

AL-MUSSAYAB CITY: a cradle of suffers & hope of Babylon



By: Sabah M. Jasim
Sabah1iraq@yahoo.com

AL-MUSSAYAB city, one of Babylon biggest cities, located about 70 Km south Baghdad, capital of IRAQ. It is 50 Km far away from the most famous ancient city of Babylon, and 30 Km North West Karbala, the sacred Moslem city.

It is known of its strategic location overlooking on Euphrates. This very famous river referred to in both bible

and Koran.

AL-MUSSAYAB is a newly established city – born at the beginning of the sixteenth century soon after building an inn for religious visitors.

For the time being its population is 70000.

A visitor would easily feel the city nice weather, its blue sunshine sky overwhelmed by its distinctive fresh air, its attractive scenes, numerous orchards full of different fruitful trees.

A visitor may get fascinated by its attractive river Euphrates, especially when stops at the middle of the old bridge of the city. Sooner he would be haunted by those nice songs its native people usually sing when come close to the old bridge. The bridge was built in 1937 close to the same place where a wooden bridge was made and owing to the strong current of the river, one of its ends often slipped away. That is why people said the bridge was astray. The people arranged their precaution by appointing some guards with a drum when the bridge got loose, men starting warning by beating their drum.”

That is how the bridge entered the people history. However, people would repeat their lovely song:

At Mussayab Bridge my beloved got me astray
My family and those dear to my heart, left me lost!

You sweet heart got me alas depressed,
Such my beloved had forsaken me, got me mocked by censors!

That song made as a pass-word to the civilians' hearts. They are kind, lovely and generous. They never say NO to others in case of assistance, welcoming for residency. They would rather say YES to death when it touches the safety of their guest.

People may differ only when some try to deform their kindness. They never forgive such a mistake.

Good morning my city!

Agriculture is the main interest among the civilian in addition to their old interest, fishing. They grow grains, barley, rice, different fruit trees like lemon, date palms, apple trees, pomegranate, peach trees and the like. Besides, the so many available orchards here around could help in growing different vegetables like pepper, okra, egg plant, cucumber, beans, garlic, lettuce etc.

In old days, this city was the main joint for transporting goods across this strategic midst of Euphrates where merchants' goods were to come across this city.

Passengers were arriving the city by carriages that could not be able to cross the bridge, however they got down their carriages to walk on foot then to ride into other carriages waiting to carry them to their destination.

The other famous song talks about a very attractive young man, called Jawad who at the time could fascinate a lady coming from Baghdad. She soon fell in love with Jawad and secretly made her verse about him signaling her passion. Thus she was shyly

whispering:

Jawad, Jawad the lover who got me astray,

You invaded those in love, how then your mother never got pained!?

Where from my Jawad, Mussayab or Baghdadian,

Reply and don't be obstinate, sooner you get angry, quicker we all be captured!

People of the city got used to wake up in the morning to do their daily works.

Families blame whoever wakes up late. Old people often advise: "Do not wake up when sun is rising; that may get you rotten."

Terrorism passed here!

The most exciting sight here is the local public market which overlooks the main river Euphrates where civilians used to do their shopping.

What makes the city look antique is its main mosque and old schools.

Unfortunately, this very place encountered a suicide blast that caused death of 150 victims and more than this number of injured when a fuel tank truck for L.P.G gas stopped in the middle of the market place then was exploded.

Always there is a hope!

Life ever since has changed. Goodness was bitterly affected. Things were shaken and Euphrates moaned. What caused things to be worse is the city location which formed together with other two neighboring cities as what is known the Death Triangle. Since foreign insurgents seized it a chance to sneak into this peaceful area to do their terrorist aggression.

Notwithstanding, people then could regain their breath and lead their life but were badly hurt inside.

Anyway, life should go on. However people grew interested in doing their best aiming at having their new life.

Nowadays, after four years passed of old regime topple, the civilians are discussing, challenging and exchanging their thoughts about deciding their democratic regime and to get to their permanent constitution.

