

ASSOCIATION FOR THE SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF MOJAHEDIN-E KHALQ

'NO MULLAHS. NO RAJAVI. DEMOCRACY. DEMOCRACY'



So shouted protestors during a week of anti-Mojahedin activity in France last week. Over two hundred demonstrators converged in Paris from as far away as Canada, Scandinavia, Germany, Holland and the UK in order to voice their support for the French Judicial system's prosecution of Mojahedin leader Maryam Rajavi on terrorism charges.

Radio Voice of America reported that 150 people took part in a demonstration on Tuesday 29th March outside the French Parliament building of the House of Representatives. A delegation went into parliament where they met with Representatives and presented documents to parliament.

In the afternoon, the protestors gathered again at Trocadero, Human Rights Square to demonstrate again. Families of Mojahedin members trapped in Camp Ashraf in Iraq were present during the actions this week. They want more to be done to rescue the individuals in Iraq, who they say, should be given real options about where

they can be sent to rather than keeping them in Iraq as hostages to Massoud Rajavi's games. The actions in this week were to express support for the action taken by French Judge Brugeiere in June 2003 when Mojahedin headquarters in Paris was raided and six leaders were arrested on terrorism charges, including top MKO leader Massoud Rajavi's wife, Maryam. The protestors demanded justice for the victims of the Mojahedin. Some personal complaints by individual victims have been added to the prosecution case against Mrs Rajavi. On Thursday Iran-Peyvand Organisation, which sponsored the week's activities, held a Seminar at l'Espace Saint Martin



EDITORIAL



This month we have focused on the two major issues which we believe will play a definitive role in how the future of the Mojahedin will play out.

One is the pending court case in France in which Maryam Rajavi and five other leading members will be prosecuted on terrorist charges. To this has now been added four individual allegations of human rights abuses. In the past it has not been possible to prosecute a person for crimes they committed in another country. However, international law and national law is beginning to address such obstacles to justice and it is hoped that, very soon, further cases against Maryam Rajavi, particularly those brought by victims incarcerated in Abu

Ghraib prison in Iraq, will be accepted by the French judiciary.

Our other, and perhaps even greater concern is the fate of the captive combatants in Camp Ashraf in Iraq, where they are ostensibly under the control of US forces. The individual combatants have been granted protected person status under the Fourth Geneva Convention. A designation which should have given these individuals a minimum of rights and freedoms, albeit under conditions of internment in Camp Ashraf. However, there is growing evidence that the MKO command structure itself continues to block the proper implementation of the Convention and that as a result concerns are growing about the human rights situation for people in the camp.

Article 116 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states clearly that "every internee shall be allowed to receive visitors, especially near relatives, at regular intervals and as frequently as possible".

Yet such visits have not only been denied, but families who turn up at the gates of Camp Ashraf desperately seeking the relatives they have not seen for many years, are treated with violence and accusations of being agents of the Iranian regime by Mojahedin guards inside the camp.

These families need answers from the

US forces and the International Committee of the Red Cross as to why their own basic rights and the rights of the internees are being so blatantly denied. In a more sinister vein, why are individuals who have previously expressed a wish to leave, now – after being taken back into the MKO 'system' – declaring vehemently that they do not wish to leave, and being paraded on Mojahedin television making these confessions. Amnesty International is investigating several cases of alleged mistreatment of members. It is suspected that several people have undergone sessions of psychological coercion and manipulation in order to readjust their thinking before they are allowed to meet their families. The survivors of the MKO who campaign to expose these human rights abuses have made it clear that whenever the MKO stops these behaviours we will stop our activities against the organisation. However, it looks unlikely that this will happen any time soon. In the meantime, we appeal to the new Iraqi Government, the US forces and the ICRC to ensure that each and every MKO combatant is able to exercise their full rights and freedoms under the Fourth Geneva Convention, and further, to ensure that they enjoy the basic level of protection as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.





under the title 'Maryam Rajavi, Accused of Human Rights Abuses'. Among the speakers were Professor Aymeric Chauprade and Mr Bruno Fannucchi, a journalist. Twenty five victims of human rights abuses by the Mojahedin also spoke at the symposium. Various media representatives, including Radio France, Voice of America, Al Ahram newspaper (Egypt) and AFP attended and held interviews with the speakers and many of the participants. A German documentary crew also filmed the weeks' events. Iran-

Paywand had invited representatives from the Mojahedin to come to the meeting and discuss the issues over which there is so much concern, but no-one attended the meeting formally to speak.

On Friday, 1st April, three demonstrations were peaceably conducted right at the heart of the Mojahedin's base in France, the Val-d'Oise. At Auvers sur Oise, only a few hundred meters from Maryam Rajavi's residence, protestors shouted slogans and their representatives held discussions with regional officials. They

stressed that Mrs Rajavi's activities in France must be stopped by French law. Demonstrations were then held in Mery-sur-Oise and Cergy Pointoise.

