

# International Liberty Association Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

The chill breath of the Beast from the East was still evident around Hammersmith Town Hall on the day of our Noruz celebration. But there was no place for gloom inside, as the colour and beauty of the season was everywhere and the spirit of life and love flowed through the food, the music, the costumes, the speakers, unifying all who attended with a rising sense of pride in past achievement and powerful optimism for the future.

This optimism has been ignited by two key factors, the protests in Iran which have been continuing since the beginning of the year and the clear evidence of change in policy towards the Iranian regime by the current US administration.

Since the end of 2017, the world has witnessed the people of Iran, from every strata of society and walk of life, taking part in protests across the country. The regime has responded with customary brutality and bloodshed against innocents asking only for their basic rights and a living wage. But, undeterred, the protesters keep gathering, evidencing their courageous determination for real change.

Meanwhile, the new US administration is making good on its word to change policy towards Iran with laws being enacted to put pressure on the regime and its terror wing, the IRGC. When the President rejected the nuclear deal on 8 May, expressed his support for the people of Iran in their struggle to reclaim their rich heritage and put the rest of the world on notice to stop trading with this rogue regime, it no doubt shook the Mullahs to their core.

We must encourage our UK Government to stand shoulder to shoulder with the US Administration in calling the Iranian regime to account. Solidarity from Western governments will greatly increase the possibility of reaching lasting

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## THE DIASPORA LIVES BECAUSE OF YOU



In his passionate speech at our event in Hammersmith Town Hall on 21 April, Senator Robert Torricelli, former Democratic Congressman and US Senator gave a brief history of his involvement with the cause and thanked everyone for their support. He concluded his remarks by saying “the diaspora lives because of you”. Excerpts of his speech follow:

Happy NoRuz, and it is wonderful we could celebrate it today in what

could be this year a new beginning in so many ways.

This is a cause that has become an important part of my life, and I want to talk to you about it today. The story of the residents of Camp Ashraf has many tragic twists and turns. The diaspora from Iran, following the revolution which was stolen from the people by the ayatollahs, taking what could have been a burst of freedom

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## MOTHER CALLS FOR FAIR AND OPEN TRIAL OF HER SON



Dayeh Sharifeh, the mother of a Kurdish political prisoner on death row, Ramin Hossein Panahi, has called for an open trial of her son.

Ramin Hossein Panahi was scheduled to be executed on Thursday, 3 May 2018, but his execution was postponed after a social media campaign

drew international attention to his case. He has since been returned to the general ward of the Central Prison of Sanandaj. His niece, Hossein Panahi, committed suicide on 1 May 1 after hearing that her uncle was set to be executed in the following days.

In a message published in social media on 3 May, Mrs Dayeh Sharifeh said: “Since the first day when Ramin was arrested, we demanded that his trial be open. Ramin is absolutely innocent.

“He had come to Sanandaj just to visit me. Now if the Justice Ministry is telling the truth, they should also disseminate what Ramin and I have said.”



The diaspora lives *continued from p.1*



into a theocracy of religious fascism, inevitably caused elements of Iranian society to flee Iran, but what follows in the next thirty years is compounded tragedies which bring us here today.

There were few places to leave from Iran but to go to Iraq and seek refuge. What follows is not a great chapter in the life of your country or mine, for the Second Gulf War begins, and even before, when my country sought better relationships with the ayatollahs, the ayatollahs' price was always clear: you can enter this door, better relationships are possible, but what are you doing about the MEK and the refugees in Camp Ashraf?

Which leads us to the point at which Struan, I, and many of you entered this struggle: thousands of Iranian refugees sitting in a desert camp named Ashraf, within a day's drive of the Iranian border, where they had built a city out of dust. They built a magnificent home: music venues, sports venues, housing, indus-

trial plants producing enough electricity to light up the province, not just their own city, producing water not just for themselves but for neighbouring farms, a miracle in the desert. And there they prospered, until, ... the long grinding down of Ashraf, the killing of innocent civilians, began: rocket attacks, entering with squads of killers, murdering people. Until on one fateful night a group of special Iraqi forces, I'm certain mixed with Revolutionary Guards from Tehran, in special uniforms provided by the United States Government, carrying American-made weapons that they didn't even bother to disguise, entered the camp and went house by house. Those who were in the hospital on gurneys were shot between the eyes in their beds, others in the backs of their heads. Those who could not hide or could not run were murdered in place. We had already moved the bulk of the residents to Baghdad. At that point everybody had to leave. It is an extraordinary story some of you may be hearing for the first time. Most people in my country have never heard it, because it is a truism in the Western world, among the liberal democracies: if the Press didn't see it, it didn't happen. So this never happened, except I was there, Struan was there, it happened. From the time of the Iranian Revolution to this day, one hundred thousand Iranians have been

murdered, executed, killed for nothing but their beliefs.

