

Greece-Turkey-Iran-UAE-Oman Tour 2002/2003

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The frog concert continued during the night, in the morning of this first day in May we had breakfast outside in the sun. We followed the scenic road again winding its way through the mountains. We think this is one of the most beautiful parts of Iran, after a short while we followed a dry riverbed until it became impassable for cars. Here we parked our car and walked further along the riverbed in what now had become a gorge. On the vertical cliffs in this gorge *Dionysia zagrica* grows, we hoped they were still in flower. On our first visit in 2000 we visited this place too and found all plants past flowering, this time we were one week earlier. Also this time it was a tough walk to find the first plants, although its not a very steep track leading through the gorge. Again this time we found the first plants on the same spot as in 2000, we even recognised some plants where we had taken pictures of on that occasion. Again all plants were past flowering! We decided that José and Lex would walk back and I just walked a bit further through the gorge to see if I could find some flowering plants. And indeed after a while I found plants of *Dionysia zagrica* still in flower. On a deep shaded vertical rock face I found *Dionysia zagrica* growing together with another species of *dionysia*, it was a *Dionysia caespitosa* ssp *caespitosa*. This species was very loose growing, probably caused by this deep shaded position. Most of the flowering plants of *Dionysia zagrica* were completely inaccessible, only on one spot I was able to make some pictures.

When I walked back I found José and Lex waiting in the shade, it had become hot and after a 5 hour walk we were happy to see our car again. After this we tried to get some food, but the only thing we could buy in the small villages was a bottle of Cola. We decided to go back to the place near the Karun River to stay for the night, this time it was busy with families having their Friday picnic. By the time it turned dark all of them had gone and the frogs started their concert again.

Next day we continued to the town of Borujen, here we found several shops where we could buy food. Again people sometimes were very annoying, luckily we found a quieter place further down the road. From Borujen we went to the town of Boldaji along the Kuh-e-Khalar Mountains and some lakes. We found a nice place to stay for the night close to a small river in a gorge. Next day we washed our clothes, there was enough water at this spot and with a warm wind blowing they dried in no time. In the afternoon a Bakthiari family arrived, they were dropped off by a truck together with all their belongings. Before they walked further into the mountains they decided to camp just nearby. After some time some of the women and children came to us and we tried to explain them we were living quite the same way as they did. When they had returned, I made a walk through the gorge. I came pass their camp and one of the men saw my camera, he asked me to make some pictures of his family! After I had made several pictures, I showed them the results. Because this is a digital camera, it is possible to see the pictures on a small screen. Of course they were very impressed; most of them probably never had seen a picture of themselves before. They were especially proud of a baby; also their cow and calf had to be photographed. I promised them to show them these pictures on our laptop, which has a bigger screen, later that evening. Now I could go on walking, but somewhat higher in the gorge I was invited again by a nice man. I had to come to his tent, drink tea, and meet his family. Again I was asked to make some photos, unfortunately we don't have a printer to give these friendly people a photo...

In the evening we went to the Bakhtiari family to show them the pictures on our laptop, we all sat on the floor on some big carpets around a fire. After we had tea the laptop was handed over from one to the other, all having big fun! Late that evening we returned to our car to get some sleep.

In the night José had become ill, she had to vomit and the rest of the following day she didn't feel well at all. We think she did eat something wrong. In spite of this we decided to leave this place and go on with our journey, late in the morning of this 4th of May we were on the road again. We tried to enter the valley of the Bazoft River from its southern end; we could see a road on the other side of the gorge. After we followed this new road for several km., it turned into another direction away from the river. We decided to go back to the bridge where we also had seen a track on the other side of the river; it was a very rough and bumpy track. Again after some km. we had serious doubts if it was possible to continue along the river on this track. This is always a problem if there are no accurate maps available, you can only find out if you are on the correct road by trying. We decided to turn back and try to get to the Bazoft valley from another approach. We took the main road to the city of ShahreKord and from here took a minor road in the direction of the town of Daran . Just before dark we found a place to stay for the night between some poplar trees near a river. But just as we had finished our dinner police arrived! Here we go again.....Because we already had covered the windows of the car for the night they were not able to look inside and they tried to open one of the doors without knocking or saying anything! Of course all doors were locked and Lex started barking, I went outside shining in the faces of 3 men and tried to ask why they behaved themselves so bad. But they just didn't seem to understand and wanted to look inside the car which I refused of course. I asked to leave us alone, but they kept asking for our passports. After a while one of them went away with their car, probably to get help in the nearby village. We decided to leave this place too, because we remembered our other experience still very well! This would again take hours of talking and talking without solving anything.

