

Join the Demonstration to Defend the Rights of Iraqi Asylum Seekers

ECHOS

COALITION TO STOP DEPORTATION TO IRAQ

NEWS LETTER 7



We call on all Human rights campaigners, trade unions and refugee rights organizations across Europe to join us to stop Iraqi Kurdish refugees from being forcibly deported

Four years after the invasion Iraq remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world 100's of people are killed daily. So far four Million refugees have left Iraq and the flow of refugees continues. The UK and several European countries claim Iraqi Kurdistan is safe. This is not true the two ruling parties in Kurdistan the PUK and KDP are not democratic parties and continue to persecute all those who speak against them. The PUK and KDP violate human rights on a daily basis. Four million Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan have been living in uncertainty for the last sixteen years.

Instead of trying to seek to help the Iraqi refugees European countries are persecuting Iraqi refugees. The UK in particular which has been a key player in the invasion and occupation of Iraq has deported 87 Iraqi Refugees over the last two years. On the pretext that Iraqi Kurdistan is safe, the way the UK deported the Iraqi refugees was humiliating. They were woken up early in the morning given no opportunity to collect their belongings. They were pushed out of the detention centres by armed guards, handcuffed and put into a coach and transferred to an airbase. Once on the flight, they were given flak jacket. This policy has been carried out by the UK Government despite the fact that the Kurdish and Iraqi people are fleeing from the disastrous and hopeless conditions in Iraq and many lose their lives in their way to reach a safe country.

European countries such as Germany, Sweden and Finland are following the example of the UK. Many Iraqi Kurdish refugees have been detained and locked up in detention centers across Europe. The Iraqi Kurdish refugees who have been lucky enough to remain free are being treated terribly. Iraqi refugees whilst waiting for permission to remain in Europe are being refused permission to work and are not given any money to support themselves leading many to become destitute.

The International Federation of Iraqi Refugees (IFIR) is campaigning to stop the policy of forcibly deporting Iraqi refugees back to Iraq and further to this we are calling for full refugee status to be granted to all Iraqi asylum seekers across the EU. To highlight the plight and suffering of Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers IFIR are organizing a number of events and demonstrations across Europe on the 22 June. Please join our campaign and support the demonstrations.

Dashty Jamal

The demonstration against the policies of forcibly deportation in Sweden was successful.



The Solidarity Committee to Defend the Rights of Kurdish and Iraqi asylum seekers held a 3 day picket from 7 – 9 June, setting up tents outside the Ministry of Immigration in Gothenburg. The Key demand of the picket was for the Immigration Department to grant full refugee status to Iraqi refugees and to stop threatening Iraqi Kurdish refugees with forcible deportation.

On the morning of 7 June the picket was opened by a statement from comrade Fatih.

On the second day of the picket (8 June) Patrick Hilgson and Yuban Sindan representatives of the Swedish left party joined the protest

On the third of the demonstration (9 June) Salam Zijj from the Workers Communist Party of Iran_Hekmatist, read out a letter and expressed their support to the Iraqi Kurdish refugees.

The picket ended at 3pm with a march from the centre of Gothenburg to Gotapltsen. At the end of the march Hawre Fatih read out a speech about the dangerous situation in Iraq and the suffering of the Iraqi Kurdish refugees in Sweden. The musician Pasha gave a free performance for the protestors.

The protest was recorded by the Kurdish and Swedish media.

Freedom of Movement and the Freedom to Stay

A petition which has been signed by 1500 people handed to the ministry of immigration in Sweden.



On 13th June 2007, Khalid Hama and Zuzan Osman representatives from International Federation of Iraqi Refugees (IFIR) in Sweden met Nicolas Cubin head of the Immigration Department. In the meeting, the representatives of IFIR raised the following issues

- The disastrous consequences of not extending the right to stay for Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden
- The unstable conditions in Iraqi Kurdistan
- The appalling conditions of Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden

At the end of the meeting Khalid Hama and Zuzan Osman said that IFIR would continue to challenge the Swedish Governments policy of forcibly deporting Iraqi Kurdish refugees. As they left the meeting the IFIR representatives handed a petition signed by 1500 people demanding that Sweden stop threatening Iraqi Refugees with forcible Deportation was handed to the Swedish Immigration Department.

On 25th June 2007, IFIR is holding a demonstration in Rasta in front of the Swedish Immigration Office from 1pm to 3pm. IFIR requests that human rights campaigners and trade unions attend the demonstration. For more information please contact: Khalid Hama: **0736 306871** or Zuzan Osman: **0736 746701**

NO DEPORTATION TO IRAQ!
Make 22nd June a European campaign day
against the deportation of Kurdish and Iraqi
asylum seekers



The International Federation of Iraqi Refugees (IFIR) is holding a number of demonstrations across Europe. Several European Countries has started to pressurise Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers and proposes to deport them forcibly. The EU alleges that Kurdistan is safe

and stable. However, four million Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan have been living in uncertainty for the last sixteen years. The future of the Kurds is unknown. Violation of human rights is ongoing in Kurdistan: a recent report from the US State Department says that people are regularly tortured in Kurdish prisons and the human rights record in Iraqi Kurdistan is poor. The UNHCR have recently released a report that in our view confirms that Kurdistan is unsafe and asylum seekers should not be forcibly deported to Kurdistan. Campaigners from women's rights and human rights organisations are threatened by the Kurdish authorities and the Islamists in Kurdistan.