But I didn't come here today simply to talk about the mullahs and the regime in Tehran; you know that story. But there's more that needs to be told of nations that are the founders of the United Nations, of the belief in my house that if the British and the Americans aren't pursuing justice in the world, nine times out of ten it's not being pursued at all. I want you to know part of the story that Struan and I lived, because while this killing was going on, the United Nations sent a German diplomat named Kobler to meet with Rudy Giuliani and me, and four or five other former US Government officials, to let us know that the United Nations recognised the problem and was going to help.

Mr Kobler came and met with us in Paris and he presented us with pictures of a former American military base with secure borders, housing, trees, water supplies, places to work and eat, knowing that we could move these people from Ashraf to Baghdad, put them on an American military facility where the killing would stop. They would be safe. In the name of the United Nations.

When I visited Camp Liberty in Baghdad, there was no water. The protective blast barriers had all been removed by the Iraqis. There were

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solutions for dealing with Iran and bringing peace to the Middle East.

And now as the days get longer and warmer, reminding us that even the most fearsome beast cannot hold sway forever, we look forward with great anticipation to the 2018 Grand Gathering in Paris.

The eyes of the world, not least the Mullahs, will be on this event as never before as tens of thousands from across the globe gather to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Iran in their clear desire for a better life, free from the oppressive medieval dictatorship that has held this ancient land and its people hostage for too long.

More than ever, we urge you to come to Paris with us. We have a strong feeling that history is in the making and we would love you to share this with us.

## ANOTHER ACHIEVEMENT FOR JUSTICE-SEEKING CAMPAIGN



On Thursday 26 April 2018, the US House of Representatives passed H.R.4744 Act holding the Iranian regime accountable for its human rights violations, with an overwhelming majority of 410-2. The bipartisan legislation holds Iranian regime officials accountable for their role in human rights abuses

and hostage-taking, and requires imposition of sanctions against them. The bill also calls for investigations into the 1988 mass executions of 30,000 political prisoners.

The legislation requires the US President to submit a report to appropriate congressional committees determining senior officials of the Iranian regime who are responsible for human rights abuses.

A section of the Act accuses the Iranian regime of hostage-taking and arbitrary detention of US citizens, and has obliged the US Foreign Secretary to submit within 120 days after the bill's enactment date a report containing a strategy to prevent Iranian regime officials from taking further hostages



no bunkers. There was nothing but desert, snakes and sand. But in good faith we moved three thousand people to live there. But what you need to know, as people who have helped save these lives, when we saw the reality of it, American military engineers told us it would take four months to get enough water supplies to support three thousand lives. It took four weeks. They told us it would take a year to rebuild this to make it habitable. It took about 90 days. These people worked around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and built a place where they could survive and keep on the struggle for Iranian freedom, in one of the most extraordinary commitments I have ever seen in my life.

But what happened is that the assault on Ashraf was now repeated in Baghdad, and soon rocket attacks began, rocket attacks that took scores more lives.

But the question remained? Where do you take three thousand people who you know a terrorist government will attack?

One nation came through: Albania. It is extraordinary. when I first went to Tirana, after the U. S. Government had approached them, and discussed the possibility, I was interrupted. They said simply to me, "We understand tyranny. You have to explain nothing to us. We lived under a dictatorship for a generation. Whatever you're telling us about the mullahs in Iran, we saw in Tirana with the communists. We want to help." And so three thousand souls started to arrive... where they created a miracle once again.

To all of you, no matter what you did, you wrote a cheque, said a prayer,

went to a meeting, wrote a letter, let me just tell you the simple truth: you saved lives. There are thousands of people alive - let me be clear: it's not that they might have been dead, they would be dead. They would have died. No-one was coming to their rescue. And I know there'll be no plaques, I know the Press didn't stand outside and talk about your great work, none of you were honoured, because the Press isn't there it didn't happen, you just did the right thing. So I decided a long time ago when I left the Government, if I could no longer save the world I could at least save some little part of it. Clearly we did the same thing. Maybe we didn't move history. But doesn't it mean something that we saved some people who deserved to be saved, that history forgot?

