

English Supplement

Al-Muntada

Of the Iraqi Association

www.iraqiassociation.org

**IRAQI
ASSOCIATION**

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Iraqi Association Held Its 27th AGM



Iraqi Association held its 27th Annual General Meeting on 24th April 2014 in Hammersmith, West London. The agenda started with the minutes of the last AGM followed by the Trustees Report and Accounts ending 31 March 2015. The meeting also discussed in details the work of the Iraqi Association during the last 12 months.

It was reported that the Iraqi Association has helped 2587 people, since last AGM, they came from different backgrounds and needs, and most were vulnerable local residents of elderly and young people.

The AGM was attended by representatives from Iraqi Academics Association in U.K., Al Kindi Society of Iraqi Engineers in Britain, Iraqi Woman's league in Britain who addressed the AGM, Iraqi Cultural Café in London alongside letters of support from the Iraqi Cultural Attaché Professor Mousa Al Mousawi and Mr. Noaman Muna Chair of Iraqi Al Amal Charity in Iraq and well known Iraqi personality Dr. Kadhim Habib, as well as members and users of the charity, including other grass-root Iraqi non profit organizations.

The election of the board of Trustees took place during the AGM, with a number of changes taking place.

AGM also addressed that despite a shoestring budget, Iraqi Association continued to service its users, and stressed that resource development must be one of the top priorities. The meeting also noted the success of the IraqChild project and its important role to help orphan children. The Board thanked the staff and volunteers for their hard work over the past year, and expressed their grateful thanks to donors and funders of the Iraqi Association.



A Snapshot of Our Recent Data

During the last three months, starting 1st March 2015 to end of May 2015, our charity assisted 569 clients, using one-to-one services. This figure represents 39% female and 61% male clients. The highest borough is Hammersmith and Fulham users, which represents 18% of the total Greater London clients. The second highest is the London borough of Ealing of 15%, and the outer London is 4%. The breakdown of age range is also indicated that the highest is between 35-60 age range, which correlates to 71% of total service users for March, April and May. Our Charity has dealt with the total of 719 enquiries during the last three months.

Preventing violent extremism in our communities

Extremism as a narrative or interpretation of religious texts or as Aggressive behaviour existed thorough out history of mankind and in all societies. However the emergence of Islamic State (IS) in Iraq, Syria and Libya, committing barbaric atrocities against the local population in cities occupied by their terrorist gangs and the way they used sophisticated social media network to influence and recruit vulnerable young men and women worldwide, represent more complex challenge and immediate present danger to our peaceful diverse communities in the UK.

According to UN general secretary recent speech, over 25000 young recruits left home to join IS gangs in Reqa in Syria or Mosel in Iraq, attracted by propaganda messages, with no regards to their families or to their future. Female recruits succumbed to a life of sexual and emotional exploitation and the male one end up as suicide bombers like the 17 years old student from UK who was killed recently while driving a car full of explosive at Biaji refinery in the Anbar province in Iraq.

Attempts to explore, understand or minimise violent extremism in our communities, is a new major challenge to ensure the physical and emotional welfare of our

community members specially the young ones. However, most Muslim families are tolerant, respectful to other faiths and firm believers in peaceful dialogues. Nevertheless, some vulnerable marginalised members within age range 15-28 years, regardless their gender, who due to the complex process of physical, emotional and most importantly psychological and social maturity or mental health concerns will, unlike the majority, start to exhibit verbal or non-verbal behaviour indicative of preoccupation with extremist narrative that leads to violent extremism. In such cases, voluntary and civil society organisations like Iraqi Association will be able act, as one of the point of contact to support to the individuals and indeed their families too, and access specialist community services available to those who are at risk of acting out their extremist belief.

Specialists in this field often describe pushing and pulling factors working in tandem that contribute to the transformation of a young person into extremism. These includes reduced opportunities to progress in their life, grievances, psychological and emotional states related to sense of isolation, conflicts, hopelessness and helplessness within family setting, schools or peers and tendency to seek and influenced by

direct or distant recruitment messages that promote thuggish violence and extremism or in some cases directly related to undetected deterioration in mental health.

What can we do in term of practical steps require clarity on what could be done or should be achieved, training and resources professional and financial.

