

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP
Secretary of State
The Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

June 3rd 2008

Dear Secretary of State

I was delighted to hear the news that, following your review of the case, Mehdi Kazemi's asylum application has been successful. I warmly welcome the government's recognition that it is not safe to return gay asylum seekers to Iran, because of the likelihood of persecution and abuse.

I would like to draw your attention to a very similar case, namely that of Ms Pegah Emam Bakhsh (H.O ref: B1191057), who has also claimed asylum here in the UK. Pegah escaped from Iran and sought asylum in the UK in 2005, after her female partner was arrested, tortured and subsequently sentenced to death by stoning. Pegah's father was also arrested, interrogated and tortured for information about her whereabouts. Pegah would undoubtedly be persecuted in an extreme manner, and possibly stoned to death were she returned to Iran. Indeed, she is at even greater risk because of the visible media attention her story has attracted worldwide.

Given the decision to grant asylum to Mehdi Kaezemi, I would urge you to review Pegah's case and ensure that the Home Office is consistent in its commitment to protecting vulnerable gay asylum seekers. I have written to Liam Byrne MP about this matter previously and was advised that I did not have authorisation to receive information about the asylum claim. To clarify, I am not seeking to know the details of Pegah's claim, rather I wish to assert the importance of gay women receiving equal treatment to gay men when applying for asylum.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.