IFIR calls upon all progressive political parties, refugee organisations, human rights organisations, trade unions, and progressive and freedom-loving people to join our campaign and participate in these demonstrations to defend the rights of Kurdish and Iraqi asylum seekers. If you cannot come to the demonstrations please sign our petition which contains the following demands:

1-Grant the right to stay for all Kurdish and Iraqi asylum seekers; European governments to recognise their refugee status.

2- Abolish all the proposed plans to deport Kurdish and Iraqi asylum seekers and lift all pressures on them by the governments.

These demonstrations will be held on following places:

England: the Home Office, 22-6-2007, 2 Marsham St, London

3pm – 5pm

Sweden: the Home Office, 25-6-2007 ,Stockholm 1pm to 2

Finland: the Home Office Helsinki: 22-6-2007

Switzerland: Bern the Home Office on 6-7-2007 :1pm to 3

Messages of support have been received by IFIR in, Norway, Netherlands, Australia and Canada For further information on any of the above demonstrations please contact :

UK-London:Karen Jonhnsen 07804 891082 Sarah Parker sarahp107@hotmail.com

Sweden, Stockolm:Zozan Hussen (0736746701) or

Khalid Hama 0736306871)Finland: Helsinki :

Rebwar Arif(00358440464905) Switzerland :Fazil

Osman(0041797266974)or Ahmad Ali (0041788532004)

Refugee Week

“No asylum seeker can be Detained or Deported under any circumstances or Justifications”

“Anyone one who may face detention, arrest or persecution if returned to her/his country of origin because her/his private life and political activates outside the country of origin are deemed contrary to the laws of that country must be granted Refugee Status”

IFIR-Declaration of Refugee Rights



Karzan Sherabayani talk about forced return of Iraqi Asylum Seekers

1 - I am not supposed to be a documentary filmmaker because I have always loved the world of cinema and fantasy

but, for now, the tragedies of my people have taken over. To show the stories and the daily life of the Kurds, the injustices that are done to them, on TVs around the world to mass audiences is most important. Therefore, when I first heard the shocking news about a large number of Kurdish asylum seekers in the UK being on the Home Office's list for forced repatriation to Iraq, I wanted to make a film to expose this outrageous policy of the British government.

2 - Some of these asylum seekers have spent more than eight years in the UK, and most have built a new life here. It is simply inhumane to think that you have the right to randomly detain them and then kick them out. This is nothing less than persecution in the name of law and order.

I did suffer under Saddam's regime and know what it means for Kurds when they are forced into police stations, which is what most of these guys have to do while living here in terrible conditions and fear – report weekly or monthly to the police until one day they are detained and put on a plane. Now isn't that what they have escaped from in the first place? Wasn't the fact that they were persecuted that pushed them to leave behind dear family and friends and all their precious connections they had in Kurdistan, in order to seek sanctuary in the UK? I find it absolutely absurd that this should happen in the 21st century in supposedly one of the most civilized countries in the world. No wonder some of these guys compare this policy to that of Saddam's regime.

3 – My first film in 1987 entitled *Passport*, and perhaps the first film made by a Kurdish filmmaker abroad, was about a young man who had no passport and was put under pressure by the authorities to leave Italy, the country he was living in. But where do you go when you are a Kurd and have no passport and no country of your own? And my latest film *Forced Repatriation*, as the title indicates, is about forcing Kurdish asylum seekers back to the Kurdistan region of Iraq, or what they call north of Iraq when it is more convenient for them to do so.

I begin the film in London and concentrate on looking into the life of a few of these failed asylum seekers in the UK, particularly Sadullah Kakl and Sherzad Jalal.

Sadullah was 16 when he first arrived in the UK and lived in Peterborough for 4 years. His asylum application was refused and the Home Office told

him to go home or he will be forced repatriated. After 4 years living off the charity of friends, he gave up and went back. Tragically, Sadullah was killed by a car bomb in January 2007 in Kirkuk. His family believes the Home office should take responsibility for refusing him sanctuary and also for inciting him to go back to such a dangerous country by offering him £3000.

Sherzad Jalal has lived in the UK for 8 years and has a British girlfriend. They love each other and are very happy together. Sherzad is very respected by his friends and his community because he is a model citizen. However, under a new UK law introduced on the 2nd of February 2005 failed asylum seekers are not allowed to get married here.