And for one more thing, not only their lives, but their survival means there's still hope for Iran to join the family of nations. What an abomination, what an irony of history, one of its oldest cultures, one of its strongest cultures, one of its most dynamic people for five thousand years, living under this oppression

of this mediaeval theocracy that has no place in the twentieth, no less the twenty-first century. There's no great international movement to end it, everyone seems willing to accommodate anyone who has oil. I got that. It's not going to come from governments. It's going to come from people who just remember and know what Iran was and could be. I leave you with this: It wasn't that many years ago that around this city there were men and women who represented Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, who all believed someday the wheel of history would turn. It did. It will here too. I mention it to you not only because I suspect you believe in the cause of freedom as I do, but that when you, you individually, saved those three thousand lives, you saved the point of a spear. The demonstrations in recent weeks in Tehran, the communication to help people organise, the spread of democratic ideas, the belief in a better future, of course it came from the hearts of Iranians. It also came from the diaspora. The diaspora lives because of you. Thank you all.





## LABOUR PROTESTS ACROSS IRAN



Iranian cities were the scenes of anti-regime protests on the occasion of International Workers' Day. On Tuesday, 1 May, thousands of workers, retirees, and other deprived strata of the society took part in an anti-government gathering in front of the Majlis (parliament) in Tehran to protest their deplorable living conditions. They chanted: "Arrested workers should be freed," "Bread, housing, freedom, are our inalienable rights," "Worker, teacher, student, solidarity, solidarity."

Placards carried by the workers read: "Our dinner table is still empty". One of the workers carried a large placard which read: "Hey, You, billionaire minister, I haven't been

able to buy meat for the past 40 months". The security forces attacked this protest rally and arrested a number of protesters.

At the same time a large crowd marched towards the regime's "Worker's House" and protested there. They were chanting: "Down with oppressor, hail to workers" "Incompetent minister, resign, resign" "We don't want an incompetent minister".

In Saqqez (Kurdistan) a gathering of workers was held in Chami Vali Khan Square. It was attacked by the repressive forces and a number of participants were arrested and injured. Similar demonstrations were reported from cities all over Iran.

On 30 April, Payam Shakiba, a political prisoner in Gohardasht Prison, sent a message encouraging Iranian workers to unite for their rights. After explaining in detail the various crises the regime is facing and the unwillingness and inability of the officials to deal with the legitimate demands of the workers he said:

"Organizing Iran's labour community and associating with others from various branches of our society, along with evicting the regime's factions and their schemes, should evolve into political demands and standing shoulder to shoulder with the Iranian people's nationwide movement against a regime that is very weak and ill. This will most definitely render a new order and a better future for Iran's hard-working labour community."

## WHY IRAN'S TEACHERS ARE PROTESTING

Since Thursday, 10 May, many cities across Iran have seen protests by teachers and other education workers. Teachers have been protesting over the government's mismanagement causing unemployment, unpaid wages, and inflation. However, this new wave of teachers' protests is the largest of its kind in the past year. The protests are taking place despite the regime's crackdown on demonstrations and assemblies across the country.

These teacher protests are taking place simultaneously with protests and demonstrations being held across Iran by various other groups of people such as the merchants and shop owners in the country's western provinces, farmers in Isfahan and Ahvaz, and the plundered clients of government-backed financial institutions across the country.

Teachers are among the poorest and yet the hardest working classes of Iran's society. Their wages are below the poverty line. But, rather than asking for an increase in their wages,



City of Kazeroun has been the scene of widespread protests in the past month

the teachers are demanding the removal of any form of discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities in the education system.

Another demand is the release of detained teachers and political prisoners. The Iranian regime has detained a number of teachers because of their active role in protests and working to restore the rights of teachers. Among them is Esmail Abdi, a teacher and activist who has long been persecuted by the regime and is currently in jail.

Teachers also demand free and quality education for all children. According to the regime's own media, Iran has millions of child labourers. A healthy, government-funded

education system would put more children in school. But, instead of spending its budget on schools and education, the Iranian regime spends the funds on regional wars and its repression apparatus.