Representatives of Ava Association, Roshana Association, Iran-Interlink helped to organise and participated in the activities in Paris. This showed that Iranians and non-Iranians with very different views on Iran can work together in close cooperation. As one participant said, 'We don't want the mullahs, and we don't want the Rajavi's dictatorship. We want democracy for Iran and we want justice for our families'.



A NEW BEGINNING FOR DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION

By Massoud Khodabandeh



"...Rejection of the MKO not simply as a force which has inflicted pain, but as a cult whose actions directly help the hardliners in Iran and which is trying its best to destroy any hope for a democratic future in Iran, signaled a new political stance..."

When I was asked by Iran-Paywand Association to help organize and to speak during the recent protest activities in Paris, of course I was willing to offer my help. But I had no idea what an honour participation in these actions would be for me. I had no idea at the outset that this first, modest and hastily put together series of protests would be the seed for a new political energy with which to push forward one of the demonstration slogans 'No mullahs, no Rajavi, democracy, democracy'. I had the honor of attending the Seminar on 31st March in Paris and listening to the speeches made both by critics and also by several victims

of the Mojahedin who have been successful in having their allegations of human rights abuses inflicted by Maryam Rajavi accepted for investigation and subsequent prosecution by the French judiciary. Their individual accounts were very moving. But if we look at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we can see that not one single ordinary member of the Mojahedin enjoys even one of the sixteen basic human rights laid out in the document. It is this intolerable situation which makes it so important to support the French judicial case against Maryam Rajavi, and so put an end to this charade. In addition to the

Seminar's theme, 'Maryam Rajavi Accused of Violating Human Rights' it emerged that the speakers and participants also had another simple demand not only from France but from the international community. That was to ask for intervention to put an end to the horrifying situation of individuals in the Mojahedin's Camp Ashraf in Iraq who have rejected the organization, but who are still being kept against their will. Clearly as Protected Persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention these people must be accorded a minimum of rights as laid out in the document - most importantly the right to have regular com-



munication and frequent contact with their families.

The Seminar and the demonstrations which took place in a peaceable, almost joyous atmosphere in front of the French House of Representatives and other locations have been widely covered by the media. Since I had several interviews with some newspapers and the radio broadcasting Farsi section of Voice of America, I will not go into the details of each event. Seeing the Mojahedin's victims active in these events was not a new picture for me, or for others. The reaction of the MKO came as no surprise either. What was new was that this time I witnessed in these former Mojahedin members and in other participants, a remarkable political maturity. This came across in the tolerance shown toward some supporters of the Mojahedin who had come to disrupt their meeting. Indeed, their friendly behaviour toward and their readiness to listen to the MKO supporters thoroughly embarrassed them. It was as though everyone instinctively understood them also to be victims of the Rajavis and thereby deserving of sympathy.

Another sign of this maturity was in the rejection of revenge as an aim, instead demanding justice as a means to stop the ongoing violations of human rights. Their rejection of the MKO not simply as a force which has inflicted pain, but as a cult whose actions directly help the hardliners in Iran and which is trying its best to destroy any hope for a democratic future in Iran, signaled a new political stance.

The MKO, for the past 20 years has rejected any open discussion about its behavior in Iraq and/or Europe. Instead it has tried to label all its critics as agents of Iran's Intelligence Ministry. This claim becomes hard to swallow when it is said that that over 700 ex members of the MKO

and over 50 prominent members of opposition organisations outside Iran (all named in the MKO's newspapers and television programs) are working for the Intelligence Services of Iran. Personally, I cannot believe that any third world country, never mind the Islamic Republic of Iran, could ever be in such a strong position. But the ridiculous claims do not stop here. The Mojahedin claims that the regime of Iran is currently holding over 120 thousand prisoners from the "Resistance forces" and is torturing them on a daily basis. This can only be interpreted to mean that the regime has over 360 thousand torturers who are so clever that news of their whereabouts is not known to anyone. Again I must say that I believe such power to be far beyond any country anywhere. The MKO's claims, however, become truly risible when it says that its designation as a terrorist entity by the USA, UK, France, Germany, and etc. and the investigations into the criminal activities of the cult leaders, are the result of a deal between Iran and all these countries. It is shameful, even for someone like Rajavi. To help the Iranian regime in its efforts to suppress the democratic opposition forces inside and outside Iran just to save your own neck from the laws of free countries is shameful. But again what should I expect from someone who got used to living under the protection of and as part of the regime of Saddam Hussein for the last quarter of a century? But to return to what I was saying. What I clearly saw here in these three days of action and protest was the burgeoning of a mature political force. A dedicated, humanitarian and democratic political force. A force which has seen and has tried all other avenues and has now chosen peaceful, integrated and democratically accountable campaigning as the way forward. As the only way forward. And which believes in that to the

core. There are about a thousand active ex members of the MKO outside the country and about the same number inside Iran. We are also looking forward to the release of about 700 more from the north camp of Ashraf where the disaffected members are kept under the protection of the US army. We are, altogether, say 2,700 people.