IA first contribution to prevent and combat violent extremism is to embark on a program to raise awareness among our community in particular, and Arab speaking community in general. IA have organised series of lectures by well-known Iraqi Academics, to address historical, social and psychological basis of violent extremism. At the same time to setup a working group to consider the best practice available to promote a locally effective and sustainable preventative measures to counter act of violent extremism. This should be formed in consultation with the potential stakeholders in the Borough. This would lead to a better understanding of violent extremism and to underpin practical steps to tackle violent extremism as a narrative or behaviour, identify those who are at risk of falling victim to the manipulation of evil terrorist propaganda and working with them and their families, with attention to mental health perspective.

Help Wanted

Contact us:

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London art exhibition features portrait of Iraqi migrant shot dead in Iraq after being refused UK asylum

The Independent newspaper recently published this article by Nick Clark. When curators installing a London exhibition about migrants hung a portrait of a Kurdish grandfather they found a chilling message written on the back of the drawing. It revealed that the subject of the picture had been shot dead in Iraq three years after he was denied asylum in the UK.

The inscription, written by the Kurdish artist Behjat Omer Abdulla, read: "Hajy Khalil was killed by a gunman on 12 February 2013 in Baghdad on his way home. He was refused for his asylum application in the UK. He went to Sweden and was deported from Sweden to Iraq."

Abdulla, who currently lives in Sweden, said that the message was "a kind of signature", and he was glad the curators of the Southbank exhibition "Adopting Britain: 70 Years of Migration", had found it.

Mr Khalil's story was "tragic" he said, and the portrait was born of an earlier tragedy. Just days after he was deported to Iraq in 2010, Mr Khalil's three grandchildren were killed by a car bomb.

"I had met him in Stoke and he was a beautiful person, a really nice guy," Abdulla said. "When I heard about his grandchildren I really wanted to do something, to do his portrait. I sent it to him and he was really happy with it."

Three years later, Mr Khalil was shot in the head by a gunman on a motorbike. Both the identity of the killer and the motive for the crime remain unknown.

"When I heard about his death I was completely shocked," Abdulla said. "At the same time it shows how sometimes the immigration office cannot find out the true story of people's lives. I was really sad about it." Abdulla does not blame immigration officials for Mr



Khalil's death, however, adding that it is "very difficult to make a decision about someone's life" after just a few hours in an interview room.

"It's not their [the officials'] fault; it's something to do with the system. There needs to be a more suitable law."

The Southbank exhibition was set up to tell the stories of the different communities who have settled in Britain whether for work or love, and those who have sought refuge from war or persecution.

Bea Colley, who organised the show, said: "We want to celebrate migrants' contribution to the artistic and cultural scene."

The exhibition is part of the Southbank's Changing Britain festival. Other displays include items brought by migrants from their home countries, a digital timeline of the cultural contribution migrants have made to the UK, and the chance to fill out some of the questions from the Life in the UK citizenship application test.

It also looks at the lives of those held in detention centres or stuck in the system after applying to remain in the UK.

Abdulla spent 12 years going through the refugee process after fleeing Kurdistan in 1997 at the age of 21 and seeking asylum in the UK. The portrait of Mr Khalil is one of three large works in pencil he created as part of a series of 12 works called "In Limbo".

He said: "The people I chose [to draw] were invisible and I wanted to stretch their images to monumental sizes and ask: 'Who are these people?'"

"In some cases, like Hajy, it's important to know your neighbour can be going through this sort of process."

Discussion on Toxic Extremism

Iraqi Association is presenting Dr Ibrahim AL-Haidari (Professor in Sociology and Author), in an open lecture and discussion on the Social basis of violent extremism. The lecture will be on 28th July 2015 at Threshold House, 65 Shepherd's Bush Green, London W12 8TX the lecture will start promptly on 6.30pm. The meeting will be chaired by the Iraqi Association Chairman Dr Al-Yassri.

The lecture will explore the sociological basis of violent extremism and terrorism and the theoretical models that explain violence and its relation to the human nature. It will also details the risks it pose on society and the individual.

The speaker will discuss topical issues on why a young person become a suicide bombers, is violence is product of nature or nurtured? Professor Al-Haidari will highlight reasons for the spread of Terrorism.

This is the first lecture of a series that tackle social and psychological basis of violent extremism. All lectures in Arabic aimed at raising awareness at this toxic phenomenon. Prior to the lecture Dr AL-Haidari will be available for a signing session on the book he recently published on roots and consequence of terrorism.



Professor Ibrahim Al-Haidari



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

