

**RAPAR – the Manchester based human rights organisation working with displaced people**

**Press Release – *for immediate release***

**MANCHESTER COLLEGE STUDENT AND HIS FAMILY FACE FORCED DEPORTATION TO IRAN ON FRIDAY**

**Friends and Neighbours sign petition backing family's asylum claim - case is a human rights issue, supporters say**

A Manchester College student and his family who are facing forced deportation to Iran on Friday (Aug 20<sup>th</sup>) are pinning their hopes on last minute submissions of fresh evidence in their case.

Farhad Vahidi, his father Mohammed and mother Zahra, fear that their lives will be in danger if they are returned to Iran.

An Amnesty International report says hundreds of people have been detained and victimised following the peaceful protests against the election result last year. New laws have been introduced to stop people from writing on websites and website content is being monitored by the security forces.

Last year, Farhad and his older brother, Farid, who has made a separate application for asylum, were involved in a protest against the Iranian government outside the BBC. This increases the danger they face if they are deported.

The human rights organisation RAPAR is working with Mr Vahidi and his family. RAPAR believes they are being threatened with deportation as part of a North West pilot scheme looking at alternatives to detention for children and young people.

"We are very surprised that this family have received removal instructions as all the information we have suggests there are currently no deportations from the UK to Iran," a RAPAR spokesperson said.

"The procedure for removing the family implies they are part of the North West pilot scheme. A Manchester City Council document outlining the scheme was leaked to the national press a fortnight ago."

The family - who are making urgent representations to their MP Sir Gerald Kaufman - live in Friendship Avenue, Gorton, Manchester, and are being supported by their friends and neighbours who have signed a petition asking the Home Secretary to allow them to stay.

Farhad was formerly a pupil at Wright Robinson school and is now at Manchester College. He has played basketball for both his school and college teams.

The family applied for asylum in the UK in January 2007 after they were forced to flee Iran following Mr Vahidi's unknowing involvement in the leaking of information about his place of work which had connections to the Government's nuclear programme.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June this year, Mr Vahidi and his family received a letter from the Home Office which said they could choose to return home themselves. If they did not, arrangements would be made to remove them.

On 14<sup>th</sup> July, three people from the Home Office – two women and an interpreter - came to the house. One of them had handcuffs with her. They told the family they would be removed in two weeks (30<sup>th</sup> July) and that Home Office officials would arrive at 6.30am and take them to the airport. They were given three plastic bags in which to pack their belongings. If they were not ready at 6.30am on July 30<sup>th</sup>, they would be given half an hour to pack.

The removal instructions for July 30<sup>th</sup> were cancelled after the family's solicitor sent a statement to the Home Office from Mrs Vahidi's brother. He returned to Iran in January 2010 after 10 years and was arrested and interrogated about the whereabouts of Mr Vahidi.

They have since been given new removal instructions for Friday August 20<sup>th</sup> but are pinning their hopes on extra evidence submitted to the Home Office this week.

Mrs Vahidi has severe health problems and is being treated for them at Tameside Hospital and Manchester Royal Infirmary.. Mr Vahidi has also been ill and the whole family is suffering from severe stress. Their elder son Farid has now been told that his application for asylum has also been refused.

Farhad says: "We are afraid of returning to Iran. If we went back, we would be arrested and tortured or worse. Iran is a battlefield, innocent people are being arrested all the time. Here in the UK, all my friends use Facebook but anyone who uses Facebook in Iran is risking arrest.

"People involved in protests against the Government have been denied access to lawyers. When my father approached a lawyer in Iran to ask if he would represent us if we were deported, he refused saying that he could not take our case because my father is a fugitive from the Government."

*For more information, please contact:*

Kath Grant at the RAPAR office 0161 834 8221, home telephone 0161 225 2260, mobile 07812471047  
Email: [kath.northernstories@googlemail.com](mailto:kath.northernstories@googlemail.com)

Or Cathy Wilcock 07846628669

