

UN should hold Syria to account

Iranian Minorities' Human Rights Organisation (IMHRO)

An Open Letter to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the Hon. António Guterres, and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Hon. Ban Ki-moon

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In recent days the Syrian Government has handed over further Ahwazi Arab refugees to the Iranian authorities. This time the victims consist of a family, a mother along with five children. Ma'soumeh Ka'bi and her five children: Shima' Nabgan, Asia Nabgan, Asma' Nabgan, Asma' Nabgan, Iyad Nabgan and Imad Nabgan all deported to Iran and reportedly subjected to torture and human right abuse. Under any law, what is happening to Ahwazi refugees in Syria is not acceptable.

In recent years, over a period of time, Jamal Obaidawi, Taher Ali Mazra'a, Rasool Ali Mazrae Saeed Hamadi, Faleh Abdullah Al-Mansouri and Saeed Saki, have all been arrested in Syria, despite registering as political refugees with the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and have been handed over to the Iranian authorities. They are reportedly under torture and the death penalty has been issued for them.

Ahwazi Arabs are seeking to escape from a range of human rights abuses by the Iranian government including: persecution, torture, arbitrary arrests, death penalty and land confiscation. They seek to escape in the hope that the UNHCR and the UN would support them and help them to move to a safe country.

It is very disappointing that the Syrian government returns refugees, registered with the UNHCR, to Iran to be tortured and is not brought to account for this betrayal. The safety of all these refugees is surely the responsibility of the UN.

Those who are deported to Iran face torture and possibly the death penalty. Please treat this as an urgent matter. We ask you to take the following action:

- To condemn the Syrian Government for this inhumane and unlawful act of the deportation of political refugees to Iran, and to ask the Syrian government to stop deporting any more Ahwazi asylum seekers to Iran.
- To request the Iranian government to release those who have been arrested.
- To send a UN team to meet those who are in prison and to investigate their treatment and their condition in prison.
- To ensure the protection of Ahwazi refugees by UNHCR and to speed up the process of application; to organise a new UNHCR office in a safer country for refugees from Iranian minorities.

Yours Sincerely

Reza Washahi
IMHRO Director