I'm a 25 year old graduate student from Baghdad and my name is Ahmad.

I want to thank you very much for caring about me and my problem. Finally, after many desperate years of hopelessness I found a group of people that understand and care about me.

My problem is that I'm a gay, and as a gay man I can't live a normal life in Iraq because:

- My life is in danger. I live in continuous fear of people finding out that I'm gay.

- I can't express my deepest emotions. I can't love...I can't tell those who I care about that I love them... It is like being tortured from inside.

In the past few months I have heard of many cases of violence against gay men, including killing, torturing, and public humiliation of us. The religious vigilantes (known as Maghawer) have kidnapped many men suspected of being gay. No one knows anything about the fate of those gays.

The Maghawer's most popular method of torture for homosexuals is putting silicon glue on their anus to shot down their digestive system and then force them to take laxative drug to make them suffer.

Every time I walk on the street I wonder what may

happen to me today. To protect myself, I have to lie to everyone and pretend that I am a straight person. It is really hard to be a 24/7 liar out of the fear of death...I keep asking myself if this is going to be MY LIFE!!!

I have no one to turn to. Not even other gay men or my family members. Recently I have been blackmailed by men I had sex with in the past. They told me either I have to have sex with them again or they will out me to my family, neighbors and even classmates. I had to choose between scandal and public humiliation and prostitution. But I decided that I can't have sex with people I don't love ... so I decided to transfer to another college in Northern Iraq.

My family doesn't know about my homosexuality...if they find out, they will disown me because I will become a disgrace to them. They may even try to kill me to protect their honor. I always have to pretend in front my family that I 'm "normal"...but like any other straight man, my family wants me to marry a woman ... I try to avoid that conversation as much as I can but there is a lot of pressure on me to get married.

I am not happy with myself. I am not proud of who I am.

A while back I went to a psychologist to see if he can treat me. I told him about my problem...he told me that homosexuality has no treatment in Iraq and only

experienced doctors in developed countries can give me therapy.

The news made me so depressed that I started thinking of committing suicide. I feel even without vigilantes killing me, I AM ALREADY DEAD FROM INSIDE.

I just want to know what wrong I have done. Do I have a choice to be gay? Do I want to humiliate myself? Do I want to live in constant fear and anxiety? Do I want my family & friends to hate and abandon me if they discover my truth? Do I want myself to be killed on the hand of uneducated people for something I didn't choose?

I don't want to make it long for you…but I want to let you know that I have already suffered too much and I don't have the power to go through more pain and suffering.

And finally I want to thank you for your support and help…

My Regards and Best Wishes to ALL of YOU…