So, we left the surprised men behind and followed the road in the dark to find another place to stay for the night. We did not exactly know where we were going, after a while we came in a village and found a track leading into the mountains. After some time we could see some patches of snow in the dark and according to our GPS we were at an altitude of 2700m. Here we found a suitable place to stay for the rest of that night and were not disturbed again.

Next morning we woke up amidst the snow covered peaks of the Zarde Kuh Mountains !

The night before we probably had taken the right track and we decided to follow it as far as possible. There was still a lot of snow and we could see that the track had been cleared by a bulldozer, on some parts there was still a thick layer of snow and ice on one side of the road. At an altitude of approx. 3000m. the road still was blocked by snow and ice, here we found the bulldozer working its way through the snow. This would take days and we returned. On some parts where the snow had disappeared, there were thousands of purple flowering crocuses, a beautiful sight!

We think this track connects the Kuhrang valley with the Bazoft valley, one day we hope we can come back here and find it out. Just before we came back to the village we took another track following the Kuhrang River , here we hoped to find *Dionysia archibaldii*. After some km. we crossed the river and saw a suitable rock face, again we were lucky! Here we found *Dionysia archibaldii* in full flower on these conglomerate rocks. We also stayed here for the night, there was also a Bakhtiari family on the nearby hilltop living in the open! After a while one of the men came down on his donkey to get a closer look at these 'strange nomads'.

After I took some pictures and tried to explain why we were here, he went back to his family again. Now he had something to talk about at the fireplace that evening! We think they have a tough life under these circumstances.

In the morning of the 6th of May we returned to 'civilisation', we first tried to get back to the Bazoft valley. Although we came through a few villages we could not find a suitable shop to buy some food and we decided to go back to the city of ShareKord, here there would be plenty of shops. Already in the first shop José was invited by a daughter of the shop owner to have lunch at their place! She kindly refused and instead asked for directions to other shops and an internet café. Now she offered to come with us to show the way, but her father did not allow her to come with us! So, we had to find the way by ourselves leaving the very disappointed girl behind. When we were yet at another shop, I waited in the car, a woman came to me and asked in English where we did come from. She also asked if we would like to come to her house to have lunch. I said to her that she also should ask José and of she went into the shop to talk to José. After a while I also went into the shop and we decided not to go to her place, slightly disappointed she went away..... After this we drove down the road a few hundred meters and stopped to eat something. After a while the woman came back, this time accompanied by her son. He spoke good English and asked again if we would like to come to their place, this time we agreed and this was the start of a 14 day stay at their house!!

After a short time we were having an excellent lunch in their comfortable house and we quickly felt at home. Parvim and her 24 year old son Amir were living here because Amir had studied at the ShareKord University. He just had finished his degree for veterinary doctor.

Parvim had been married with an American, but during the Islamic Revolution of 1979 he went back to the States for obvious reasons promising to get Parvim out of Iran as soon as possible. At that time she was pregnant of Amir and because of that not allowed to travel by air. The tragedy of the story is that after this man arrived back in the States Parvim never heard anything from him anymore! Amir only does know his father from pictures they still had. Since several years now he is trying to get contact with his father, until now without result. After we had finished lunch and tea we wanted to go on with our journey, but our hosts did not want us to leave! So, we decided to stay for the night at their place. We also could use Amirs computer to receive some e-mails. He also examined Lex because our dog did not feel well; he suffered from serious diarrhoea since a couple of days. We also went to a friend and colleague of Amir; because he is a vet with a practice, he could prescribe some medicine.

After a long evening talking and showing each other's photos of family and friends, we went to sleep. For us a new experience to sleep inside a house again!

Next morning we left our hosts to try to get to the Bazoft valley, we promised them we would come back. Just as we had passed a village a police car followed us and of course we had to stop! Again the scene started: police officer(no uniform) asking for passports, I asking why. (This time a soldier accompanied the police officer; this guy could speak a few words English.) He said: because he is a policeman! I asked: what did we do wrong? He said: you didn't do anything wrong. I replied: o.k., then we can go! He said: no, we first want to see your passports and write down your names etc. I again: you just said we didn't do anything wrong... This went on for a while, but they did not let us go. The soldier tried to explain that he felt a shame about this, but the policeman did not give up. Now we had to follow them to a nearby village, here they asked the local schoolteacher to assist them with the translation.

