

Most Vulnerable Singled Out

Over the years, we have met here refugees, and those who fled home-country persecution, to preserve their lives and the lives of their children. They are people who have survived the most appalling experiences, fleeing from war, terror, torture and sectarian murder. Some of our clients have been forced to watch their relatives being murdered and their homes destroyed. They come to us seeking safety, they are penniless and desperate, and these are the people who are singled out by the Home Office for cuts in their benefits. Today in Britain, thousands of these vulnerable people face a life of sever and extreme hardship.

Nowadays, economic recession is also increasing xenophobia and false headlines - it is true though that

the issue of asylum seekers is surrounded by strong feelings, political controversy and emotive arguments. However, it is also important to distinguish between the refugees and economic migrants. Migrants choose to move in order to improve their lives. Refugees are forced to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom. The debate concerning asylum and immigration in the UK has long been warped by a litany of half-truths and false impressions. Perhaps the most pernicious misconception is that Britain is a magnet for foreign free-riders, welfare-cheats and scroungers. On average, however, a single asylum seeker is expected to live on little more than £40 a week; barely enough for basic amenities.

As we lurch further into the recession, it is no secret that a public spending cut is on the way, and one target for cuts has already been identified asylum-seekers' benefits. The Home Office proposes to reduce the weekly subsistence payments to those waiting for a verdict on their application from £42 to £35. Targeting those who sought safety here might be politically convenient, but it is not morally right. The subsistence payments they receive are already meagre; around 30 per cent lower than job-seekers' allowance. Cutting them will push asylum-seekers further into severe poverty. The cuts will heap suffering on people who have already suffered enough, as the system prevents them from working while their claims are being processed.

The propose cuts discriminates against people who are already among the poorest and most vulnerable in this country.

At Iraqi Association, we see people with professional skills of qualified doctors, teachers, artists and engineers. The vast majority of our clients are eager to work and play a useful role in our society, but the system would not allow them to earn their livings. Since 2002, the government has refused permission for almost everyone claiming sanctuary here, to work. The cost is met by taxpayers, a policy which prevents people from contributing to our economy. In a time of economic crisis, we must take care and not to leave some of the world's most vulnerable people in an even more terrible situation.

Sadly Missed

Anthony Lillis, our well-loved councillor mourned. Lillis was the cabinet member for community and children's services at the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, and was the vice chairman of the London Councils' grants committee, which distributes £28m to groups working in the capital. Anthony Lillis was born and brought up in Fulham and lived all his life in the borough. Much of his life was dedicated to public service and in particular the children and elderly residents of the borough. Anthony Lillis, passed away on 29 July after a battle with cancer, he was 42. He will be sorely missed by our community.



Iraq Refuses £250,000 Asylum Charter Flight

In October, a flight carrying 40 refused Iraqi asylum seekers has been forced to return to Britain. The UK Border Agency spent £250,000 chartering a plane to fly around 40 Iraqis and more than 80 security escorts. But officials in Baghdad refused asylum seekers to enter the country because of the legality of their paperwork. Only 10 of the Iraqis were allowed in, the rest were returned to Britain and being held at detention centre at Gatwick.

Amnesty International warned that the deportations to central or southern Iraq risked the lives of the failed Iraqi asylum-seekers. But the Home Office said that the UK government was working with the Iraqi authorities to secure entrance for all the men and was committed to finding another flight to return the detainees to Iraq as soon as possible. The Home Office had taken advice from the

Immigration and Asylum Tribunal, which had said that returns to any part of Iraq were lawful and would not place detainees in danger from violence. However, the UK Foreign Office website advises against all travel to Baghdad and the surrounding areas. Its guidance states:

"The situation remains highly dangerous with a continuing high threat of terrorism throughout the country. This includes violence and kidnapping."

We deplore arranging secret flights, and inhumane methods of the Home Office to send these people back to dangerous areas. It would be an ideal and cheap way to determine whether the target areas is safe, just send a senior member of the UK Border Agency to spend a week on a fully paid private vacation in the destination areas of the Iraqi asylum seekers.