Generally women struggle for their rights. Some are ignorant, others are well aware of the necessity to decide their rights equally with men. Still women suffer of being treated merely as housewives. Others could struggle and succeed in joining men in different careers. Thus a man would no more find himself alone in schools, pharmacies, industrial plants and companies besides a woman could find her way to those civil social organizations.

People here feel very proud of having their experts and scientists in physics and nuclear power fields. They now are sharing in deciding their permanent constitution in spite of all aggressive attempts made by other foreign intruders that have interests and ambition to obstacle

rebuilding in Iraq. One may wonder the reason behind all that and the answer is very simple:

They are afraid of such change owing to the new trend Iraq is getting through to which may certainly enlighten the nations of those countries to fully distinguish between those parasite rulers and those exploited people. This new element is known as democracy.

Still democracy needs its true knights and heroes to direct it properly aiming at persuading all those people under oppression that have stagnated inside their tunnel and who would certainly find at the tunnel end a true light.

One can easily find how points of the people's views are different especially when a talk goes round people in government. They got used to criticize and debate for the most suitable way of their living. Such aspect was taken for granted to be exploited by those neighbouring country regimes.

The turn of the educated people should play its big role in participating in educating people to know better how to keep their unity.

This frankly goes back to what is known of the Iraqi people discussing their political affairs even on lunch.

Still people need to know more!

When we met Mr. Qasim- an old officer recently injured on the suicide blast-, he commented that future is promising.

At my questioning a friend at an Internet Cafe' about his wishes, he replied:

"If only our conditions be like those in Europe."

I asked why so, he went on expressing:

"Europe has an excellent constitution. People over there have their full rights, no exploitation nor disgust to other foreigners. People there are all alike and they are very kind. I wish they always be the ideal to other countries. Further, Europe did protect our Iraqi refugees together with so many other oppressed people from all over the world."

When his friend Ali interrupted with enthusiasm:

"By the way, we are waiting to check ALMUNTADA Newspaper, sure we need to know more and get our interest in following up the news and all that is new with our emigrant Iraqi people over there." That is what Mr. Audai suggested. Audai is a close friend to our writers' forum. He is one of those Iraqi-Iranian victims. His ambition to knowledge is endless so far.



New rule regarding Iraqis

Introduction

On the 1st August 2006 the Home Office announced its Iraq Policy Bulletin 2/2006 which opened the door to those failed Iraqi asylum seekers who made applications between April 1991 and 20th March 2003 and were refused asylum or exceptional leave to remain or their cases were pending at that time to apply to remain in the United Kingdom indefinitely. As such those who are eligible must write to the Home Office, at a designated address, explaining, with full reasons, and in accordance with case law why they qualify. It is important to note that this is not law but a mere policy that is governed by discretion and legitimate expectations.

The Policy

The policy affects, in different ways, those who have been living under the so called GCA (Government controlled Areas) and those who were living in the KAZ (Kurdish Autonomous Zone). In simple terms the reason for the introduction of this policy was that the Home Office had a practice, during the relevant period, not to use the reason that person from GCS can relocate to KAZ to escape persecution mainly because the Kurdish authorities, at that time, were refusing to accept individuals into their territories unless they had lived there previously or had family members living there. As to those living in the KAZ the Home

Office refused people, from October 2000 to March 2003, on the basis that they may relocate within the area of each party with which they were affiliated. The Home Office failed to recognise the fact that the KAZ was not able to provide state like protection, therefore such reasoning was flawed. It would be interesting to examine why the Home Office continues to advance this argument in refusing Iraqi claims for asylum in light of the Kurdish authorities continuous refusal to freely allow families, from outside the KAZ, to settle in the autonomous region!

Criteria:

Persons Not From KAZ

1. Decided or held on appeal between April 1991 and March 2003; and

1. Claimant from part of Iraq controlled by Saddam Hussein and had a well founded fear of persecution in the area (no credibility issues); and

2. Have been refused asylum and / or ELR by IND or on appeal on the basis that they could internally relocate.

Persons from KAZ Area (policy on internal flight was not complied with)

1. Decision of home office had been made or held on appeal between 23rd October 2002 and 20 February 2003; and

2. It was accepted that he had well founded fear of persecution but was refused or appeal dismissed on the basis of internal flight from PUK to KDP within KAZ.