In the meantime all villagers had come to see this unusual happening, many of them got involved. I said to the policeman: now look, all people from this village think we are criminals because of you! He didn't know how to handle this situation, I said to him: we now drive to the police station in the nearby town of Ardal , either with or without you! We just drove away, they following us in their car. After a few km. they passed us and stopped. Now he said he felt sorry about the whole situation, even inviting us to his house.... We just said to each other: this is Iran After shaking their hands we went on with our trip to the Bazoft valley, after passing several villages we came on a 2845m. high pass. Here we stopped to enjoy the great view into the Bazoft valley; we also found some flowering plants of *Dionysia lamingtonii* on the surrounding rocks. I decided to have a closer look on some nearby vertical rocks and found more and more flowering dionysias. After a long descend we followed the Bazoft River until the metalled road turned into a track. Here we turned and found a spot near the river to stay for the night.

The weather had changed that night, in the morning of 8 May it was raining and we decided to go back to ShareKord. Driving back through the valley we again found some dionysias on vertical rocks along the road, this time they were all past flowering. This location was at a much lower altitude: about 1750m. We also have serious doubts about these plants being *Dionysia lamingtonii*. This time the pass was covered in clouds, reducing visibility to almost zero. In the late afternoon we arrived at Parvim and Amir again.

Next day we went together with Parvim and Amir to some friends of them, they lived just outside the city of Esfahan . The house was in the middle of a big garden and orchard, a real paradise so close to this big city! After some more family had arrived we had a nice meal, sitting on the floor on a big carpet with a view over the garden because this room was upstairs. We also stayed here for the night, next morning Amir and I went to the city to a bank to get some info about transferring money from Holland to Iran . Because of the trouble with our car we did not have enough Euros anymore. After lunch we said goodbye and returned to ShareKord. Next day we were busy sending e-mails to our friends about the money transfer. This day we also noticed that 2 name plates were stolen from our car, they had also tried to pull off the left side direction light.

Our car always got a lot of attention during our stay in Iran ; also in ShareKord a lot of people especially came to the street where Parvim and Amir lived to see our car. Until now we did not have any trouble like damaging or trying to steel parts from our car. We hoped this was just an incident, some older boys said they had seen 2 children doing this... Some days later we had very serious troubles because of this!

In the morning of the 12 th of May we said good-bye to Parvim and Amir; we wanted to go to the mountains near the city of Aligudarz to see *Dionysia haussknechtii*. We had been in this area during our visit in 2000, at that time we found this dionysia in full flower. From ShareKord we found an unpaved road to the Northwest following the Zarde Kuh range. In this remote, but beautiful, part of Iran we found a place to stay for the night at the entrance of a gorge at an altitude of 2700m. Because of this altitude we again had trouble with our hotplate; we think that through a lack of oxygen at these altitudes the burning process is wrong. These hotplates were developed for use on boats, being always on sea level! Luckily we also have a gas cooker, so we did not have to starve...

Next morning I first cleaned the inside of the hotplate, after this 'service' it will work again for a while.... We continued along the track heading northwest, through impressive landscapes still

following the Zarde Kuh range. Just as we came around one of the many bends in this road we saw 2 grey 'dogs'.. In the first instance we thought it were dogs, but after we stopped and took a closer look we saw it were 2 male wolves!! For a short time they did not move and just gazed at us as we did at them, but then they must have realised they were in danger and started to run up a hillside. Fortunately we could follow them with our binoculars for a while before they disappeared into the mountains. Of course we were very impressed by this encounter and will never forget their strong and independent appearance.

When we passed one of the small villages we came along a police post, there was a soldier standing on the road but he probably was so amazed of seeing us that he forgot to stop us! We just drove on but I saw in the back mirror a few policemen rushing out of the building, waving their arms and shouting that we had to stop! I decided to drive on and hoped they would think we just did not had seen them...Unfortunately I took a wrong turn in the village losing precious time, already 2 policemen on a motorbike approached. They wanted us to come to the police station, but I tried to explain to them we did not want to go back and continued, this time taking the right turn. After a while I saw they were following us again, in the first instance we said to each other: let's just drive away from them! But after a few km., leaving the policemen in a cloud of dust, we thought this could cause a lot more trouble... So, we stopped; I jumped out of the car and acted like I was very angry. I shouted: what do you want, just leave us alone and go home!! Now I think they became very frightened of me, one of them grabbed his gun while the other drove away on the bike to get assistance....

