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English Supplement

IRAQI ASSOCIATION HELD ITS 19TH AGM SUCESSFULY



IA held its 19th Annual General Meeting on 24th September 2006, at the Irish Centre, in Hammersmith, west London.

Mrs Wafa Razzak, member of the board of trustees, welcomed the AGM members and guests and asked to observe a minute of silence in memory of those members of the community who ceased during the year and those fallen victims of terror in Iraq. Afterward the Association's Chair Mr. Abdul Ilah delivered a speech on behalf of the board of the Trustees thanking the participants and guests and gave a brief account on the achievements, challenges and

opportunities that the association came across during the year. A number of supporting speeches were delivered by representatives from various organizations from the community; among them were:

- 1. Iraqi Women League in Britain 2. Association of Iraqi Academics,
- 3. Organization of Libral Phaily Kurds in Britain,
- 4. Iraqi Al-Amal Charitable Association,
- 5. Iraqi Youth United,
- 6. Mandaean Society in the UK
- 7. Iraqi Community Association in the North East of England.

8. Letter of good wishing from the Iraqi Ambassador to the UK Dr.Salah Al Shaikhly

A number of volunteers and community activists were presented with certificates of appreciations for valuable services they provided to the association and the community, then 6 short films about IA were showed covering various activities since 1991. The AGM resumed its work after a short break, by discussing the

annual and financial reports, and after a thorough debate, both reports were adopted along with a number of recommendations. The AGM was concluded by the election of the new board members

that has appointed its officers at its first meeting on 6/10/2006, as follow:

- Secretary

- 1. Mr. Abdul Ilah Tawfik Chairman - Vice Chair & Public Relation
- 2. Mr. Fouad Hassan
- 3. Mr. Talib Hassan
- 4. Mr. Ala Al-Safa

7. Mr. Ahmed Ameer

- Treasurer 5. Mrs. Ahlam Al Saadi
- Women 6. Mrs. Waffa Razzak
 - Cultural & Social activities - Youth

New reports on destitution highlight "government inhumane policy" **Refused asylum-seekers are being** reduced to penniless poverty

The government's policy on refused asylum seekers does not work and is forcing thousands into abject poverty, said Amnesty International UK and Refugee Action on Tuesday (7 Nov 06), as the organisations published new reports on

asylum-seekers and that financial support should continue until their cases can be resolved.

Amnesty International UK Director Kate Allen said: "The government's policy on refused asylum seekers is a failure on both

have been destitute for over five years.

Many of those interviewed spoke of their "desperation" and the absolute "hopelessness" of their situation. One case highlighted in the reports is that of a 49year-old Iraqi Kurdish man living in a

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Putting Theory into Practice

While many of small, independent immigrant and refugee community charities are committed to and capable of supporting their communities, they are often restricted in their efforts because of limited access to financial, staffing and other resources. In recent times, most levels of government departments have significantly underestimated the important role of grass-root immigrant charities play in the well being of their communities and the process of positive integration. Our experience tells us that because funding for community services is often politically motivated, governments prefer to fund higher-profile community service organisations rather than small, relatively unknown groups. It is also more straightforward for governments to administer larger funding amounts to a smaller number of bigger organisations. Small community groups with limited resources cannot compete with better-resourced organisations Based on our experience with our users and other community groups, it is clear that many people can and want to play an important role in the issues facing their communities. They can do this as individuals, or they can do it through community groups. Working through community groups can often be more effective because being part of a group legitimises the views and actions of community people; support can be provided to individuals by other members of the group; and a collective voice is often more effective than a single one. Often it is the case that small community groups which are so closely connected to their community understand community issues and problems in ways that governments and people from outside the community never can. They are motivated by a passionate commitment to their community. Since new Labour came to power we have seen many reports on 'integration' in this country, but hardly seen tangible direct support from the Home Office or other government departments. The fact is that the rhythm of support to grass root groups is shrinking very fast. Whenever the Home Office announces funding schemes under the integration theme, our charity presents proposals to meet the needs of the community to integrate. But our efforts have been confronted by continues barrage of declined automated letter. If the government is truly committed to the integration process, then it should consider empowering grass root community groups and acknowledge their important role in building and maintaining stronger positive contributions to this society. Grass-roots community groups need to be supported rather than overlooked as has most commonly been the case in recent times. Supporting grass-roots community groups will encourage them to recognise their own strengths and the important role they play in society rather than have them adopt the view that they are inadequate. Lack of recognition and support may create alienation and disengagement.

