



# International Liberty Association Newsletter

Rowlandson House • 289-297 Ballards Lane • London N12 8NP

W: www.iliberty.org.uk • E: info@iliberty.org.uk • T: 020 8452 3481

## Editorial

### Season's Greetings

As another year in our struggle for justice and human rights draws to a close, it is a good time to reflect on our achievements and review our ongoing, not-yet-won, battles.

But first, let us wish our Christian readers a very happy and holy Christmas and everyone a most joyous and inspiring New Year. We have high hopes for 2018 continuing to bring success for each of us as individuals and as a linked community of good people doing what it takes to stop the evils of our time.

When we look back over 2017, we do see the hurdles as well as the achievements, but note the direction of movement set firmly towards our goal and the momentum for change building steadily.

Looking back in order to move forward is a theme expressed in several of the contributions in this bulletin. It goes to the heart of our efforts as part of a huge international campaign to bring to justice the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity in 1988 as 30,000 prisoners were killed during the summer months.

We are delighted with the progress that has been made by our collective effort as for the first time in 29 years the matter of this heinous attempt to purge a whole generation of activists who opposed the undemocratic and brutal behaviour of the Mullahs' regime was clearly referenced in the report taken to the UN General Assembly by the UN Special Rapporteur of Iran's human rights.

In her report she referred to the massive global campaign and said "To move forward, I would suggest we must also look back. In this regard, the significant number of petitions,

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## ILA EVENT IN HAMMERSMITH

### LORD CLARKE: LET US RE-DEDICATE OURSELVES TODAY TO BRING ABOUT THE FREEDOM THAT THE IRANIAN PEOPLE BOTH NEED AND DESERVE

In the event that was organised by ILA at Hammersmith Town Hall on 21 October Lord Clarke of Hampstead spoke on behalf of British Parliamentarians who support the cause. After explaining his life long support for the cause of human rights and basic freedoms in Iran he said:

"Currently, our Committee is very much engaged in pressing the Government on the question of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on what happened in 1988. On the fourteenth of August, the Rapporteur reported in detail and gave evidence of the massacre that took place in 1988. Earlier this year, in the House of Lords, I was fortunate enough to secure a debate on the situation in Iran, and I was able to once again draw attention



to the appalling abuse of human rights. But in that debate, I asked the Minister a specific question, and would she make a comment on the executions that had taken place in 1988, which we now know was a massacre of the innocents. In a response, the Minister, at that time it was Baroness Anelay, she said – I'm going to read this out because I

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### UN RAPPOREUR: I AM CONCERNED BY THE RATE OF EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

In her report to the UN General Assembly on 25 October 2017 Ms Asma Jahangir, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Iran, expressed concern at the rate of executions in Iran and said: "Reports indicate that since the beginning of the year 435 persons have been executed.



"...at least four juvenile offenders were executed, and 86 more are known to be on death row, although the actual figure may be higher. I take the opportunity to reiterate my request for a list of all juvenile offenders on death row and reiterate my appeal to the Iranian authorities to urgently abolish the sentencing of children to death, and to engage in a comprehensive process of commutation of all death sentences issued against children, in line with juvenile justice standards.

"Furthermore, I recently received information concerning Mohammad

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## ILA EVENT IN HAMMERSMITH

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don't want to misquote her – she said: 'The noble lord, Lord Clarke, among others, raised the issue of alleged, *alleged!*, 'executions in 1988. What I can say is that at the moment the UK is in a position of having very little corroborated evidence of the reported massacre of political prisoners in 1988.' She went on to say, 'I certainly hear what noble lords have said and I have in the past expressed at the dispatch box that if there was corroborated evidence, *if there was corroborated evidence!*, we would be able to take action. At the moment,' she said, 'the Iranian Government have repeatedly denied that it took place, although a number of lords have graphically set out what they, and certainly many people, believe took place.' With that statement, an ordinary person would believe that if the corroborative evidence was to be had, or to be seen and understood, then the action that the Minister said would take place would follow. Nothing happened. In the absence of such action, after the report was published, I wrote to the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I copied it to our Foreign Secretary, it was on the 21st of last month, reminding him of what the Minister of State had said about the 1988 massacre. I also raised a number of other matters with him, including the destruction of mass graves, and I again asked, had efforts been made to have an independent investigation into the massacre? I specifically asked that



those responsible were dealt with at an international tribunal, because they are war crimes and they are crimes against humanity that have got to be dealt with by an international body."

Lord Clarke concluded his remarks by wishing for a free Iran and said:

"Let us re-dedicate ourselves today to bring about the freedom that the Iranian people both need and deserve."