There we stood: one frightened policeman, one angry (acting) foreigner. After a while more assistance arrived, a senior officer who could speak some English tried to calm down the situation. I tried to explain to him that we had enough of being stopped by curious policemen all the time. Although he was friendly he insisted that we had to go back to the police station for a check. Here we went again, 3 policemen on a motorbike and a van with some 'angry' foreigners. At the police station it was the same story again: they were probably so surprised to see foreigners in this part of Iran that they just had to stop these 'exotics' in order to take a closer look. After a while one of them went to a small 'health centre' to get the doctor, he was the only person in town who could speak English well enough to translate. He told us what we already thought: curiosity! After we told the doctor why we were so 'angry', the policemen said they were sorry for what had happened. The doctor also said he never had seen foreigners in this village before! After all this 'excitement' we stopped at a spring to drink some coffee and fill our water tanks, the landscape sometimes gave the impression of being somewhere in Scotland . With the help of the GPS we found the right tracks and in the late afternoon we were on the same spot as in 2000 again. Here we stopped for the night, but first had dinner outside at an altitude of 2100m. and with 20°C.

In the early morning of May 14 th we were waked by singing birds, but some minutes later somebody starts to knock like crazy on the side of our car! Now what the hell is this again....

By folding one of the blinds for the windows, I saw a young man standing near the car asking for petrol....Six o'clock in the morning!! I said to him: this is a diesel car, we don't have petrol. Gasoil, gasoil in Farsi. But then he starts knocking at the car again, shouting: benzin, benzin....

This time I became really angry and jumped out of the car and made clear to him that we did not have a single drop of benzin! After I had returned inside the car he started throwing stones and again started yelling for benzin!! I jumped out again to kick his arse, but he ran away screaming and yelling for his friends. Now I could see a car on the nearby valley floor, they probably had run out of petrol. I

also saw 4 other guys coming up to see why their friend made such a noise, luckily they stayed calm and after I again explained that we had no benzin they tried to calm down this idiot! But he continued, even threatening to shoot me through the head! When I tried to go to him, his friends stopped me. Then José gave me our camera and I made some pictures of this mad man, saying we would go to the police if he did not stop! Now he backed off, his friends apologizing for his behaviour. What a way to wake up.....

From here we went further in the direction of the city of Aligudarz ; in the distance we already could see the Ghadee Kuh and Oshturan mountains. Some of the hillsides were covered with a purple flowering Allium species. After we stopped at a spring for a break, two busses stopped too. They were both filled with girls in the age between 16 and 20....Of course all dressed in decent black and soon focusing their attention on us! They asked all kinds of questions, especially to José and after a while she was surrounded by all girls. In the meantime I had a chat with the accompanying, male, teachers. We think most of them never had talked to foreigners before. After their curiosity was satisfied, they rushed off and we could enjoy the silence again!

After a while we came on the road from Aligudarz to Shoulabad, we had been here in 2000 and at that time found *Dionysia haussknechtii* in full flower. But this time it was 14 days later and at the first spot we found most of the plants past flowering. We recognised some of the plants we had taken pictures of in 2000, this time they looked far less spectacular past flowering! On this spot the *dionysias* grow together with *Viola pachyrrhiza*, as a consolation these violas were in full flower. We followed, what had become, an unpaved road further in the direction of Shoulabad. The next spot where we had found *dionysias* was on a pass at an altitude of 2920m. Also this time we found the plants and all of them were still perfectly flowering! We also explored some vertical rocks near the pass and found more and more *dionysias*, all growing in the most spectacular ways. A lot of pictures were taken here!

