Facing the challenges ahead, together

Iraqi Association held its 25th Annual General Meeting on 20th January 2013 in Hammersmith, the Charity’s chair, Mr Muhy Mahmoud presented Trustees’ report and accounts ending 31 March 2012. It was followed by a detailed report on the work of the Iraqi Association during the course of the past 12 months. It was reported that the Iraqi Association has helped 1471 people from different backgrounds and needs, and most were vulnerable local residents of elderly and young people. It was also noted that the move from Palingswick House to Norland House in Shepherds Bush, led to fear and uncertainty among users and members of the charity. Iraqi Association was one of the 15 charities to be evicted by the Hammersmith Conservative led Council.

The meeting heard the consequences of this move and how it has affected the potential development of the charity’s volunteerism, as the pressure of space and users’ expectations have decreased volunteers placements. The other point which was discussed was the reality check on embarking on a capital project during the current austerity period and its impact on Iraqi Association’s work because of the cutback of local services. Nowadays, the referral from other agencies to Iraqi Association has increased by three folds.

The panel of discussion also mentioned that despite a shoestring budget, Iraqi Association continued to service its users, and stressed that resource development must be one of the top priorities. The meeting also noted the success of the IraqChild project and its important role to help orphan children.

The Board would like to thank the staff, and volunteers for their hard work over the past year. We equally are very grateful for the support of funders and donors.

Iraqi Association’s Jubilee anniversary covered different activities, targeting the general public, as well as users of the charity. The activities were held included an exhibition, poetry reading, interactive discussion on the community’s history in the UK, seminars on topical community integration, Iraqi film showing by Iraqi directors, and a cultural evening.

The AGM was attended by members and users of the charity, including other grass-root Iraqi non profit organizations with messages of support for the excellent work of the Iraqi Association and its Jubilee anniversary. The meeting also thanked our local MP Andy Slaughter, and the work of David Anderson MP, who presented the Early Day Motion on 6 November 2012 in the House of Parliament in support of the Iraqi Association 25th Anniversary, and its work as a non-sectarian organization.

The election of the board of Trustees took place during the AGM, with a number of changes taking place. The AGM also highlighted the challenges ahead, particularly the current austerity period and its impact on Iraqi Association’s work because of the cutback of local services. Nowadays, the referral from other agencies to Iraqi Association has increased by three folds.

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Volunteers Wanted...

Our Charity provides skills and experience in areas of administration, confidence building, work environment, IT skills and communication with different age groups of people. Minimum hours 7 per week for the period of three to twelve months. For further information please contact Jabbar on 02070232650.

Join us and make a real difference.
British Parliament will debate Iraqi Kurdish Genocide

The current campaign to win formal recognition of the Iraqi Kurdish genocide is gaining an important stage. The British House of Commons will debate a motion calling for formal recognition of the mass murder of Kurdish people in Iraq as genocide. The news follows a tireless campaign for recognition, supported by more than 27,500 British citizens, who have all signed an e-petition demanding justice for the murdered Kurds.

Robert Halfon, the Conservative MP for Stratford-on-Avon, said it would be fitting tribute to have the debate on the 25th anniversary of Halabja chemical attack. Nadhim Zahawi, Conservative MP for Stratford-on-Avon, said that his father fled Iraq because "his only crime was to be Kurdish and not willing to join the Ba’ath party," said that Britain has been heavily involved with the Kurdish people going back to Sykes-Picot, but more recently with Sir John Major who saved the Kurdish people with the no-fly zone and Tony Blair who is seen as the liberator of the Kurds.

Such a debate would also focus on the UK Government’s current position that it prefers to follow judicial precedent rather than take the lead itself. It may take time to shift the British Government’s position. A debate, which allows Parliament to give its formal support, would be very useful in this process.

Scottish Refugee Council challenges inaccurate reporting

The Scottish Refugee Council has lodged a complaint with the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) in January 2013 against the Scottish Daily Mail which ran a front-page story that inaccurately reported the rates of asylum applications in Scotland as compared to the rest of the UK.

Entitled ‘Crisis as Asylum Seekers Target Scotland’, the article implied that asylum seekers are arriving in Scotland in the hope of an increased likelihood of their asylum claim being granted.

In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that asylum seekers are deliberately ‘targeting’ Scotland. The vast majority of asylum seekers are dispersed to Scotland on a ‘no-choice’ basis by the UK Border Agency. The Scottish Refugee Council has previously complained to the PCC about a Scottish Daily Mail article. In February 2012, the paper was forced to print an apology and correction after publishing our complaint regarding its misleading article about the legal bids of asylum seekers was upheld.

Gary Christie, Head of Policy and Communications said: “We are disappointed that when other newspaper headlines focus on real crisis facing refugees in the world, such as the tens of thousands of people fleeing Syria, the Scottish Daily Mail chooses to fabricate a ‘crisis’ of its own in Scotland.”

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Gary Christie, Head of Policy and Communications said: “We are disappointed that when other newspaper headlines focus on real crisis facing refugees in the world, such as the tens of thousands of people fleeing Syria, the Scottish Daily Mail chooses to fabricate a ‘crisis’ of its own in Scotland.”

Seen inaccurate reporting? Have you seen inaccurate or inflammatory reporting about asylum issues? Write to the editor and let him know that it’s unacceptable, or make a complaint directly to the Press Complaints Commission.