conditions faced by those refused asylum a practical level and a humanitarian level and left in limbo in the UK.

The findings, contained in an Amnesty International report on London and a Refugee Action report on another nine cities, reveals the suffering caused by an inhumane and ineffective government policy that cuts off support for refused asylum-seekers. The policy, said the two organisations, is leading to a new wave of widespread destitution.

The reports note that the government is deliberately using destitution in an attempt to drive refused asylum seekers out of the country. But the research found that, far from encouraging asylum-seekers to return to their countries of origin, destitution made return less likely. The two organisations believe it is vital that the government maintain contact with refused

forcing people into complete destitution as an attempt to drive them out of the country is backfiring badly and vulnerable people are suffering".

"Refused asylum-seekers in our towns and cities are being reduced to penniless poverty - forced to sleep in parks, public toilets and phone-boxes, to go without vital medicines even after suffering torture, and to relying on the charity of friends or dropin shelters to survive".

Amnesty International and Refugee Action interviewed scores of destitute people, but with large numbers of refused asylum-seekers presently in the UK for various reasons, there are concerns that thousands may be living lives of extreme hardship. Some people who spoke to Amnesty International and Refugee Action

caravan provided by a church. The caravan has no sanitary facilities. The man, a refused asylum-seeker whose support was cut off in October 2005, survives on food provided by the same church.

Refugee Action's Chief Executive Sandy Buchan said:

"There exists in Britain a new and growing excluded class of people who have no contact with the authorities, no access to work or mainstream support services, and little prospect of their situation being resolved. As a policy for dealing with refused asylum-seekers, destitution simply is not working. Driving people onto the streets makes return even less likely. This policy is causing enormous suffering to vulnerable people and does nothing to enhance public confidence in the system."

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English Supplement

Overall asylum applications plummet while Iraqi asylum claims rise 50 percent

20 September 2006

UNHCR - The downward trend in asylum applications in most industrialized countries continues unabated, according to the latest UNHCR statistical report. Meanwhile, the number of Iraqi asylum seekers arriving in industrialised countries has risen 50 percent over the same period last year.

In the past three years, the United Kingdom has witnessed a steady downward trend in the number of persons applying for asylum. Some 13,900 persons applied for asylum in the first six months of 2006, accounting for 10 per cent of all asylum requests lodged in the industrialized world, making the United Kingdom the third largest asylum-seeker receiving country after the USA and France.

Among the few nationalities recording a rise in applicants across the industrialised world were Iraqis, recording a 25 percent increase over the previous six months and up almost 50 percent over the same period a year ago.

Based on provisional data provided to UNHCR by governments, the report indicates that during the first six months of this year, a total of 134,900 asylum applications were submitted in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

This represents a drop of 14 percent compared to the same period last year, when 156,300 applications were recorded. Asylum applications lodged during the first half of 2006 are 15 percent lower than the previous semester [July to December 2005], when 158,800 applications were registered..

The figures show that the perception, common in many industrialized countries, of a growing asylum problem is

not supported by reality.

Last year, saw the lowest number of asylum seekers in industrialized countries since 1987. Figures for the first half of 2006 point to this year's number of asylum claims falling even lower than last year's.

UNHCR believes this can be attributed to a large extent to the introduction of more restrictive asylum policies across the continent, as well as to improved conditions in some of the main countries of origin of asylum seekers.