Carnage in Baghdad must be condemned by all



Iraqi Association issued a Press Release on 26.10.2009 in the wake of the latest nihilist crime in Baghdad. The Press Release extract says that, the return of murderous nihilism to Baghdad must be condemned by all. Yesterday's terror shows that extremists' indiscriminate killing is a grim reminder that terrorists

will try to undermine the planned election in January. More than 150 killed and over 500 injured in Baghdad on Sunday. "This was the deadliest terror since 2007. The first bomb struck the Justice Ministry building in the morning. It blew out the building's large windows that overlook Haifa Street, sending flying glass and shrapnel into passers-by. The second attack hit the main Baghdad city council building killing many worker and visitors." Said Jabbar Hasan of Iraqi Association in Hammersmith West London. "This horrific evil act is committed by abundance of sub-human killers, and terror feeds their hate and sadism. How can anyone claim to carry out these abominations in the name of opposition? How can any community or regime tolerate and protect these murderers in their midst?" Said Jabbar Hasan. This carnage leads to more widows and orphaned children, and are a cause of poverty and unemployment and of wider economic dislocation. We urge Iraqi leaders to set aside political and religious differences to work together to protect civilians and assist victims of the frequent evil and savage attacks. You can send Condolence Messages to info@iraqiassociation.org

Our Charity's Recent Activities

1. Organised an evening in July in Hammersmith to host the famous Iraq stars, actress Nahida Ramah and actor Sami Kaftan to coincide with showing their play in London.
2. Organised an outing for the elderly club users to visit Brighton in June attended by 45 people.
3. Organised a community family outing in August to visit East Bourne attended by 80 families with their children and friends.
4. Held an evening in Hammersmith, west London, with ZIPANG on Iraqi culture and poetry including Babylonian and Sumerian, it was held in July and attended by 45 people.
5. Organised a book launch for Iraqi Author Salwa Jarah to sign her new book in Hammersmith, it was attended by 50 people.
6. Organised an evening in September for families and children in Hammersmith to celebrate 'Ed' Al Ramazan. The evening event attended by 100 people.
7. Organised a book launch in October for Iraqi artists and author Faisal Laibi Sahi. Sahi is a renowned Iraqi intellectual and painter.
8. Participated in a meeting of in June Aswat Al-Iraq – the Iraqi news agency mentored by Thomson Reuters Foundation during its start-up period in Iraq. Aswat AL Iraq is funded by UNDP.



A play by actor Sami Kaftan and actress Nahida Ramah in Hammersmith, organised by Iraqi Association and attended by 200 people...



An evening with Nahida Ramah and Sami Kaftan



Our elderly users, attending our regular day centres....

A phone call from the Consulate ...

Following our previous article which described the pain of Iraqi bureaucracy, the Iraqi Embassy Consulate kindly contacted us to express his unhappiness about the contents of the article. The fact is that our message was to highlight the needs of our community and deplore the existing bureaucratic procedures, some of those crawl procedures were created by the past regime's culture of suppression and punishment. Saddam knew that bureaucracy is the art of making the possible impossible. We are fully aware that the maze of bureaucracy is led by the Iraqi complex law and procedures, and not the Consulate section. However, locally the system can be modernised to ease the pain and suffering when it comes to the rights of Iraqi citizens to obtain personal documentations.

Documents such as:

1. Certificate of Power of

Attorney

2. Certifying/endorsing British Marriage Certificate
3. Certifying/endorsing British Birth Certificate
4. Renew/Issue of Iraqi Passport
5. Certifying UK Full Driving Licence

The pressing issue is that many British- Iraqi have lived here since 1970s as exiles and settled. A large majority of them married with children born and educated here, some of them highly qualified and employed in many British institutions. They could be encouraged to serve their native parents' country.

These people do not have copies of original Iraqi birth certificates nor do they have Iraqi personal identity documents. But they do have British legal documentation to confirm their Iraqi origin. A classic case is that, in Iraq including the Kurdish area, the

previous regimes law, in relation to personal documentation is active and applied. This year, one of our community members returned to Iraq, and he wanted to certify his British marriage certificate, he was interrogated and spent hours in a local police station then he was released on bail and told that overseas marriages are illegitimate. The same degrading process exists when British-Iraqi exiles wish to obtain the Iraqi personal identity, whether in Baghdad or the Kurdish controlled area. Another classic case is the tragedy of Faili Kurds, they are not entitled to obtain Iraqi personal documents, unless to produce a range of original Iraqi documents, which they don't have, and it is a catch 22 situation. The deportation of the Faili Kurds from central and southern Iraq was part of the policy of ethnic cleansing practiced by Saddam's regime. They were

stripped of Iraqi citizenships and their belongings and properties were confiscated by Saddam's apparatus.

In an ideal world it is not naïve to put a rigorous system, which suspicions becomes a popular culture, but surely common sense

must prevail to ease the nasty passage to obtain the essential documents, which without it, Iraqi exiles are unable to pursue the return process and rebuild their settlement in Iraq, cruel law heap suffering on people who have already suffered enough.

Help Wanted! Come join our volunteer team!

Volunteers!



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