Ingrid Betancourt, former Colombian Presidential candidate who had spent 6 years as a hostage, said: "We all believe that if we are here tonight, it is because we have the power to change things. That's what we believe in, and of course it's kind of strange to think that from here, from this hall, we could have an impact on things that are happening so far away in Iran. But this belief is not grounded in wishful thinking. Actually, it's the experience of each of us for a lifetime, and in my case as a French-Colombian living here in the UK, I can testify on the power of the actions in unity that are done abroad



for the sake of the freedom of and of the life of, sparing lives in other places in the world. When I was abducted in the Amazonian jungle I was kept alive, not because of the generosity of my captors, I was kept alive because of people like you that were demanding, rallying for the freedom of the Colombian hostages, naming my name with other names, putting the light and the focus of not only my government, who didn't want to know anything about the hostages of the guerrilla at the time, but putting pressure on the governments,

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### **EDITORIAL** *continued from p.1*

communications, and documentation related to the reported execution of thousands of political prisoners, men, women, and teenagers in 1988, speaks of a deep and unremitting pain that must be surely addressed."

What an achievement! What hope for further success in the year to come! Our grateful thanks go out to you all for your ongoing support for these efforts.

However, our joy is also tinged with sadness as we reflect on the atrocities still taking place every day in Iran. In our thoughts especially at this time, the Christians, particularly those who

have converted from Islam during the 'Islamic' rule of the mullahs, are inevitably the most aggressively targeted. ILA firmly believes that nobody should be punished for holding, or changing, a belief, and has made it a responsibility to highlight their cases and bring their suffering to an end.

This persecution of Christians and other religious groups, as well as the continuing oppression of human rights activists, clearly points to the weakness of a regime faced with mounting internal crises and external pressures.

There are welcome signs that the regime's efforts to stave off trouble at

home by exporting chaos and terror abroad are beginning to founder as increasing numbers of people are coming to understand the dangerous game they have been playing. Recent documentary evidence revealing the financial, logistical and training backing of al-Qaeda by the Iranian regime has made a powerful case in point.

So, let us look forward with confidence to our continuing collective efforts making 2018 the year that human rights and the rule of law come to Iran and the sun of justice and peace shines from there across the world. Yes, together we can, we must and we will!!





## UN Rapporteur: I am concerned by the rate of executions in Iran *continued from p.1*

Ali Taheri, the founder of a spiritual movement, writer and practitioner of alternative medicine theories used in Iran and abroad, who was sentenced to death on the charge of Fesad fel Arz (corruption on earth). His appeal is pending before the Supreme Court. The trial took place amidst serious due process concerns, and a number of his followers were arrested and reportedly coerced into giving confessions. I call for the immediate withdrawal of charges against Mr. Taheri and for his unconditional release, and the withdrawal of charges against all individuals held for peaceful exercise of freedom of expression, religion, or belief.

“There are numerous reports of the use of physical and mental torture, including to coerce confessions. I regretfully note that amputation, blinding, flogging, and the continued use of prolonged solitary confinement continue to be regularly practiced. I am also deeply concerned by consistent reports of the denial of access to proper and necessary medical treatment of detainees, including the deprivation of medical care as a form of punishment.

“Mr. President,

I would like to pay tribute to those individuals and organisations who

submit information to my mandate – many in fear for the consequences. More broadly, I have received ongoing and consistent reports of harassment, intimidation, and prosecutions of human rights defenders. For example, the well respected human rights defender, Narges Mohammadi, continues to be imprisoned simply because of her commitment to human rights. I am also deeply concerned by the reports of attacks on women human rights defenders in the form of judicial harassment, detention, and smear campaigns. Interlocutors living outside their country have expressed extreme fear also of reprisals against their family members living in Iran, and I have received reports of actions taken, mainly by the judiciary, against the family and lawyers of activists in order to exert pressure upon them. I will continue to document and report on such intimidation in line with my mandate and while seeking to ensure confidentiality where necessary. In my report I also highlight the situation of trade unionists held in prison for peaceful activism, as well as the urgent and critical health situation of prisoners of conscience on, or having undergone, life-threatening hunger strikes who contest the legality of their detention.



“To move forward, I would suggest we must also look back. In this regard, the significant number of petitions, communications, and documentation related to the reported execution of thousands of political prisoners, men, women, and teenagers in 1988, speaks of a deep and unremitting pain that must be surely addressed. The killings themselves have been acknowledged by some at the highest levels of the State. Almost on a daily basis, I receive heartfelt letters from the relatives of those killed calling for answers. The families of the victims have a right to remedy, reparation, and the right to know about the truth of these events and the fate of the victims without risking reprisal. I therefore reiterate my call upon the Government to ensure that a thorough and independent investigation into these events is carried out.”

