

F R I E N D S   O F   N A S I R A   B E G U M

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P R E S S   R E L E A S E

Tuesday 29th April 1980

On Thursday 8th May Nasira Begum will appeal against the order which the Home Office has served for her deportation. The appeal will be heard at the Immigration Office, Aldyne House, New Bailey Street, Manchester at 10.00 am. Her supporters, The Friends of Nasira Begum, will be mounting all-night vigils outside on the Tuesday and Wednesday nights preceding the appeal.

Nasira Begum's case has provoked widespread anger against the Home Office and the Immigration Rules. She has received support from numerous individuals and organisations including MPs and one Shadow Cabinet Minister, black organisations, Trades Councils, trade union branches and women's groups. Pickets, demonstrations and meetings have been held up and down the country. Thousands of people have petitioned the Home Secretary and written personally urging that the deportation order be repealed. A special booklet describing Nasira Begum's position, the history of Home Office delay and prevarication, and the aspects of the Immigration Rules which affect her has been published and distributed. Her case has been publicised in the Press, on television and radio.

Nasira Begum is the deserted wife of a British citizen, Mohammed Afzal. She has lived in this country for four years, since she came from Pakistan in 1976, her home and friends and life are now firmly based in South Manchester. She has no wish to live in Pakistan, let alone be forcibly deported there.

Nasira Begum has committed no crime. The treatment she has received at the hands of others, not least the Home Office, could be described as criminal but she herself is innocent of any offence.

Nasira Begum was deserted by her husband 3 months after their marriage in 1976. The Home Office is trying to deport her, giving two reasons which seem to many to be contradictory. They claim that her marriage is invalid, going so far as to describe it, in papers sent to her lawyers, Manchester Law Centre, as "a form of marriage" -- the "form" it took was civil marriage under British law in Huddersfield Registrar's Office, followed by marriage under Islamic law at Huddersfield Mosque! (Both marriages are fully certificated, details are reprinted in the booklet mentioned above, "The Case of Nasira Begum: how you can stop her deportation".)

Their second reason, given in a letter to Nasira Begum, was that "your husband no longer has any intention of residing with you as your spouse", a statement which seems to make liable to deportation any deserted woman who is not a British national, apart from contradicting the earlier smears about Nasira's marriage being in some totally unspecified way invalid.

The appeal date was finally made known last week - three and a half years after Nasira Begum first applied for her visa to be altered to allow her to remain in Britain, and nine months after the Home Office announced they intended to deport her. In the papers the Home Office sent to Nasira Begum's lawyers, Manchester Law Centre, there are, as yet totally unsubstantiated, allegations that her husband was previously married. Her husband has stated to the Home Office that he was married and divorced before he met Nasira. The Home Office appear to choose to believe that he was married previously - a fact unknown to Nasira Begum - but to deny that he was divorced. Should Mohammed Afzal's earlier marriage be proved, Nasira Begum's many supporters and her lawyers say this is no grounds for punishing and harassing her for three and a half years.

It would seem that while there is insufficient evidence for her husband to be prosecuted for bigamy in a court of law, such "evidence" as there is is deemed adequate grounds to deport Nasira Begum from the country she has made her home.