The UN Refugee Agency has expressed concern that the drive to keep the number of asylum seekers as low as possible may be resulting in some genuine refugees being denied the protection they need.

A total of 97,000 new asylum applications were submitted in European countries during the first six months of this year, 19 percent fewer than during the corresponding period in 2005 (120,200) and 21 percent fewer than in the previous six months.

In the 24 countries of the European Union for which data are available, a similar trend was recorded, with a 20 percent fall in new asylum applications (89,200) compared with the first six months of last year

(112,200) and a 21 percent drop compared with the previous semester.

Over the past few years, 80 percent of asylum requests in industrialized countries were made in Europe. Europe's share has now declined to roughly 70 percent of asylum applications in the 36 industrialised countries included in the UNHCR report.

At the same time, North America's share has increased from about 20 percent of all applications in industrialised countries to nearly 30 percent during the first semester of this year, mainly as a result of fewer people applying for



asylum in Europe. The share of Australia and New Zealand has remained

fairly stable at about 1 percent of all applications in industrialized countries.

The United States received the largest number of asylum applications - 25,500, or 19 percent, of the total number of applications lodged in industrialised countries, followed by France (16,400), the United Kingdom (13,900), Germany (10,600) and Canada (10,100).

The main countries of origin of asylum applicants were China (8,800), followed by Iraq (8,500), Serbia and Montenegro (8,000), the Russian Federation (6,900) and Turkey (4,600).

End

Please find the report at:

http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-

bin/texis/vtx/statistics/opendoc.pdf?tbl=STATISTICS

Modern law on refugees

Modern law on refugees originally aimed to protect Europeans in the aftermath of World War Two. The 1951 Refugee Convention was very limited. It created legal protection for (mainly) European refugees that had suffered before 1951 (but not afterwards).

Refugees from other continents and those persecuted after 1951 gained protection much later. In 1967 the United Nations expanded refugee status to residents of any country. 146 countries have agreed to protect refugees under these laws, including the UK.

A refugee is someone who has made a successful claim for asylum. The word 'refugee' is often used to describe

also has a precise legal meaning. A refugee is someone who has fled to another country to escape persecution and who has been given asylum.

An asylum seeker has not yet received a decision. An 'asylum seeker' is someone who has fled to another country to escape persecution and exercised their legal right to apply for asylum.

At the end of 2004, there were 9,236,521 refugees in the world; but just 289,054 were in the UK. Refugees are people recognised by the UK authorities as in need of a safe place to stay because of persecution in another country because of politics, religion, war, social group, or nationality. (Source: United

Board for Refugee Integration London

Following an agreement with the Home Office, the Mayor of London is now taking the lead on integration in London, including heading up the newly established Board of Refugee Integration in London (BRIL).

The Mayor has invited onto BRIL the leaders of many of London's key service providers and refugee organisations.

A Refugee Advisory Panel has also been set up which brings together 40 London refugees - a cross-section of the city's diverse refugee population - to guide the Mayor and Board in their work.

will build on the wealth of integration work in London across community, voluntary and statutory sectors and look at employment and other issues that can affect the participation of refugees within the wider community, such as housing, health and education.

The first task of the Board for Refugee Integration will be to develop a citywide strategy. The strategy will consider how the different agencies and communities can work together and will focus on five key areas: employment, training and enterprise; housing; health; community safety; children and young people (including education). It is due

IRAQI ASSOCIATION (IA)



The Iraqi Association is a nonprofit 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

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Most Iraqis expect the Baker Commission's report to provide intellectual cover for retreat and may produce more peace in America than in Iraq. Equally, the regionalisation solution will undoubtedly diminish democratic hope of Iraqi people. After all Britain made a commitment to the people of Iraq to turn tyranny to democracy, regionalisation of Iraq will allow bordering countries to protect their interests in Iraq directly. We are sceptical that those countries will want to be helpful. Instead of regionalisation, we need to jump-start political accord and genuine militia disarmament. It doesn't matter how "realistic" the political proposals drawn up by Baker Commission may be, unless the majority of Iraqi people can be protected from foreign terrorists, militias and death squads, they will not be able to negotiate and sustain any political solution. There is no getting around of the fact that under present conditions, cut and run policy or regionalisation solution, will bring about the rapid collapse of Iraq, and the violence we are seeing today would seem minor compared to the bloodshed of a genuine civil war.