### How has the regime responded?

As with all protests taking place across Iran, the regime has responded by force. In Tehran, the regime's security forces cracked down on the teachers' gathering, arresting dozens and injuring many others. But the teachers continued their protests. Security forces have confiscated mobile phones and other communication devices to prevent teachers from spreading the news of their protest gatherings.



## HAMMERSMITH EVENT FROM YOUR EYES



informative exhibition and video of progress at Tirana, very powerful speakers, excellent dinner and then entertaining music.

**Audrey and Herbert:** We are so pleased that we came because we found the event quite inspirational. Many thanks and may your dedication to your cause bear fruit very soon.

**Tom:** I found the speakers quite inspiring, especially the US Democrat Senator, whose commitment to your cause was amply demonstrated. Thank you again for your welcome.

**Susan:** I thought your Noruz party was very good. Lovely flowers and pictures and the exhibition was very interesting and the ladies in national tribal costumes.

**Guy:** It was a really impressive occasion and I thought the two speeches were inspirational, particularly Bob Torricelli.

**Diana:** I was very impressed by the speakers. The music was wonderful, particularly the sitar/ violinist and I was fascinated.

**Michael:** I thought the evening was very well organised and was certainly well attended.

**Nigel:** First of all, I would like to thank ILA for a very good, informative, entertaining, enjoyable and very well organised event at Hammersmith Town Hall on Saturday. As always, it was a tremendous team effort on the part of so many arranging the furniture, decorating the hall, preparing the food, welcoming your guests offering such genuine hospitality. It's a huge amount of work on the part of ILA and a visible demonstration of your commitment to bring about freedom and justice in Iran. Thank you all very much indeed.

**Margaret:** The NoRuz event was delightful with just the right amount of comment and music to please everyone. As always the food was delicious. Many thanks for inviting me. I shall look forward to the next event.

**Ruth and Jeff:** We really enjoyed the food particularly the chicken in walnut sauce and the music was wonderful, and obviously of a very high standard. I loved the flute! The speeches were very moving also.

**John:** May I thank you for inviting me and my daughter Jane. She had not known very much about the organisation except what I had been inadequately able to tell her, so was very interested in meeting you all, eating that wonderful meal and listening to Bob Torricelli's very impressive talk. It was a great occasion and we were delighted to be there.

**Hilary:** Many thanks for a very stimulating early evening.

**Olly:** My family and I had a great time. Thought the level of welcome, food, and hospitality were amazing.

**John:** As usual the organisation was very impressive and the surroundings, displays and table layouts were beautiful. The speeches were very thought provoking. You are to be congratulated on attracting speakers who were so involved in the recent history in Iraq and elsewhere.

**Norman:** Much appreciated the warm welcome and a cheery atmosphere,





# HAMMERSMITH EVENT IN PICTURES





## NEWS IN BRIEF

### IRAN'S WATER CRISIS



Protests in Iran are escalating due to the water crisis millions of people are affected by. The protesters are criticising the Iranian government's mishandling of water resources. Following protests by farmers in Isfahan, on Saturday, 12 May, a group of rice farmers in Ahwaz gathered in front of the governor's office to protest against water management and distribution rules. The protester's banners read: "We need water to stay alive."

### HUMAN CHAIN TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT



A group of people in Shahrud, eastern Iran, formed a human chain in Shahvar Mountains on Friday 11 May, to protest the plunder of mineral stones and destruction of the environment by the regime's elements.

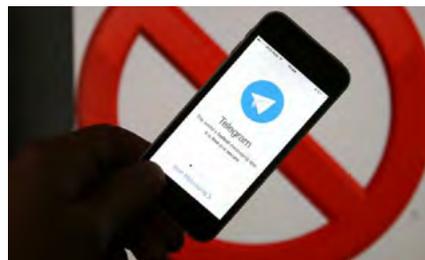
### STUDENTS PROTEST TUITION INCREASE



On Saturday, 12 May, students of Mashhad's Ferdowsi University gathered in front of the university to protest against increased tuition fees for extra years of higher education.

Ferdowsi is among the country's public universities, and according to the Iranian regime's own constitution, the government must provide free education and grant subsidies and scholarships on public higher education institutions.