After this success we descended the pass and hoped to see a family again whom we had met in 2000. At that time they invited us to have tea and a chat in their tent. Unfortunately they were not at this place this time; we regretted we could not give them the pictures we had taken on that occasion. These mountains are inhabited by semi nomadic tribes during the summer months, living up here in tents together with their herds of sheep and goats. We followed the unpaved road along a river through very scenic landscapes in the direction of Shoulabad. After some km. we found a spot near the road to stay for the night, at this spot a karst spring emerged. We found a dry place between some willow trees, this way we hoped we could have a calm night..... Unfortunately after a short time the first people from the nearby village had 'spotted' us, most of them children. They were gazing at us and trying to get attention. We tried to neglect them, but its always giving an uncomfortable feeling knowing that so many eyes are watching you! Later that evening most of them disappeared, but were replaced by older boys. They also tried to get our attention; after it had become dark they started to throw stones at us!! After I was hit on my head by one of the stones, I went to them. Of course they all ran away in the direction of the village and still throwing stones at me...Near the village there were some adults standing on the road, I tried to explain what had happened but they did not seem to understand. I went back to the car, José and Lex had stayed there feeling very threatened because some of the boys had hide themselves in the bushes, while I went after their friends. While I was away, they started yelling and even started to throw stones again! So, we decided to leave this place as quickly as possible. While we were driving away, a lot of stones hit the

back of the car causing some damage!! After a few hundred meters one of those boys was walking along the road, I could see in the headlights of the car that he was still carrying stones... I stopped beside him and jumped out of the car, grabbed him by the arm and pulled him inside the back of the car. He must have been about 16 or 17 years old. Once inside the car he became very frightened, probably because of Lex and also because I yelled to him that we would take him to a police station in Aligudarz....

In the mean time we were driving again, the boy begging to let him go. I said to him to keep his mouth shut and keep calm, but he really started to panic. He tried to take over the wheel, I hit him back while driving, José also tried to keep him away from the wheel. Then he managed to open the side door and jumped out, disappearing in the dark..... Of course, we decided to let him go and get away from this place before things would run out of control.

There we were: driving in the dark on a bumpy mountain track, crossing a 2900m.high pass. Luckily we knew a place where we could go, far away from any village or other human activities... This was one of the several bad experiences we had in Iran during this visit, there were others to come.... Because of this 'incident', we were not able to get further into this very interesting region. Despite what had happened, we think this is a beautiful part of Iran which needs to be explored in the future. But remember: never camp nearby villages!!

Next day we first went back to the city of Aligudarz , to do some shopping and to make a phone call to Holland to see if the money transfer had been successful. Also in this city people were very annoying, everywhere we stopped people came to the car and tried to have a look inside, both children and adults. When we finally had found a place where we could phone, the car was surrounded by many men and boys trying to get a glimpse of these 'aliens'. After some time a police car came, trying to chase everyone away. But the people just ignored them, once again we had to escape this 'madness'...

In the evening we returned in ShareKord, to Parvim and Amir. At last we could tell our stories, and feel safe again. Parvim prepared a nice meal and we felt very grateful we had met these hospitable and kind people!

The following days we stayed in ShareKord, to have money transferred to Iran wasn't that easy. Parvim had to open an account first, this took several days. On the 18 th of May we went together with Parvim and Amir to a special garden with very old walnut trees, a favourite spot for Iranian families to have a picnic.

Next day, the birthday of the prophet Mohammed was celebrated in Iran . Most of the shops and all banks and offices were closed. As a tradition, many people get married on this day. Also in the neighbourhood where we were was a wedding party going on, we could hear the music. In the evening Parvim went there, after a while she came back and told us to come to join this party! Of course we had some doubts, could we go there as complete strangers and uninvited and even without a present? But Parvim said this was no problem at all, the marrying couple and their family would be honoured if we would join their party! So, off we went... When we arrived at the house, the groom was outside and gave us very warm welcome. First we came in a room full of people dancing and having a good time, after a while I noticed that there were only women in this part of the building.... As soon as I had said this to Amir, Amir and I were kindly requested to leave this room and go to the upstairs part of the building. Here all the men had gathered and had their own wedding

party... Before Amir and I were guided to the 'men's section', I tried to persuade the lady who ordered us to leave that Amir and I would like to stay with all those nice ladies... Unfortunately we had no chance at all... Luckily not all weddings in Iran are separated; mostly it depends on the religious state of the families involved. After a while we said good-bye to the happy couple and went back home.

The 20th of May was again a beautiful day, very sunny and 26° C. Parvim, Amir and I went to the bank again in order to get the money transferred. After we got a special code, which I had to send to our friends in Holland, the money at last could be transferred. This would take some more days... The rest of the day we spent playing computer games and writing e-mails, we also went a few km. outside ShareKord to have an undisturbed walk with Lex.

