



UK Lesbian & Gay
Immigration Group

Registered Charity Number 1101400

(formerly Stonewall Immigration Group)
140, Lower Marsh, London SE1 7AE

Liam Byrne MP,
Minister of State,
Home Office,
2 Marsham Street,
London, SW1P 4DF.

Thursday, July 13, 2006

Dear Minister,

Lesbian and Gay asylum seekers from Iran

We write further to our letter to you of the 23rd of May 2006 in which we expressed our concern about the removal of lesbian and gay asylum seekers to Iraq.

Sadly, we have to write to you again concerning an upsurge in the persecution of lesbian and gay people in Iran and to request that you consider temporary suspension of the removal to Iran of failed lesbian and gay asylum seekers.

July 19th 2006 will be the one year anniversary of the execution of two gay teenagers, Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, who were hung in Edalat (Justice) Square in the city of Mashhad in North East Iran. The two young men, who were believed to be lovers, were sentenced to death in the Shia Court number 19 for the crime of homosexuality.

Our organisation has volunteers carrying out research on the persecution of lesbian and gay people in various countries of the world. Our researcher on Iran has compiled a large volume of evidence showing that lesbian and gay men are persecuted in Iran on account of their sexual orientation. We are anxious that this information be shared with the Home Office so that the Country Information Report on Iran is accurate. We are concerned that although the April 2006 Country Information Report on Iran refers to the execution of gay men in Iran in recent years, much of the information is old and out of date - particularly the information that suggests it is possible to conduct discreet same sex relationships behind closed doors, to which the Iranian authorities turn a blind eye. We have doubts as to whether this ever was the case but we would urge that continued reliance on this information, based on comments made at a seminar in Berlin five years ago, be reviewed in the light of more recent events - and the Report amended accordingly.

Until such time that it is proven to a satisfactory degree that lesbians and gay men are not at risk of execution at the hands of the Iranian authorities, we believe that it would be appropriate for there to be a suspension of the removal of any failed lesbian or gay asylum seeker to Iran.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Ian Morton, Chair
UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group

Telephone: 020 79227812 Fax: 0870 1306229 E-mail: ian@uklgig.org.uk www.uklgig.org.uk
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