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# Guardian

## NEWS



### CHINGFORD: Iran's 'government in exile' celebrates 14th anniversary

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By [Daniel Binns](#) »

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THE self-proclaimed "Iranian Government in exile" has celebrated its 14th anniversary – at its international headquarters in Chingford.

The group, which founded the United Iranian Party (UIP) in Cyprus in 1997, wants to see the overthrow of the Islamic republic's dictatorial regime and the introduction of free elections.

Its modest but high-security building in Connaught Avenue, off Station Road, has been the subject of curiosity from Chingford residents and has even been mistaken for the Iranian embassy.

But, despite its otherwise low profile, the group says it has tens of thousands of members worldwide – including 150,000 covert supporters in Iran.

The UIP is battling for international diplomatic recognition to show Iranians that there is an alternative to its current leadership of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khomeini.

Party co-ordinator Ali Befroei, 55, who lives nearby in Chingford Mount, fled Iran to Cyprus in the 1980s following the Islamic Revolution which brought the regime to power in 1979.

He escaped with his daughters after his wife was



United Iranian Party (UIP) members outside its headquarters in Chingford.



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imprisoned for campaigning against the country's new rulers.

When she was eventually released it was discovered she had leukaemia, and Cypriot doctors sent the family to the UK for treatment in 1991.

She died within a week and, with certain imprisonment or even execution awaiting them in Iran, Mr Befroi and his family settled in England.

"The people running Iran are mad – they've killed five people million and now they want to have an atomic bomb. It's very worrying. The people are very unhappy", he said.

"If you want heroin or hashish you go into the street and it takes two minutes. But if you want bread you have to wait half an hour. What kind of Government ruling is that?"

Mr Befroi and his family have lived in various parts of London but says he likes Chingford best because its residents are friendly and is far away from other areas of the capital populated by factions hostile to his party, such as Hezbollah.

Mr Befroi said his fellow Iranians in exile had been inspired by the Arab Spring, which saw dictators overthrown in Egypt and Libya.

He strongly believes legitimate change can only come with a people-led revolution, and says it would be a big mistake if the West used force against Iran.

He said: "I like England very much and it is my home now but of course I'd like to go back. But the main thing is I just want my country to be free."

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A CASHIER about to be made redundant is swapping Chingford for Chengdu as she leaves for China to help endangered bears.

### Tight contest for Hammers on cards

West Ham United's Boxing Day fixture see's them travel to St Andrews to face Birmingham City in the Championship.



#### ILFORD: Theatre's founder recalls achievements amid funding fears

AS the future of the borough's theatre remains unsure, the man who founded it has been reflecting on its achievements over nearly 40 years.

### WALTHAMSTOW: New housing proposals for industrial estate

A PROPERTY consultant firm has expressed an interest in building housing on an industrial estate which was devastated by a fire earlier this year.



#### Chat from the back of a London cab

Ever been in a black taxi putting the world to rights with the cabbie? Your words of wisdom might be in Mark Solomon's book Black Cab Wisdom, writes **Melanie Dakin**



#### New waterlillies on show at Lauderdale House



Renowned portrait painter David Graham is holding his fourth exhibition at Lauderdale House, only this time around the emphasis is on the colours and forms of nature, writes **Melanie Dakin**



**The darker side of childhood**

Ghastly dolls and creepy furry animals make up the V&A Museum of Childhood's latest exhibition.

**Melanie Dakin** takes a furtive peek at what's in store



**Young filmmaker goes behind the scenes at Westfield**

At just 17, Muzzammil Hashmi is managing director of his own production company, has filmed with the BBC and has shot interviews with some of pop music's biggest names.



**Warner Bros releases ticket date for Leavesden's Harry Potter studio tour**

**Melanie Dakin** sits in as details of our most anticipated visitor attraction are announced with pre-booking open from October

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