Next morning we went back to this place outside the city, we had seen some beautiful fields of flowering Centauriums and also found an Iris species. We also found a nice garden with trees and more flowering plants, in this barren landscape this was a real oasis. There was also a spring nearby. José picked an armful of flowers to cheer up the interior of Parvim's house.

In the evening I brought Amir to the bus terminal, he had to go to Tehran for a medical examination for the military service. He hoped he would be rejected, because of a minor heart problem. This way he could finish his study and find a job, or could leave the country and continue his study abroad, instead of 'wasting' 2 years in the military service.

After another power breakdown, we spent the evening with candle light and sending e-mails had to be done next day.

Although we stayed with Parvim and Amir for some time now, people still were very curious. Every time we walked out of the gate there were people watching us, especially children. Also our car drew a lot of attention, the bad thing being that we almost every day found new scratches and damages. So, we spent most of the time in the yard, with the gate open to keep an eye on the car.

In the early morning of the 23rd of May, Amir had returned from Tehran after a 9 hour trip. The doctor who should have examined him did not show up, he should come back next month... This is Iran ... In the afternoon we all went to the pretty 'oasis' for a picnic. Because this was a Friday, there were more people having a picnic. Again we got a lot of attention of the other visitors, especially Lex 'snorkelling' his way through the water of the spring. Here we met Behram, who also lived in ShareKord; he invited us to join him on a trip to a very remote part of the nearby Zarde Kuh mountains. We agreed and made an appointment for coming Sunday.

Next day we at last got the message that the money had been transferred to the head office of the bank in Tehran. Unfortunately it was not possible to get the money in ShareKord; we had to go to the branch office in Esfahan We decided we would go there tomorrow. In the meantime some children had come to the gate, telling that 3 boys had damaged our car again... The left side of the car was full of scratches this time, upsetting us all... The children said they knew who had done this; they also knew where those boys had gone. Amir and I went together with 2 of them down the road to see if we could find them. After a while they said they saw one of the boys on the other side of the road, Amir went to him and took him by his arm so he would not escape. The boy became very frightened and started yelling, we tried to bring him back to our place. Of course other people watched this and maybe thought we were kidnapping this boy.. In a very short time we were surrounded by a large group of people, 2 men tried to free the boy. Amir explained of course why we

were taking him away, but somehow they did not want to understand. The situation became threatening, after a while a police car arrived. We hoped they could solve this problem, but the 2 police officers were not able to handle this situation at all!! Instead of taking the boy over, they let him go!! Of course Amir tried to explain the situation, but the police men wanted to take us to the police station. They even started offending Amir, he became very upset because of this. I tried to calm him down, we walked away from the police car and were helped by a shopkeeper who let us in his shop. Amir's mother had come to the scene as well, trying to explain the whole story to the police men. After a while of senseless discussion, we were brought back to the house by a friendly guy in his car. Once back at the house we decided to go to the police station ourselves, but before we could go there, some more police cars had arrived. This time it were special policemen, they drive around in their latest models of Mercedes wearing sunglasses and behaving very 'cool'. Again a discussion started, Parvim becoming very upset even tearing her clothes!!! All the time this was happening, José had waited in the house not really aware what was going on... So, at last Amir, his mother and I went to the police station escorted by the police. Once in the police station I hoped things would be solved in a short time, but here another nightmare started... Also the 2 men who had tried to free the boy had arrived; they made some kind of statement accusing me of hitting the boy and trying to kidnap him!! Of course Amir and I tried to explain what really had happened, but again this somehow did not work out. The rest of that day was spent in the police station, not one time our story was asked! In the evening the boy and his father were brought in, they had to make a statement too. I was not allowed to go home and had to stay in the police station that night!! The whole story was reversed, accusing me of kidnapping the boy...

All the time José was at home, in the evening Behram and his friend came to the house to make an appointment for our trip to the mountains. José told them what had happened and they came to the police station as well, they were of great help bringing Parvim back home and again bringing Parvim, José and Lex back to the police station. At midnight I had to go to a special police station in an other part of the city to stay there for the rest of the night. The next day I had to visit a judge who had to decide if I had to stand a court...All the time I had demanded to let me go free, after Parvim, Amir, Behram and José had come back to the police station to bring me something to eat, I was allowed to go home. I had to leave our car in the police station, which was probably a safer place than outside on the street at Parvim and Amir's home...