### REGIME BANS POPULAR MESSAGING APPLICATION



The Iranian regime's judiciary has announced that the use of popular messaging application, Telegram, is now banned in the country. According to a court order: "All Internet providers in Iran must take steps to block Telegram's website and app as of April 30." Telegram is seen by the Iranian regime as a major threat. It is used as a way for the people to communicate, share videos and information and the regime cannot control it. Alternative domestic applications, on the other hand, would enable the regime to keep tabs on the people and they don't use them.

### SLAUGHTERED HORSES



The Iranian regime's security forces have slaughtered horses belonging to impoverished border couriers, known as 'Kulbars' in Iran's western border region under the pretext of combating the smuggling of goods.

News of the slaughter of nearly 90 horses in the Amir-Abad forest in Oshnaviyah, in Iran's Kurdistan Province, was published in the state-run 'Iran Newspaper' on 5 May.

In addition to contradicting the law and morality, this act is a serious health threat to the people of the region.

### IRANIAN KABADDI PLAYERS SEEK ASYLUM IN AUSTRALIA

Two members of Iran's national Kabaddi team are refusing to return to their home country after the Kabaddi World Cup in Australia and are seeking asylum there.

Mojtaba Shadkam and Amir Dehqani told a Persian language Radio that professional sport in Iran is run by the suppressive forces of the mullahs' regime and rife with corruption and crazy rules.

Shadkam, who also competed in the national championship in free-style wrestling, said: "Our sports managers are merely serving the regime's dictatorship. Therefore, it is hard to find a national athlete who is not fed up with the sports situation in Iran."



### DETAINED 'LABOUR DAY' PROTESTERS BADLY TORTURED

Hundreds of youths and workers who were arrested during 'Workers Day' protests have been seriously tortured by state security forces.

A number of workers from the Haft-Tapeh sugarcane plantation were aggressively attacked by the regime's agents while they were preparing and mounting their protest banners. According to reports more than 100 of the detainees, who had been transferred to Sheiban Prison in the city of Whace, were tortured with whips and hoses.



## FROM TIRANA



When I was a young boy my mother always used to tell me and my little brother Mousa interesting stories. One of those stories had a great impact on my life.

The story is about a poor boy who sold small items to pay for his own education. One day he felt very hungry and decided to knock someone's door to ask for something to eat. When he saw a young girl opening the door, he felt embarrassed and asked for a glass of water instead. The kind girl brought him a large glass of milk, which the boy greatly appreciated and enjoyed. He asked the girl how much he would have to pay for the milk? She answered: "For an act of goodwill, one shouldn't ask for anything in return."

Several years later that girl who had grown up, got diagnosed with a

life-threatening disease. The young boy had become a doctor and remembered the girl and managed to save her life.

Considering the special treatments she had received in the hospital, she was expecting a large bill.

However, the following day she received a letter which read: "All your expenses have been paid off with a glass of milk", signed by the young doctor.

From the time I heard this story, I always had a desire to be able to do something in my life that could have a positive influence on other people. Because of my interest in music, I decided to become a musician so that I could inspire people with similar aspirations through my music and lyrics.

When I was in camp Ashraf and camp Liberty, I used to play and sing for the other Ashrafis and for our people in Iran. One of the songs I produced only 3 days after the last missile attack on camp Liberty was called 'Day of Reckoning'. The song had a great impact on the people in Iran, because we had recorded the song on the ruins while everything in the camp was destroyed.

I feel very privileged to be among the Ashrafis, because they are people who even in the toughest situations never lost their hope. They are always kind, friendly and creative, and love

others more than themselves. They always give priority to others. It is from them that I learned how to express my greatest love towards the suppressed women in Iran, street children, prisoners of conscience and all other suffering people in Iran through my music and songs.

From you who have supported us all these years in Ashraf, Liberty and now in Tirana, we have learned the importance of sharing human values, happiness, and the value of giving in times of need. These are the values that creates a world we all desire, and you have played a crucial role in building up that world.

These are not just my personal feelings. All Ashrafis are feeling exactly the same. We all consider you as a member of our own family. We love and admire you, and feel enormous respect towards you. That's why we can never prevent showing our utmost admiration and love towards you when we see you here in Albania.

Blessed you are! *Ruzbeh*



## PARIS 2018 – LET'S BE THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

Your presence will help echo the voice of the people of Iran who are suffering from gross human rights violations.



PARIS: 30 JUNE 2018

Please join us for the  
#FreeIran2018  
Grand Gathering in Paris

For details, please contact ILA