describe my feelings and it's at times like these I wish I was a poet. I couldn't believe it at first. 26 years since I saw him.

So I feel hopeful more than ever and encouraged to continue helping my mum and sister and all those remaining in the so called Camp Liberty.

All these years that my family were there I felt immense pressure thinking



Me, Sode and Mum

of their fate; that I am here and they are there in difficult and intolerable conditions of a concentration camp. Many times I wished I was in their place. On the other hand, all these years that I have been in close contact with likes of you I felt that I am not alone, I felt like having a large family of my own. Each and every one of you whom I had a contact with, was like my immediate family and you filled the gap in my life.

During phone call with my father I talked a lot about you and he thanked you all on behalf of himself and also on behalf of Sode, my mum and all the other residents of the camp. He wanted me to tell you how he loves you and respects you from the bottom of his heart. He asked me to thank you for all the support you have given, for all the prayers and good wishes. He said he is looking forward to the day that he can see you in person, shake your hands and express his immense appreciation face to face. That day is not far.



Sode was always my protector



Sode (right) and my mother