3 O'clock that night I was home again, after a day full of horror...

Already 7o'clock next morning we were phoned by the police, asking if we had contacted our embassy in Tehran . They said it was not necessary to contact them; we could come to the police station to make a statement. The previous evening José had tried to phone the embassy, but did not get contact. This morning I phoned them again, telling what had happened. They said they immediately would contact the police station in ShareKord and demand that this was straightened right away. If this should not be enough, an employee of the embassy would come to ShareKord. But the lady of the embassy assured me that a phone call to the police in ShareKord would probably be enough. That morning we all went to the police station again, this time I was able to tell my part of the story. After this we went to the court, to see the judge. Iran has Islamic law, so I had to face a judge dressed as a clergyman. After he heard the story he decided that this all had happened because of misunderstanding, I was cleared of all blame and the boy would get an official warning!

At home I first phoned the embassy again, telling the results. They also had contacted the police in ShareKord and everything should be solved now. Also several neighbours came to the house, to say how sorry they feel. We decided to go for a picnic to a nearby lake together with Behram, his brother and his friend. We stayed there for the night, Parvim and Amir sleeping in our tent. That night we had a nice barbecue to forget all the troubles of the previous days.

Because we arrived at the lake in the dark, we saw the next morning what a beautiful place this was: surrounded by green pastures and snow-capped peaks in the distance. Behram and the 2 other guys had been hunting the previous night, they brought back 4 hares.

Later that morning we decided to drive to Esfahan , to get our money. Behram and the 2 guys went back to ShareKord with their own car. In order to get to Esfahan , we had to cross a dam forming this lake. There was a check point at the dam, Amir and I went to the guard house and it turned out that foreigners were not allowed to cross this dam... Now we had to return in the direction of ShareKord again, from here take the road to Esfahan . This would take too much time and we decided to go back to ShareKord and go to Esfahan the following day.

Once at home, there was a phone call from the police again... If we were willing to come to the police station to meet the highest police officer in this province.... So, we dressed up properly and went to the police station again. Here everybody was very friendly, also they were dressed in their best outfit. There was tea and fruit, the room was cleaned and when the colonel arrived the men jumped up standing at attention... I had to tell the whole story again, Amir translating. The colonel felt very sorry about what had happened, he said he hoped to improve the education of the police force in the future. We got his name and phone number, if there would be any further difficulties we could contact him. After shaking hands and a lot of apologies, we finally could end this story. They also promised to extend our visa...

We decided not to stay for the night in the house of Parvim and Amir anymore, we were to frightened that our car would be damaged again. We went for the night to the 'oasis', a very peaceful and more suitable place.

The 27 th of May we drove together with Parvim and Amir to Esfahan, to get our Euros. Like always, its very busy in the city but we managed to park the car very close to the bank. After a while Parvim returned with the money. Because Parvim and Amir have lived in Esfahan for a long time, they still have a lot of friends here. So, after visiting the bank we went to some of their friends, who were very delighted to see them again. In the evening we visited a friend who is the owner of a pizza restaurant, after a nice meal we went back to ShareKord again

Next day we do some shopping, something we could not do for a long time! I also sent a CD. with pictures to Ufuk in Ankara for our website, this way it is easier to send a lot of pictures.

The 29 th of May was more a relax day, we spent most of the time in the yard keeping a close watch on our car! We still had to send children away hanging around the car again...

In the evening Behram and his friend visit us to have dinner, we also make a new appointment to go to the mountains the next day.

In the morning of the 30th of May we do some extensive shopping first, after that we pick up Mohammed, a friend of Amir. Parvim, Amir and Mohammed come in our car, while Behram, his

brother and friend go in their Jeep. After a 5 hour drive over, mainly, graded roads through spectacular mountain scenery, we find a place to camp in a valley near a river. Behram had taken a lot of wood on the roof of his car, this way we were able to make a nice fire for the cold evenings at this altitude. In the evening we had a nice meal round the fire, while Mohammed was playing his guitar.

Next morning Behram, Amir and the other guys go for a hunt, we hope they won't shoot anything for we don't really like hunting! When they are back, José and I drive back a few km. to a pass where we expect to find some interesting plants. After a stiff climb we come to a vertical rock face, but unfortunately we did not find what we hoped for: dionysias. This whole area is full of hidden valleys and remote places where interesting plants could grow. We hope to come back here one day to do some more exploring.