

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. 102

English Supplement

October 2010

We provide free and cost effective services

As a client-led charity, Iraqi Association is a non sectarian organisation, so far this year we have helped more than 300 people every month. Despite our prudent budget, we continued to deliver an outstanding services to our service users, and alongside this work, we are formulating new projects. We remain a flexible organisation that aims to respond to changing needs and to changing government policies. The organisation is equally adding more value to local borough services, by helping the community members locally in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. It is a milestone to deliver changes to the lives of our beneficiaries in the borough.

Principal Activities of Iraqi Association

1. Volunteerism

Volunteering empowers individuals by improving skills, confidence and self-esteem. It increases social capital and delivers innovative and much needed services to our community. Coupled with that, volunteering is a fundamental building block of our civil society. During the course of this year, Iraqi Association was engaged with an average of 8 volunteers every week from all age groups, and this is continuing to grow.

2. Advice and Support

Supporting people, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged, to live more independently. Every year, we assist more than 4000 people; it is free, independent, impartial and confidential service. We give advice on wide range of issues affecting our charity users and members of the general public. This year we reached different categories of the following users:

- * A homeless person who needs support
- * A young person in need of support
- * A family with young children needs support
- * An older person in need of support
- * A person fleeing domestic violence
- * A person with mental health problems
- * A person with a learning disability
- * A person who needs employment training guidance
- * An ex detainee or ex-offender
- * Someone who needs support to live independently
- * A lone vulnerable elderly person who needs befriending

3. Settlement-led Information



Integration and settlement process requires authoritative up-to-date, detailed information in the charity users' languages. Since January 2010, we offered a wide range of services using cost effective delivery methods, both, online and our regular community newsletter of Al-Muntada, in two languages, and it is prepared by volunteers. This newsletter reaches 15000 readers, and our online visitors have increased to thousands. As a non-sectarian organisation, Iraqi Association is continuing to become a focal point for the community, press and media. This year, Iraqi Association has actively promoted the U.K general election, to encourage British Iraqis to vote as their numbers are increasing by tens of thousands. We also campaigned to encourage Iraqis here to participate in the Iraqi election abroad.

4. Health Trainer

We offered health Trainer service to promote better health and wellbeing of the local borough community members, by tackling health inequalities, reducing smoking, increasing physical activity, awareness on healthy eating, improving oral health, leading healthy lifestyle, tackling obesity. Iraqi Association delivered different methods to reach service users in this area, which were, one to one support and guidance, workshops, information in users' languages and telephone services.



5. Youth Advocacy

We provide direct services to destitute young Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers, age range (16_21) those who have no friends and relatives here and live in severe poverty or lost family members or relatives in Iraq. The services enabled its users to access healthcare, legal provision, housing, education, training, and have linked the isolated young people with this society, to settle and integrate successfully.

More than 83 people have benefited so far from this service. From our daily contacts with our service users, it is clear that destitution is on the increase. A snapshot within this age group, we found that over 40 per cent live in extreme poor condition; it can be described as, destitute young asylum seekers. We predict that this trend to increase. Others can be described as young refugees but isolated as their poor living condition is becoming more severe. From our assessment work, many of our young users in this category suffer from multiple health stressors, including, traumas of war and kidnapping, physical harm, intimidation, deprivation, malnutrition, and bereavement. However, with our community led services, many of our young users demonstrate an ability to adjust and function in their everyday life in the UK; others display characteristics of mental distress.

6. Elderly Service

The elderly exiles can be a forgotten generation on the fringes of our society, sometimes given little value. At

Iraqi Association, we want to show love, respect and dignity to older people who might be living in nursing homes or those who are housebound. We provide help within the community by offering services such as weekly healthy lifestyle activities, elderly befriending volunteers, outreach work, sharing their concern, and maintain elderly networking. We delivered supports to vulnerable and socially excluded elderly men and women, and encouraged social inclusion through various tailor-made activities. During the course of the year, we offered services to an average of 20 elderly people every week.



7. After Hours community-led workshops and seminars

We organise seminars and meetings on issues related directly to our charity users and the community. This year we organised over 10 seminars on relevant subjects; and on average 75 people attended. We also engaged users and members of the general public to organise community events, to cater for families and children. These events were mainly organised by volunteers and led by users. We offered 6 community events in the last 10 months, and on average attended by 150 people including parents and children.



