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Subject: [iraqsolidaritycampaign] PRESS RELEASE: imminent deportation back to Kosovo with his family

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

17th October 2006

A former Manchester City Council worker, who was praised by council leader Richard Leese as ‘the sort of citizens we would want all our citizens to be’ is facing imminent deportation back to Kosovo with his family, who he only found by chance in 2005.

Perparim Demaj sought safety in the UK in 1998, fleeing violence in his native Kosovo. He worked for Manchester City Council’s Social Services department for four and a half years as a Support Worker working with vulnerable people with HIV. Perparim’s wife Albana arrived in the UK in 2002, yet neither Perparim or Albana was informed that each other was in the UK despite declaring each other as spouses on entry.

Perparim, who lives in Chorlton, literally bumped into Albana, who thought Perparim had been killed, in another area in Greater Manchester in January 2005. The couple had two sons at the time - Perparim was not aware of the younger son as Albana had just fallen pregnant when he was forced to flee for his life. Happily the couple are now together and Albana gave birth to their daughter in August 2006.

However, the good news of their daughter’s birth has now been tainted by a recent decision by the Home Office to refuse the family leave to remain in the UK, meaning that they could be detained and deported at any time.

Wendy Allison, UNISON Assistant Branch Secretary, who is the Chair of the Perparim Demaj and Family Must Stay Campaign stated, "Perparim arrived in the UK with literally nothing, and has worked incredibly hard since he arrived. He has done a huge amount of voluntary work - including returning to the centre where he learnt English to teach the language to other refugees - and has taken qualifications in social care.

"In fact at the time he was forced by the Home Office to stop working the Council were about to train him as a Social Worker - a four year course. The council have also applied for a work permit and appealed its refusal twice. It’s ridiculous that someone with a job waiting for him, and who is such an active part of the community should be deported."

Perparim added, "My wife and I applied for leave to remain under a Family Amnesty allowed by the government. We were refused because we were not living as a family unit in 2003. The only reason we were not together is because nobody told me Albana had come to the UK and nobody told her that I was already here. If it wasn’t for the coincidence that we were both in a similar area we may never have seen each other again.

"The Home Office say they acknowledge the fact that we didn’t know each other was here, yet we

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are penalised because of it. It is like my family is being punished twice." Val Stevens, Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council stated, "From the city council's perspective we are extremely disappointed at the recent Home Office decision, particularly as the City Council has expressed its full support over the years for Perparim to stay here as a valued employee and member of society"

Background Sought Safety in the UK

Perparim arrived in the UK in 1998 having fled from war-torn Kosovo in fear of his life, and claimed asylum. Since his arrival he has worked and studied extremely hard, learning almost perfect English, as well as studying Social Care to NVQ level 2 and an Access to Higher Education (nursing) equivalent to NVQ level 3.

Socially Useful Worker

Perparim has worked in social care in the Greater Manchester area in a paid and voluntary capacity since 1999 as an ESOL support worker, translator, Mental Health Nursing Assistant and as a Community Support Worker with older people and people with HIV/AIDS. Perparim decided on his arrival that he wanted to help vulnerable people and has shown exceptional commitment in this field. He has found the five other European languages he speaks invaluable in his work.

Perparim had been working for Manchester Social Services for four and a half years, latterly supporting individuals and families with HIV/AIDS. In July 2004, his solicitor informed him that he no longer had the right to work in the UK, and that he may be facing deportation. Despite their best efforts Perparim's employer, Manchester City Council had no option but to dismiss him or face legal action from the Home Office. His colleagues and managers, as well as his clients, are absolutely devastated to have lost him. He has been a lifeline for scores of vulnerable people in the Manchester area, and has shown a dedication to his work that is unparalleled.

Work Permit Application Refused

Manchester City Council has left his post open, as well as a career path that will result in him studying for a Social Work qualification; such is the high regard he is held in by his employer. They applied for a work permit from the Home Office and this was refused in December 2004. An appeal and further application were also refused in 2005

Family Reunited

Perparim and his family were only reunited by chance after literally bumping into each other. The Home Office knew they were all in the Greater Manchester area but failed to tell them. If it wasn't for this chance meeting their sons would still be fatherless and their two month old daughter would never have been born.

Facing Deportation

Perparim and Albana now have to sign on every month with the Immigration Service and has been asked to leave the country voluntarily. They could be detained and deported at any time. Perparim and Albana's supporters across Manchester and further afield have registered their support for them to stay and work in the UK.

Unjustly Made Destitute

Despite having paid tax and national insurance on his earnings for five and a half years Perparim is now left destitute because draconian asylum laws mean that he is not entitled to any benefits. For someone who has worked hard for the duration of his time in the UK this is an extremely distressing

situation. Perparim also cannot live with his family because they would lose the meagre financial support they get from NASS if he were to move in with them.

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