## THANK YOU ALAN CARTER AND KEVIN LAWLER

Alan Carter [left] and Kevin Lawler [right] are two ILA supporters who took part in sponsored run activity this fall. Alan ran the Maidenhead ½ Marathon (13.1 miles) on Sunday 3 September. After finishing the race he sent this report to ILA: *The Good News – I finished. It was the first time I had run in the Maidenhead ½ Marathon. (I have done a few others) It was a*



*well organised event and a good course – quite flat and a lot of it through fields and along the river. I was feeling good for most of the run ...*

Alan finished 5th in his age group (70+) and sent this photo with the caption:

*The photos near the finish were not quite as flattering...*

Kevin ran the Great South Run on October 22nd. About his motivation he wrote:

*“Since being introduced to ILA and its struggle for justice and human rights several years ago, I have been inspired by the tremendous courage and dedication of all those involved in this noble cause. I am humbled by the many stories of personal sacrifice ILA members have shared with me and also by the passion with which the campaigns are waged. As I’m blessed with reasonable fitness and good health, it is the least I can do to help the cause.”*

He managed to complete the 10 mile course in 1 hour 22 minutes – 3 minutes under his target time of 1 hour 25, “so I was pleased with that”, he wrote.

**Everyone at ILA, trustees and volunteers, are deeply touched and inspired by their efforts. Thank you Alan and Kevin!**



## ILA EVENT IN HAMMERSMITH

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foreign governments, the French government, the Italian government, the Canadian government, the American government, the UK government. My family was here, asking for the support and the support was granted, and if it hadn't been for that support I wouldn't be alive and I wouldn't be free. So I believe it is my duty, that it's our duty, to reflect on the power we have as individuals, the power of our words, the power of our actions and the power of the unity when we come together for a cause. And today I thought of bringing us together to follow a path, a dramatic path, but I think you see that if we believe that we can change things and that we can create a new future we have to have the courage to look back."

And in her concluding remarks she said:

"We need to be united because we need to demand from our governments that an independent international investigation committee is brought up, set up, to bring to justice the criminals. This is our mission. This is why we're here. I know that sometimes we feel that we cannot change the world, that it's too big of a mission, that we cannot even change the way we run our families, but don't be mistaken. We can change the way we relate to each other in our families, we can change with words the way we talk, we can heal, we can also heal our communities, and we can of course change the way this massacre has been dealt. No more silence. Let's break the silence. That's why we're talking today."

Tahar Boumedra, former UN Human Rights chief in Iraq was another speaker on the panel who congratulated the audience for their active support for ILA and its campaigns that have all borne fruit and said: "There is a draft resolution being prepared to address the situation of human rights in Iran. We are expecting this resolution to address the issue of the massacre of 1988, and if this happens, and we are hoping with full justification that the resolution, the coming resolution of the General



Assembly, will again condemn Iran for the violations of human rights, and also will invoke the issue of the massacre of 1988, together with a proposal for an international investigation."

Referring to the justice seeking campaign for bringing justice to the families of the victims of the 1988 massacre he said "we want an international Commission of Inquiry... it's no longer an issue of investigating internally, domestically, it's a question now for an international Commission of Inquiry. This is feasible, and I think the coming General Assembly resolution will confirm that."



Paulo Casaca former MEP from Portugal said: "Ladies and gentlemen, dear members of the board of the International Liberty Association, my first words are of congratulations for the big victory you had of getting so many thousands of Iranians out of Camp Liberty. For many times when I visited Ashraf, I thought this would never be possible. As the time went by and we lost so many friends, so many of us that have been together in this battle, I thought that nothing could be done to prevent a big massacre. But this was done because your voice is fundamental. It has been heard. Your voice and the voice of further organisations around Europe, very like-minded with you, that made a tremendous work. Never, never think that your voice is not important, that your work, that your contribution is not fundamental because it is. It is now and it will be in the future.

"We are all here together because we all believe in the sanctity of human life. We all believe that there is no possible reason for any human organisation to

think that it has the right to decide, in the name of whatever value, of whatever principle, that someone else should be deprived of life.

"I am Portuguese, I am not Iranian, you are, most of you are British, but we are all together, we are all humankind, we are all the same family. But beyond this, this battle is the battle of humanity, because the moment that we turn our eyes from these crimes, the moment that we say these crimes can go unpunished, we are at the very same time signing the death sentence of many, many other living people, because impunity is the most important recipe for the repetition of the crimes.

