

## Iranians in Azerbaijan March 2005

Until recently, we have had five persecuted Iranians in Azerbaijan. Recently, three of them got to Canada and are now attending ecclesias in the Toronto area. This has been the result of a huge amount of prayer and countless visits, emails, phone calls and letters to UNHCR and other bodies, as well as sterling efforts by our Canadian brethren. We can only give thanks for the Father's blessing so far.

However this leaves our brother A and sister B, whose plight we have often written about on carelinks. Deported back to Iran from Turkey whilst seeking asylum, they were tortured and imprisoned and then miraculously delivered; and finally escaped to Azerbaijan. They've been here for some time, but have had little success with UNHCR. Recently things looked very bleak indeed; they couldn't, it seemed, renew their visas there, were under threat of deportation to Iran, and the UNHCR and Azeri authorities had 'lost' their case file and documents.

An emergency visit was made by Br Phil Ashforth of the CBM and Br Duncan of the CCM and CAT. A joint letter was written by those organizations ahead of time, urging UNHCR to not allow this evidently sincere brother and sister to be deported to their death sentence in Iran. After long discussions and much effort with a lawyer, their case file was 'found' again [go figure...], and the lawyer confirmed that their visa can be extended. There is a new official at the UNHCR in Baku who appears more sympathetic to their case; and we are also pursuing other channels of help, for which again we are grateful to our Canadian brethren. So this visit had God's especial blessing; a situation which looked dire has at the very least been put on hold.

We believe that God's special blessing was likely added to our human efforts because of a more united approach amongst us. The CCM look forward to yet more and deeper co-operation with the CBM in future over these urgent cases.



Photo:

Br Duncan and Phil along with Br A, outside the UNHCR in Baku

Our brother and sister are fearful to go out much in case they are hassled by the aggressive Azeri police, who carry out spot checks frequently, especially focusing on Iranians and Pakistanis. The long period of anxious waiting in fear has taken a huge toll on them, although spiritually they remain focused upon the Hope of the Kingdom. Phil and Duncan held a breaking of bread with them and enjoyed good spiritual fellowship with them, seeking to encourage them to hold fast and to realize that the sufferings of this present life are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory in the Kingdom to come.



Photo:

Phil, Duncan with A&B breaking bread in Baku

They very much appreciate our wonderful sister L's monthly visits to them and we pay tribute for her tireless attention to them and others in their situation.

We ask for your prayers and continued support of them in this trying situation which they now continue to face. Please spare a prayerful thought for them in this nerve wracking and faith testing experience which they are going through every hour. And please pray for wisdom for those of us trying to deal with the complex red tape which surrounds them.

There are other Iranians needing our attention and care in Turkey and a visit will soon be made to them, God willing. Please pray for it.

With love and gratitude

**Your brothers and sisters of Carelinks Christadelphian Ministries**