Sherzad claims his life will be in danger if he is forced to return to his hometown of Kirkuk and he has good reason to do so. Kirkuk is far from safe and has become just as violent as anywhere in Iraq. During the first 3 months of 2007 a total of 90 bombs exploded there.

One must ask why the Home Office is putting people like Sherzad and Sadullah under such pressure and humiliation, when all they have done is come to the UK seeking safety and protection, unless of course this is considered to be a crime? Why then the hypocrisy of talking about human rights. Why this double standard?

4 - Iraq, or the Kurdistan region in the north is NOT SAFE, and that comes across very clearly in my film. I traveled around following the latest group of 38 Kurds forced back on 12th February 2007. I visited most of them and spoke to their families, members of their communities and to the authorities in the region, including Sarhad Qadir, chief of Kirkuk district police and Falah Mustafa, the head of the Foreign Relations for the Kurdistan region. I did not come across anyone who would agree with the Home Office's policy of forcibly repatriating these Kurds. On the contrary, most people I spoke too were shocked and could not understand the logic behind this policy. They found it very damaging for both the asylum seekers and the people of the Kurdistan region.

The region is part of Iraq, and here is what the head of UNHCR in Erbil, KHALID SIDDIQUI, had to say about it:

“Well as a humanitarian organization I will not subscribe to the forced return and even at the moment the economic situation here is not right, the security situation is not right and there is a lot to be done in this area to help provide for these people before they are returned home.”

Maybe for the Home Office unsafe means only when you are blown up by a car bomb like Sadullah, or you completely lose your senses and kill a few people like Sarwan did, before himself being killed by neighbors, or if you are shot dead by the American forces by mistake as was the case with Hiwa Azzadin who

lived in Coventry for 3 years and was killed in this manner shortly after his return to Iraq?

Maybe it is only unsafe when you are kidnapped, or blown up by suicide bombers? Or killed by Turkish or Iranian shells? Maybe you have to die first to prove that you are not going to be safe so that the Home Office rethink its policy and stop forcibly repatriating you!

During my filming I came across many terrible stories about the challenges these poor men have to face when forcibly repatriated. The psychological trauma, and how much this damages them for the rest of their lives, is a huge price that they are paying for this wrong policy.

They simply say they have no life there and all of those I met want to come back to the UK. Actually some have already made it back.

5 - To ask whether it is safe or not to send back people to Iraq is really bizarre because by now even the cats and dogs in Europe must know that Iraq is a very dangerous place and that the violence is increasing every day. Everyone's life is in danger over there and that is why they are fleeing in their thousands. But some people can afford to have massive security around them, while others like the asylum seekers who are sent back are totally exposed. And that is exactly contrary to the human rights conventions to which Britain is one of the signatories.

Did I find that these asylum seekers who had been forced back were exposed to danger? The answer is yes, and there is plenty of evidence contained in my film.

6 - In making this film I have never intended to take sides and to blame the Home Office. I know they have a lot on their plate and have to deal with huge political pressure from the government to hit targets on time and to reduce the immigration figures. But this reduces people to mere numbers. I wanted to really investigate, as a professional reporter, the cases of these Kurdish asylum seekers and try to understand why and what is making the Home Office take this very sensitive position especially with regards to sending back people to Iraq.

I not only found out that this policy is dangerous and counter-productive, but also learned that there are many escaping from Iraq every day, including from the Kurdistan region, and they are desperately in need of protection.

I hope my film, as it bears witness to the horrendous suffering these innocent people are exposed to, will be used as a document in the hands of humanitarian organizations, solicitors and in the courts, including by the Home Office. Not only should my film be used in the UK, but also in all Europe to put an end to the forced repatriation of Kurds and all Iraqi failed asylum seekers, because this policy is sending people directly to their death, and while this death may not

always be physical, it is always a psychological death.

7 - I don't think the Home Office's policy of forced repatriation could be considered legal because the UK government is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention. And to handcuff asylum seekers, put them into military gear on board RAF planes, and ship them back to Iraq, should at this moment be considered a barbaric act and condemned by all. I surely will never agree to it and will always fight it with my film work.

8 - One can never do enough to raise the people's awareness about the terrible conditions that asylum seekers have to go through because of some right wing racist opinion against immigrants and refugees in this country.

Of course I agree that we should not have to conduct this campaign in the UK when there is a Labour Party in power! But we should be campaigning in countries where there are rightwing hardliners and regimes who have no respect or consideration for human rights and for persecuted asylum seekers.

But then again, did I say Labour Party in the UK? Well, for the time being, I find the Labour Party's forced repatriation policy with regards to the Kurds and Iraqi asylum seekers much more shameful than the policy of racist, rightwing governments because at least they are not declaring themselves to be saints and at the same time behaving as bitches - they are honest bitches.

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NO TO DEPORTATION NO TO DETENTION!