"And so we have here a team of the most brilliant people I've ever had the chance of working with. We are very favoured from this point of view. We have you. You have been tremendously important, and so I am certain we are going to win the 1988 battle."

Other speakers on the panel included Masoud Zabeti, solicitor partner at Mishcon de Rya law firm, Hossein Abedini, member of Foreign Affairs Committee of the parliament in exile, NCRI and Azadeh Zabeti Co-Chair



of the Committee of Anglo-Iranian Lawyers. In her remarks to the meeting Ms Zabeti, referring to the case of Nazanin Ratcliffe,

the thirty-eight-year-old dual Iranian and British national who is currently in prison in Iran, said: "My personal view on this case is that not enough has been done, our Foreign Office have made representations, we're told, to the Iranian authorities, but have certainly in my view not been nearly as robust as they should be."







## ARREST AND INTIMIDATION OF CHRISTIAN CONVERTS IN IRAN, A NEW SURGE

The newly married Christian convert, Abdolali Pourmand, was arrested on Thursday 19 October 2017 by Iranian intelligence agents in the city of Dezful, south-west Iran. He was later transferred to a prison in Ahvaz, the capital of Khuzestan province.

According to reports, the agents raided his house and found Bibles, pamphlets, and CDs. He was not at home at the time so was summoned on the phone and asked to go to the headquarters of the Ministry of Intelligence in Dezful. He was then arrested and transferred to Ahvaz.

Pourmand, a member of the “Payame-Aramesh” (message of peace) church in Dezful who got married only two months ago, had a brief telephone conversation with his family on 21 October and told them that the interrogators have promised that he would be released soon.

At least three other Christian converts have been arrested in Dezful recently. They have been beaten and threatened to renounce their faith, leave the country, or face death under torture.

On 10 October another Christian convert, Mohammad Ali Torabi, nicknamed Davood, was also arrested in Dezful and transferred to Ahvaz. Torabi had also told his family that he would be released soon but he remains incarcerated after two weeks.

Two other Muslims who have recently converted to Christianity were also arrested at the same time, but they have reportedly been released after undergoing an interrogation.

A website that is dedicated to reporting about Christians in Iran, Mohabbat News, has also mentioned that two other Christian converts – Sara Ne’mati and Mehrdad Houshmand – were summoned by security agents of the country’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) on Monday 9 October.

This happened in the Iranian capital Tehran and they were jailed after a very long interrogation process.



In the past few months a number of Iranians who had converted to the evangelical church have been arrested. They are usually accused of “acting against national security” because they started up house churches or participated in Christian ceremonies.

Religious minorities have been mistreated in the country for many years and a large number of people have been arrested for peacefully and privately partaking in activities related to their faith.

Christianity is recognised as an official religious minority in the constitution, but the Iranian regime continues to persecute members of the faith, especially converts.

Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified more than forty years ago, states that everyone is entitled to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.

Iranian Christians also requested renewed prayer for Eskandar Rezaei and Soroush Saraei, believers who have faced a series of pressures over the past five years, following their re-arrest in July 2017.

Middle East Concern reported that



Eskandar was arrested on 6 July 2017 at his home in Lar where several hundred New Testaments were discovered and confiscated. He is being held at Quran Branch of Adel-Aabad prison, Shiraz. Soroush was also arrested in July. He was initially held at the intelligence offices before being transferred to Adel-Aabad prison.

Both Eskander and Soroush have been verbally charged with “acting against national security”. Soroush faces an additional charge of “forgery” for issuing letters as the pastor of the Church of Shiraz for students seeking exemption from Islamic studies classes. They are to attend court hearings soon to face these new charges.

Eskander and Soroush were first arrested in October 2012 along with five other members of the self-styled ‘Church of Iran’ denomination in a raid on a prayer meeting in Shiraz. Both were released on bail in March 2013 and were formally convicted on 16 July 2013. Eskander received a one-year sentence and Soroush two and half years. Following unsuccessful appeals in March 2014 they waited several months before being summoned to serve the sentences.

**Yusef Naderkhani [left] has been jailed again.**

**Ebrahim Firuzi [right] has been in jail since 2013.**







# PHOTOS OF THE ILA EVENT IN HAMMERSMITH







## NEWS FROM IRAN

### Prisoner of conscience critically ill in Iranian jail

Mohammad Nazari who has been on hunger strike since 30th July, has been in prison for over two decades. According to reports from Iran he is critically ill and needs urgent medical care outside prison.

Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action appeal on 23 October calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Mohammad Nazari, 46, was arrested aged 23 in May 1994 by Revolutionary Guards officials in Bukan, and has spent half of his life in prison.