Saddam's Verdict **Delivered by** Iraqi People

"During his reign this man has brought death and destruction to a multitude of people beyond imagination. Now, we are witnessing his legacy in the violence that permeates Iraq today." In a press release issued by Iraqi association.

"It's the first time ever in the history of the Middle East to see a dictator to be judged directly by his own people, history tells us that the transformation of governance is often bloody as the disposed and his henchmen battle out supremacy. Questioning the fairness underestimates the weight of the rule of law that Iraqis desperately need." Said Hasan

Transparency and independent judiciary system never existed in Iraq before, but this time Iraqis insisted on holding this trial within their border under the full glare of cameras. Dozens of witnesses were heard, and more than thousand pages of evidence were entered into the record. We heard the testimonies of people whose lives were destroyed by this savagery, and whose pain echoed that of

Law and Order must replace militias' rule in Iraq

Iraqi Association condemned the sadistic attacks on civilians in Iraq in a press release issued on 24 November 2006.

"We strongly condemn yesterday's senseless terrorist attacks in Sadr city and Athamia district in Baghdad. It is time to neutralize militias and enforce the rule of law." Said Jabbar Hasan, director of Iraqi Association.

It was a highly orchestrated attack that aims to unleash yet another cycle of reprisal killings and push the country closer to all-out civil war. Thursday's carnage began in the afternoon in sections of the sprawling working-class area, including a crowded marketplace.

"No good purpose can be achieved by such an indiscriminate and cruel use of terror."Said Hasan of Iraqi Association.

A new pattern of revenge has become the driver of violence in Baghdad. The sectarian-based militias in Iraq appear to be waging tit-for-tat attacks on rival groups. This violence and fear led many Iraqis, especially professionals, to flee the country.

The UNHCR said earlier this month that up to 2,000 Iraqis a day are going to Syria and an additional 1,000 a day to Jordan. Overall, the U.N High Commissioner estimates that since the war began in March 2003, 1.6 million Iraqis have been displaced internally and up to 1.8 million are living outside the country.

Sadistic terrorist crimes in Iraq must inspire us to work unceasingly together in pursuit of peace, justice and respect for differences. Dissolving militias will ease the tension, which will equally break the cycle of foreign terrorists and pave the way for peace.

We extend our heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims and those who have injured in the inhumane act of terror on 23rd November 2006.



In order to highlight the enormous contributions made by London's refugees, the Evelyn Oldfield Unit's Refugee Community's History Project has been working with 15 Refugee **Community Organisations** to collect over 150 life histories from refugees living in the city. Visit the project's exhibition Belonging: Voices of London's Refugees at the Museum of London from 27th October 2006 - 25th February 2007.

This exhibition is based on the stories collected by **Refugee** Communities History project and includes extracts from these as well as objects and photographs to tell the inspiring stories of London's refugees and the contributions that they make to the city. Visit the project's website www.refugeestories.org where you can listen to some of the interviews, find up to date information about the project and it's events and download educational resources.

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millions of Iraqis who endured one of the bloodiest tyrannies in the modern history of the World.

"Let's ask the families of the innocent women, men, and children who were tortured, raped and murdered in Saddam's jails, how they feel about that. The people of Iraq will prevail. No religious dogma, no biased media propaganda, and no political motives will diminish their collective will." Said Hasan.

Anyone with the smallest knowledge of Iraq knows that its society and infrastructure and institutions have been appallingly maimed and beggared by three decades of war and divide and rule tactics of Saddam.



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