The Case of AH (any area of Iraq)

1. Refused by Home Office between April 1991 and 20 October 2000; and

2. Not been granted ELR.

OR

1. From Government controlled area refused by Home Office between April 1991 and 20 February 2003; and

Any failed asylum seeker, applied during the relevant period, my apply to the Home Office setting out full reasons for doing so to be considered.

Finally, it is always useful to remember that applicants need need to have been found to be credible in having a well founded persecution for a convention reason in their claims and that the Home Office have used the Internal Flight Relocation reason in the refusal letter. The right of appeal is limited, complex and can be costly. The possibility of success, if errors are made at application stage, can be rather low.

Salah Hashimi
Solicitor

IA Cultural and Social Activities

During the year 2005/06, the Iraqi Association held and organised a number of community led cultural and social activities among them were the following:

1. Poetry evening on 27 July 06, by the well known Iraqi poet Abdul Karim Kasid.
2. Popular medicine by Dr.Sabah Jamal Addin on 5 June 06.
3. Democratic Process in Iraq, by Dr Ghanem Jawad on 5 April 2006.
4. Women International Day celebration on 17 March 2006 in cooperation with the Iraqi Women league.
5. An evening with the well known Iraqi writer and journalist Khlid Al Khishtiny on 17 February

2006.

6. An evening with the Iraqi actors and director of the play "Soldier tale" and viewing of an Iraqi film "Birds dreams" on 20 January 2006.

7. Seminar on the daily life and the media in Iraq by the writer & journalist Zuhair Al Jezairi on 13 January 2006.

8. Xmas party on 17 December 2005.

9. "Baghdad Festival" an evening of poetry and music on Baghdad, on 3 December 2005.

10. History of the Iraqi museum seminar delivered by Dr. Lamia Al Gailani on 12 November 2005.

11. Traditional Ramadan family gathering on 28 October 2005.

Almost One in Four Appeals of Asylum Decision... get leave to remain

The latest asylum statistics for the second quarter of 2006 were released by the government in August 2006. They show that 23% of appeals were successful, a figure that remains high. However, the overall number of applications is still falling, down by 15% from the last quarter.

The highest number of applications for asylum were from Afghan nationals, which rose by 11% from the first quarter of 2006. Applications from Chinese nationals also rose by 18%. Applications from other three nationalities in the top five, Eritrea, Iran and Somalia, fell by 28%, 13% and 23% respectively.

Of the 4980 initial decisions taken, 460 applicants were granted refugee status, 15 humanitarian protection and 525 discretionary leave. Almost 80% of the total, 3975, were refused. Of 4345 appeals determined by the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal, 980 were allowed, 23% of the total.

The total number of asylum seekers currently being held in detention was 1,825, including 15 minors. Five of these children had been in detention for more than two weeks, 5 for more than a month.

The number of removals increased again to 5070, although this figure includes those who left of their own accord. The government claims it is still reaching its target of removing more failed applicants than it is refusing.

Home Office warns judges not to block Iraqis' deportation

John Reid sanctions the forced removal of up to 32 Iraqis on 5/9/06, after telling the high court he would ignore any last-minute legal challenge to their deportation. The Guardian has learned that the home secretary has told the high court that today's specially chartered flight will not be stopped by anything short of an injunction.

Last November, an attempt to deport more than 70 Iraqi Kurds ended with just 20 going home because of a host of last-ditch legal applications. Mr Reid has since decided to take a tougher stance and told the high court today's flight would go ahead regardless of any legal applications.

This is despite the Foreign Office issuing advice against all travel to Baghdad and all but essential travel to Iraq, which suggests there can be no guarantee for the safety of those being sent back.