### Prisoner's family ask UN Special Rapporteur for help

In a letter to Ms Asma Jahangir, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights



in Iran, the family of a Kurdish political prisoner called on her to help them get clarification of their son's situation in prison.

In their letter, Ramin Hossein Panahi's family refer to the torture and mistreatment and lack of any news about the fate of their son and complain that the Iranian regime is prohibiting them hiring a lawyer for him. They fear that he might be executed without due process of law.

Ramin was arrested nearly four months ago by the security forces and taken to an unknown location.

### British-Iranian mother faces another 16 years jail in Iran

According to reports from her family, Nazanin Ratcliffe is facing new charges

brought up by Iranian Revolutionary Guards who arranged for her arrest in April 2016. Nazanin who is an Iranian born British citizen married to Richard Ratcliffe, was arrested in the airport near Tehran while returning home from a visit to her family in Iran. Her little girl was separated from her and she remains in jail for trumped up charges. As an employee of Thomson Reuters Foundation she is being accused of joining organisations working to overthrow the Iranian regime.

Tulip Siddiq, the MP for Hampstead and Kilburn, where the Ratcliffe family live, has called on the British government to intervene, saying their "soft-ball approach to the Iranian Authorities seems to be doing little to improve their plight".



## How a gift in your will makes a difference

Human beings deserve to live in a society where human rights are respected. No matter how far the world is from this goal, it is our belief that it can be reached. All the people in the world, religious or nonreligious, regardless of their beliefs deserve human dignity & honour in common. We have to work together to keep moving towards that goal.

### We yearn to experience a world...

**...where friendship and tolerance replaces mistrust, hatred and vengeance and all citizens of the world enjoy the right and freedom to have a belief and talk about it without fear of persecution, the right to life and the right to security...**

**...where all citizens with diverse beliefs and religions can live side by side in harmony...**

**...where war, bloodshed and violence are completely eradicated.**

*Such a future would make many children smile and be without fear.*

*Having fun with friends would become easier and safer for many children.*

*Our values can have a resonance in history and our beliefs can be represented beyond our life span.*

*Together, we have come a long way and have seen many ups and downs. All the way we have kept our visions and dreams. Let's pass it to the next and the next generations.*



**By leaving a legacy to International Liberty Association you can guarantee this continuity.**



## GREETINGS FROM IRAN AND ALBANIA

Human rights activists and Ashrafi in Iran and in Tirana sent their best wishes and season's greetings to all of you who have been thinking of them and defending their rights.

Golroo from Tehran said: *It is unfortunate that we cannot celebrate Christmas as my parents and grandparents used to. Nevertheless I feel honoured to share my thoughts with such great people who have been thinking about us and our rights. Iran will not remain like this much longer. There is a very deep sense in the atmosphere here that the time for change has arrived. I can almost hear the whisper in the wind, the time has come.*

*I send you my greetings and best Christmas wishes and pray that the New Year will herald a new era in our lives.*

Sepehr from Shiraz said: *We are so fortunate to have caring people like ILA supporters and volunteers who are dedicating so much to expose our suffering under the medieval rule of godless clergy. I always watch Sima TV secretly and share*

*the messages with my friends. It inspires us to tolerate the pain and suffering with a daily dose of hindsight as well as hopeful news and analysis. So let me take this opportunity to wish all our British friends a happy Christmas and successful New Year. I wish I could celebrate Christmas with you.*

Sudeh from Tirana: *I wish I could be with you and say this in person. Happy Christmas. This is the second year that we are approaching Christmas without fear of bombs and hateful attacks. This is so because of you and your selfless sacrifices. We shall never forget you. I plan to go to a*



*church in Tirana and celebrate Christmas with my new Christian friends. This will certainly be a comforting experience for me and I will be thinking of you all on Christmas eve.*

Ruzbeh: *I can imagine the day that we will all live in peace and harmony together. I am also very aware that this day will not arrive unless we work hard and pay the price with our selfless endeavours. When I was asked to send a message for this coming Christmas I thought I should do it with a song which I will certainly do and I hope you will like it. Happy New Year.*



## ILA CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATIONS

*Being able to share Christmas is always a great privilege.*

*We will prepare an afternoon of delicious feast of turkey with all the traditional trimmings, music and games for you to enjoy.*

*Your companionship will vitalise our hopes, our spirits, and our strength.*

*We truly hope you can join us.*

**Saturday 16th December 2017 3pm-6pm OR**

**Sunday 24th December 2017, 3pm-6pm**

**If you are able to attend please contact us by email, phone or in writing.**

**HOSTED BY FATHER CHRISTMAS!**

