

Iran: UK bishops join NCRI in human rights plea and recognition of Camp Liberty

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[The Right Reverends Adrian Newman and John Pritchard meet the NCRI president-elect Maryam Rajavi](#)

By: Harriet Sinclair

International Business Times - January 21, 2016 - Fifty one UK religious leaders have called for the recognition of Camp Liberty as a refugee camp, demanding human rights be at the forefront of discussions for the upcoming European visit of Iran President [Hassan Rouhani](#) . The Right Reverend John Pritchard, assistant bishop of Durham, and the Right Reverend Adrian Newman, the bishop of Stepney, delivered a statement condemning an October attack on Camp Liberty, at a meeting with [Maryam Rajavi](#) , the president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran ([NCRI](#)), in France.

The statement, delivered on 20 January, read: 'We urge an independent investigation of the 29 October attack, and prosecution of those responsible. We also call for the immediate recognition of Camp Liberty as a refugee camp under the supervision of UNHCR and recognition of the residents' status as refugees and protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the lifting of all current restrictions on the camp.

'We hope that the British government will intervene and pressure the government of Iraq, the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, the UN and the United States to take urgent and decisive action, in accordance with previous assurances, to put an immediate end to such attacks against

Iranian refugees in Camp Liberty.

'We support the opinion of those British MPs who say that 'failure to do so would only embolden the Iranian regime to plot even more deadly attacks against these refugees in an effort to annihilate the main and most organized Iranian opposition objecting to its theocratic rule'.'

The October 2015 attack on Camp Liberty, the Iraqi base of exiled Iranian opposition group the Mujahideen of Iran (MEK), left 24 dead and more injured, highlighted the perilous position of the MEK, who have not been a welcome presence in Iraq since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003.

Discussions between the bishops and Rajavi also included the need for European leaders to make improved international relationships with Iran contingent on the demands of the latest UN resolution on human rights in Iran.

This included 'the abolition of executions violating international obligations, the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and end to torture and arbitrary arrests'.

Rajavi said: 'Muslims and Christians should rely on their common values and stand against those who deviate their religions.'

She also expressed hope for 'an end to homelessness and displacement of Christians in the Middle East and liberation of Iranian Christians from oppression of ruling mullahs and freedom of all Iranian people from the religious dictatorship.'

She added: 'Two years ago, Rouhani became the president of religious dictatorship and claimed to be moderate. But this was a ruse to mask the dictatorship. The balance sheet this time including 2,000 executions shows the real face of Rouhani. Only in the first two weeks of January, 53 people have been executed. During Rouhani's tenure, executions and arrests as well as unemployment and poverty have increased.'