In a letter to the duty high court judge sent on August 31, the Home Office says: "Because of the complexities, practicalities and costs involved in arranging such charters, it is essential that these removals are not disrupted or delayed by large numbers of last-minute claims for permission to seek judicial review."

"To ensure the viability of this operation and in line with enforcement operational instructions, the Home Office may decide not to defer removal in the face of a last-minute threat or application to seek judicial review."

It is known that a number of legal challenges have been made to a duty judge but the only way individuals will be taken off the flight is if an injunction is served.

The 32 Iraqis are all in detention, and were only told they were to be forcibly returned within the past seven days. They were all warned that the home secretary would not defer their removal if a threat or legal application was made.

The high court is closed for the summer, and only a duty



judge is available to deal with possible appeals. This is believed to be the first time removals will take place as a matter of policy while there are still legal challenges outstanding.

The deportees were only the second group of failed asylum seekers that the government has tried to send back to Iraq. In February 2004 ministers decided to start enforcing the return of failed asylum seekers to the country, but the programme has been a notable failure. Since 2000 more than 30,000 Iraqis applications have been applied for asylum and more than 90% have been rejected. So far, 2,600 are known to have gone home voluntarily but only 20 have been forcibly removed.

The dangers of flying into Iraq meant this group was flown to Cyprus in a charter plane before being flown to Irbil in northern Iraq, an area administered by the Kurdish regional government, by the Ministry of Defence.

Ministers say it is important to demonstrate that people will be sent back to Iraq to "maintain the integrity of our asylum system" in the face of

repeated criticisms.

The Home Office ministers admit that there are security problems in parts of Iraq, "but we do not accept this applies to all areas". Nevertheless, they have decided not to send back women or children or break up family groups for the present.

Maeve Sherlock of the Refugee Council said last night: "News reports every day show that Iraq is still a highly volatile and dangerous place. It isn't possible under these circumstances to guarantee the safety of anyone returned there." She added: "Many Iraqis are keen to return to Iraq and will do so as soon as it is safe."

The UN Commissioner for Refugees was also seeking reassurances from the government that those sent back today will have access to protection, housing and other basic services.

Report into Impact of Hate Crime on its Victims

The charity organisation Victim Support has published a report entitled, 'Crime and prejudice' which focuses on the experience and support needs of people who suffered attacks because of their ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

The report is based on evidence from in-depth interviews with 107 hate crime victims, a survey of and workshops with service providers, and a review of existing research. The research found that hate crime victims suffered major damage to the quality of their life, including the loss of their home or business due to arson or vandalism, and deterioration of emotional well-being.

Victims gave a number of reasons for not reporting the crime to the police. These reasons were consistent with those cited in previous research projects and included:

- Negative perceptions of the police.
- Negative experience of reporting incidents to the police.
- In the case of new migrants, and asylum seekers in particular, a negative experience of the police in their country of origin.

- A sense that reporting is futile and that nothing will change.

- Difficulties involved in reporting to the police.

Of those who did report the crime, only one in five felt that they were well supported by the police. Victims who were dealt with by specialist police officers were the most satisfied with the support they received.

Victims surveyed wanted the police to be more communicative and more sympathetic, and to take hate crime seriously. They also felt that more use should be made of third party reporting centres.

The report outlines a range of recommendations for those who provide services to victims of hate crime. Recommendations in the report relevant to the police service include:

- The police should consider how the successful features of their specialist units can be mainstreamed.
- Inviting victims of hate crime to participate in police training, to help increase officers' awareness and sensitivity.

- Victim Support should seek to secure guidance from ACPO on the use of discretion to encourage reporting of hate crime by those whose immigration status or other activities may make them reluctant to report such crimes.

- Local partnerships should seek to engage the CPS in hate crime work.

- Greater publicity for third party reporting schemes needs to be undertaken,

particularly through outreach, training and support to community organisations. The

pilot reporting hotline in West Yorkshire should be evaluated, with a view to

establishing a national service for victims of hate crime alongside further research to

determine why current third party reporting arrangements are under-utilised.