End the ban on asylum seekers volunteering in public sector



It was reported that Justin Davis Smith, chief executive of Volunteering England,

will ask government officials to remove regulations that prevent asylum seekers from volunteering in the public sector. Smith says the existing regulations 'highlight the stupidity around some of these issues'. Although asylum seekers were permitted to volunteer for charities but they are not allowed to volunteer in the public sector.

"Asylum seekers can volunteer to help run a tea service in a hospital, but only if that service is being provided by a charity rather than by staff at the hospital itself. We need to simplify the system a bit." Smith said.

Halt Iraqi Deportation Says UNHCR

The assault on Iraqi asylum seekers to deport them is continuing, while the UNHCR has called on European countries to halt the return of Iraqi refugees to Iraq. UNHCR's appeal came in response to the forced return of Iraqi asylum seekers from four countries, Sweden, Denmark, Britain, Norway. UNHCR spokesman Adrian Edwards told journalists that the Commissioner "strongly urge[s] European governments to provide Iraqis with protection until the situation in their areas of origin in Iraq allows for safe and voluntary returns." UNHCR fears that refugees returning to Iraq will become victims of instability and violence. Car bombings, kidnappings, and mortar attacks remain a daily occurrence within Iraq. The Commissioner explained that all nations hosting refugees have a continuing obligation to protect those who have sought asylum until conditions within Iraq improve.

The latest round of forced deportations is the third in a series of efforts to send Iraqis back to the war torn country. UNHCR issued guidelines to European governments hosting refugees recommending that Iraqi asylum seekers should not be sent home until violence subsides. UNHCR indicates that five provinces, of Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Salahuddin continue to be plagued by serious human rights violations and security incidents. Furthermore, UNHCR says that Iraqi asylum applicants originating

from these five governorates should benefit from international protection in the form of refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention or an alternative form of protection.

UNHCR noted that the forced return of refugees may send a message to Middle Eastern countries harbouring Iraqi refugees that protection of refugees is no longer necessary. Currently 1.6 million Iraqi refugees reside in Jordan and Syria and another 50,000 in Lebanon.



Kurdish authority in Iraq ban flights returning forced asylum seekers

Home Office deportation flights are being prevented from taking Iraqi asylum seekers directly to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish region in northern Iraq, because of a diplomatic dispute with the Kurdish regional government (KRG).

A ban has in effect been placed on incoming flights from the UK landing returned forced asylum seekers at the city's airport in Erbil. Political objections and local protests have led to the UK Border Agency redirecting the planes to Baghdad.

The Home Office's forced repatriation of asylum seekers denied permission to remain in Britain has been diplomatically fraught. The first flight to Baghdad last year led to airport officials in the Iraqi capital refusing to accept all but a handful of passengers. Most were denied entry and sent back to the UK.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom Border Agency is collaborating with Iraqi interior ministry officials to unusual privilege of interviewing and screening detained asylum seekers in UK detention centres.

The UK policy of sending deportees back to, or through, the central provinces of Iraq, which include Baghdad, is in defiance of guidelines issued by the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, which warns that the area remains unsafe due to suicide bombs and attacks by nihilists.

One Iraqi deported from the UK was killed by a car bomb in Kirkuk in 2007. The Kurdish authority has

objected to forcible returns of Iraqi asylum seekers from western European countries, threatening to withdraw diplomatic co-operation.

Many deportation flights from the UK have nonetheless been sent to Irbil in the past; on the first flights deportees were ordered to wear flak jackets for their return to what was deemed a safe country. The Home Office now will deport Kurdish Iraqis back via Baghdad.

"Currently we have agreement with the government of Iraq to return all Iraqi citizens to Baghdad. We make arrangements for those who require onward travel to their home towns, and this includes those travelling to the KR [Kurdish region]. "These arrangements worked well on the recent charter flights to Baghdad and we are confident they will continue to do so." Said United Kingdom Border Agency.

Meanwhile, Richard Whittel, of the Coalition to Stop Deportations to Iraq, said: "It is inspiring that popular pressure in Kurdistan forced the government there to take a stand against these deportations but disturbing that our government persists with them, pandering to the myth that immigration is to blame for the country's problems."

Among the common complaints raised by opponents of forced removals have been persistent allegations that failed asylum seekers are mistreated by security guards when they are forced on to planes in Britain for flights back to Iraq. Beside that, NGOs doesn't have access to deportees.

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