

Iranians Free At Last! December 2005

We're delighted to report that our beloved brother Babak and sister Mona, the young Iranian couple who have so frequently been the subject of prayer requests and news on carelink, have finally arrived in Canada. This is a cause for pure rejoicing; that prayer does change things, and that our wonderful Father and His Son are indeed actively at work in our lives today, doing things which can truly be described as 'miraculous' in that without their gracious help, these things simply wouldn't have happened. In this message we summarize the history of our beloved brother and sister, and report on their final release.



They were baptized in Summer 2002 in Iran, along with six others, who have all now reached North America



Here is the ecclesia as it was then in Tehran- Babak is far left top, holding a Farsi Bible Basics

Soon afterwards, the fledgling ecclesia was persecuted, Bro Rassool was murdered, and all of them seriously persecuted and in risk of losing their lives. The entire ecclesia fled through Kurdistan to Turkey, where we began the long and complicated process of appealing to the UNHCR for them.



Here's Babak on the last stage of that amazing journey

The whole refugee experience was traumatic, Iranian agents were following and threatening the group. Babak and Mona perhaps inevitably fell in love



Babak and Mona

and we arranged a wedding service. Here they are choosing a ring, and Bro Steve Johnson doing the service in an apartment in Turkey:



Babak and Mona chosing a ring



Bro Steve Johnson doing the service in an apartment in Turkey

But their lives were hard. Soon afterwards they were suddenly arrested on the street, imprisoned and deported to Iran, where they were imprisoned. Here's a sad photo of the luggage they left behind in Turkey:



luggage they left behind in Turkey

They were imprisoned in Iran, badly beaten and abused and handed death sentences. They suffered terrible things which we won't elaborate. We stepped up our appeal to the UNHCR, collecting a petition of 2000 letters, which we took in person in a big box to the UNHCR head office in Geneva and personally pleaded for something to be done urgently:



We took in person in a big box to the UNHCR head office in Geneva

Eventually, something was done. But not before the Lord had saved them by a great deliverance from jail and death through payment of 'the cost of living'. They hid in various places in Iran, until we were able to arrange for them to flee to Georgia during the revolution and brief anarchy there [we have to mention the wonderful efforts of dear Liz in this connection, as in so very much]; and from thence to Azerbaijan. Here they are on our first meeting with them after their imprisonment:



First meeting with them after their imprisonment



In Baku there were other Iranian refugee brethren and sisters

In Baku there were other Iranian refugee brethren and sisters, all of whom have now escaped to Canada; an ecclesia was formed:

After the other Iranians left, our brother and sister were very depressed and had huge problems with the authorities.



Sisters Liz and Cindy made several visits to encourage them and strengthen them

However most of the time they were alone, often fearful to even go out of the apartment, breaking bread and doing the Bible readings faithfully:



Doing the Bible readings faithfully

Along with Br Phil Ashforth, we stepped up yet again the pressure on UNHCR and the relevant agencies:



We stepped up yet again the pressure on UNHCR and the relevant agencies

Nothing seemed to be happening, despite our prayers. But God does answer! Recently Duncan was able to go out to Azerbaijan and be with our brother and sister through the final clearances, and to see them onto a plane to Canada. Here they are a few days ago outside the IOM [International Organization for Migration] in Baku, having received the final clearance- along with a kangaroo and Australian calendar sent from well-wishers and prayer partners in Australia.



Kangaroo and Australian calendar sent from well-wishers and prayer partners in Australia



And the great moment came, for them to sign up the final documentation for entering Canada

This was a cause for some celebration- so Duncan took them to the Baku McDonalds to celebrate that evening [and get them in practice for North American life]:



At McDonalds

But all wasn't over. We had tickets for them to fly at 03:45 at night- but we still didn't have their passports, without which they couldn't travel. We'd arranged to meet the man working on their case in a park at 01:00 at night. It was a nail biting finish. We broke bread together, prayed fervently that indeed this time all really would work out.



The Lord taught that we must act as if we believe in what we ask for, and act and feel as if we've received it. And so we tried to. Going about the apartment, which had become some kind of prison for them over the last months, we joked about 'this will be the last cup of coffee here... last time we flush this toilet... last time we use this kettle...! The final act of faith was giving the keys back to the landlady. She asked if they really were leaving for good, as if so, she could move another tenant in the next day. 'Yes, we believe we're leaving for good tonight'. And we handed the keys back. We made a video of our prayer, that we would meet up with the guy in the park OK, and get through the airport OK. The prayer was answered. But we didn't know that at the time of course. So, as we said, 'for the last time', we walked down the stairs just after midnight, and out into the night to walk with the bags to the park:



We walked down the stairs just after midnight

It all worked out like clockwork. We got to the airport and started the long red tape process. Here's Mona almost asleep standing up, with her IOM tag, as we went from pillar to post with the red tape.



Mona almost asleep standing up, with her IOM tag

And finally, finally ... passing through the final security and on towards the plane:



This is our last photo of Babak in Azerbaijan

It truly was 'goodbye to all that'; and we're delighted to say that our dear brother and sister were met off the plane in Toronto by Iranian brethren Kourosh and Nima, along with local Canadian brethren. We're grateful to the Canadian ecclesias who are taking in our Iranian brethren.



Met off the plane in Toronto by Iranian brethren Kourosh and Nima

What can we say to these things? Thanks be to God for His unspeakable mercy even in this life. But please don't forget the number of other brethren and sisters in serious danger at this time who are still seeking safety and live in daily danger. Please pray for them and please continue to support the efforts for them. And we would like to record our sober and deeply felt gratitude to those of you who have prayed, given funds, found out information, tried to pull strings behind scenes, worried, cared and fasted for our Iranian brethren. We really do so appreciate it, and so do they.

With love from us all your brethren and sisters at CCM