The report can be found via

http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/vs_england_wales/index.php

IRAQI ASSOCIATION (IA)



The Iraqi Association is a non-profit organisation that exists to enable Iraqis to settle and integrate in this country with rights to express their cultural identities. Our work aimed at Iraqis, by providing volunteerism, advice, public health support, counselling, training, employment guidance, information

services, and organising cultural events. It is also our mission to raise awareness about relevant events in Iraq and the integration process in this country."

Our Aims and Methods:

We provide the following services to

our clients regardless of their race, ethnic origin, language, and gender, religious or political background.

- Face-to-face support session
- Group empowerment session
- Workshop advice session
- Training session
- Outreach work
- Client-led information

English Supplement

Al-Muntada

of the Iraqi Association

www.iraqiassociation.org

IRAQI ASSOCIATION

PALINGSWICK HOUSE
241 KING STREET
HAMMERSMITH
LONDON W6 9LP
TEL: 020 8741 5491
FAX: 020 8748 9010

E-mail: info@iraqiassociation.org

Issue No: 88 September 2006

English Supplement

العدد ٨٨ ايلول (سبتمبر) ٢٠٠٦



THE 19th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE IRAQI ASSOCIATION

WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2006 AT 12.00 NOON
AT Irish Centre - Blacks Road - Hammersmith - London W6 9DT

AGENDA

1. Annual Report, the directors' report,
2. Auditor's Report, the appointment of and remuneration of the Auditors.
3. Nomination and election of the directors.

Clutches of Segregation must be Confronted

In August this year, Ruth Kelly the Communities and Local Government Secretary has set up the Independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion, with a remit to bring Britain's fractured and mutually suspicious communities together by any means it can. It will be headed by Darra Singh, the leader of Ealing Council, and its 13 other commissioners, including academics, youth activists, and representatives of the police, trade unions, business, local government, voluntary groups and the Interfaith Network. Ms Kelly warned that Britain's ethnic make-up was now far more diverse than in the days of the Windrush migrants. She also warned that political correctness had in the past stifled discussion of the true problems society faced, and allowed resentment, misunderstandings, separatism and extremism to flourish.

This initiative should not be just political posturing to try to hang onto votes. What are required now are practical measures - not weighty reports that are not acted upon. It is time that the government, having done so much work on gender, spends some quality political time on the issues surrounding ethnicity, which needs addressing urgently. The process requires resources, coupled with necessary clear cut policies. Beside that, this should not encourage segregation and delivery of special programmes, but its core strategy should be about meaningful integration.

Every year, our charity deals with more than 10,000 cases of individuals and families, they seek our help to settle and integrate in this country. Although, majority of our users are naturalised British citizens or people born here, but grass root support is crucial when it comes to a successful integration.

We welcome this initiative to help and assist migrant communities to settle and integrate successfully in this

country. Let us move from a period of politically correct consensus uniform on the value of multiculturalism, to one where we can encourage living together.

But the government is not looking into the issue of faith schools. It has become such a cornerstone of government's policy that it is becoming a no-go area for discussion or examination.

It is obvious that childhood is the age at which integration is most important. Children naturally play and converse with each other and most are very open minded. This is the key to at least a society enjoying some sort of social mixing. It is essential to dilute religion from schools that would not have our young being segregated for the first 16 years of their lives. It is absurd to continue having our children separated by the influence of religion.

Can we really talk about schools which are 100 per cent Jewish or Muslim or Roman Catholic and use the word "integration" in the same sentence?

No child should be indoctrinated into any single religion as part of schooling but rather should learn about all religions. Parents who wish to guide their offspring towards a particular faith should do so in a familial setting out of school hours. Segregated education feeds sectarian tension. It needs to be phased out.

The Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, recently said "The cultural heritage of people who come here must be respected. They should be able to take pride in their language, literature, art and spiritual background. At the same time, if they are to adjust to life in this country, they should be prepared to live in mixed communities, and not on their own. Their children should attend school along with those who

come from the host culture, or from other cultures and traditions. They should be willing to learn through the medium of English and to be socially mobile, rather than "ghetto-ised" on the basis of religion, language or culture. Politicians keep talking about the need to teach British values so that there can be national cohesion. But what are these values, and whence do they come? The most fundamental of these has to do with the innate dignity of all human beings, with fundamental equality, with liberty and with safety from harm. Those learning such values will know how to respect the dignity of people who are quite different from them in appearance, language or belief."

What we fail to understand is the fact that we have allowed the creation of ghettos - immigrants being excluded and forced to live in areas which are described as deprived. Let's not beat about the bush - we are talking about poor communities that hardly seen opportunities to improve their living conditions. Poverty and discrimination is a significant contributor to alienate many young people. Those who speak of "our way of life" rarely have any great insight into how poor and marginalised people actually live. However, frustration is no excuse for extremism and murdering others.

On paper, the idea of a commission for integration sounds like a great idea. Integration is a fluid concept however, as a family has shifting relations over time, many of which are beyond words, so does a community, and a group of communities - our society.

The problem of integration cannot be solved with something so simple as a committee; it is a process which needs backup resources, involvement of grass root groups and authority's commitments.

Iraqi Association provides unique services to the Iraqi community

It has been a challenging year for the Iraqi Association, a year dominated by development and delivery of services. The Iraqi Association is playing a unique role in supporting Iraqis in the UK against all the odds. Without this organisation, thousands of people would face insurmountable challenges to settle and integrate here.

The charity has now been working for Iraqis in this country for over nineteen years. Two years back the association began a process of change within the organisation to meet the evolving needs of our beneficiaries that build the foundations for our future work, with confidence and security. Our grateful thanks are due to all those who contributed so much to this task, especially volunteers, staff and my fellow trustees, all of whom played a pivotal and inspirational role. The Iraqi Association operates in a uniquely turbulent environment.

Geo-politics and economics are not just things we hear and read about. They directly

affect our daily work. Last year's government decision to send back failed Iraqi asylum applicants led to fear and uncertainty among our community. We have made it clear that a transparent, fair and humane system should be considered, and to ensure that the affected individuals are treated with respect. In the years to come, the organisation will be called upon to demonstrate great resolve and resourcefulness in pursuing both its mission and the charity's long-term strategy. Yet, despite the difficult times we will undoubtedly face, we have every confidence that the Iraqi Association will stand firm to help survivors survive whatever the future holds.

While providing a broad range of services, the Iraqi Association underwent a major change that is necessary because the pattern of our clients' needs have changed. We have developed a long-term strategy that reflects our (Needs Assessment) which was conducted following the post-war Iraq. We have taken

necessary steps to prepare the organisation for the future, and ensure that we are speaking on behalf of our members and users. We are proud to say that last year the charity assisted over 6000 people, most of them were socially excluded and vulnerable.

We carry out our day-to-day work against enormous odds: a chronic lack of funds and often media misrepresentation about Iraq. Our staff and volunteers have done a miraculous work in these circumstances, proving that we lack in resources we make it up in total commitment and dedication.

During the year, we produced regular client-led information, including our community newsletter (Al-Muntada), which won the Mayor of London's award 'London Local Press Award 2005'. As one of the leading experts on Iraqi affairs in this country, the Iraqi Association focuses on issues concerning Iraqis here and informing British public and media on relevant events in Iraq. The organisation's website is now bilingual

and attracting large numbers of users and visitor, including those who cannot travel to see us. We convene a network of organisations which work with Iraqis, and participate and initiate a regular dialogue with national and local government that is based on talking and listening, rather than shouting from the sidelines. Our ability to respond to the increased demand on our resources led to the development of appropriate and essential services.

For example, the elderly project is becoming a haven for over 100 users every week. The charity's focus elsewhere is on youth and isolated young people, with our extensive children and family networking experience, the numbers of users have increased significantly. We constantly want to listen and deliver the appropriate services. During the year, we have organised different target groups community activities, and explored new areas, as well as that consolidated and progressed our work further.