Rajavi on the other hand has been left with about 2,500 combatants in the south section of Camp Ashraf, where the true numbers of hard core believers and disaffected members will not be known until they are interviewed independently by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Rajavi managed to send a couple of hundred of his followers out of Iraq when his wife ran away from Iraq just before the start of the war. Let's say he has just over two and a half thousand people.

I think it is fair to say that the number of people who have left the organization is sufficient to describe them as a schism or branch of the organization, rather than ex members or disaffected members. Our numbers, if not greater, are certainly not fewer than the people remaining in Rajavi's cult.

In Paris this time, I clearly saw the desire, the ability and therefore the necessity for a better organized force in which the currently active personnel and the future survivors of the cult can be integrated into the kind of political force to which they all joined up in good faith so many years ago, and which was deliberately and bitterly misled and misused by Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. After years and years, I witnessed myself, my colleagues and my friends getting back on the same path that we had all originally joined up for - independence, democracy and freedom for the people of Iran. This time, armed with the historical experience which will not allow any individual to derail the

train of our collective responsibility. Yes. After 3 decades I witnessed in this conference the same old victims burning new fuel. The same old lamps giving out new light. And a fresh motivation to achieve the release of every one of our erstwhile colleagues from the cult. We need every bit of every one of them. We need every bit of each one of ourselves.

What will happen to Massoud Rajavi? What will happen to his wife Maryam? What will the new masters of Massoud Rajavi decide for him? What will be the outcome of Maryam Rajavi's court case? ...Who cares?

We never have been and never will be after revenge or personal benefit. All we need and want at this moment are our colleagues. We need them, and we want them badly, and we will have them freed.



NEWS IN BRIEF

MKO Tries to Stop Members from Escaping

Irandidban, March 16, 2005

Reports from Irandidban's correspondent indicate that MKO commanders in Camp Ashraf have forced all members to submit the ID Cards which were issued to them by US forces. According to these reports, after granting Protected Person status under the Fourth Geneva Convention to MKO members in Iraq, US forces interviewed and issued individual ID Cards to all members. Individuals carrying these ID cards are protected by coalition forces all over Iraq and consequently can come and go to cities and visit international institutions. It is therefore possible for any member to leave Camp Ashraf. Every member of the MKO has recourse to help from humanitarian groups in Iraq and can ask to leave Iraq. This situation is not acceptable for the MKO since it could lead to revelations about MKO crimes inside the Camp. The report adds that: 'to protect themselves and to prevent crisis inside the MKO, and also to delay dissolution of this terrorist group, the leaders of this criminal cult have forced all the members to submit their ID Cards'.

It appears that US forces in Iraq are not aware of this move by the cult's leaders.

The report also points to wide dissatisfaction among MKO members in Camp Ashraf and stresses that the Mojahedin is using every possible means and propaganda tool, including its satellite TV channel, to hide problems it has with the members who want to leave the camp. But the activities of humanitarian institutions bypass these efforts.

(www.irandidban.com)

Fourth Geneva Convention

Article 97

...Family or identity documents in the possession of internees may not be taken away without a receipt being given. At no time shall internees be left without identity documents. If they have none, they shall be issued with special documents drawn up by the detaining authorities, which will serve as their identity papers until the end of their internment...

Article 35

All protected persons who may desire to leave the territory at the outset of, or during a conflict, shall be entitled to do so...

Article 48

Protected persons who are not nationals of the Power whose territory is occupied may avail themselves of the right to leave the territory subject to the provisions of Article 35, and decisions thereon shall be taken according to the procedure which the Occupying Power shall establish in accordance with the said Article.

Radio Farda, 30th March 2005



We have put the issue of visits of ex members of the MKO with their families to the representative of Amnesty International in

charge of Iran. Mr Drewery Dyke in London replied:

AI has put the issue before the Mojahedin Khalq and they say that the meetings with families have taken place. But the issue is still under investigation.

The view of AI is that the Mojahedin are obliged to let those who have a family member in Ashraf camp meet them without the presence of any

member of the Mojahedin, and in a fashion that they would feel sure there are no eavesdropping or bugging devices to reveal their conversation.

AI also has some concerns about and is in the process of investigating some allegations suggesting that members of the Mojahedin are mistreating other members, and if it is found out that these allegation are true, in an appropriate time we will put this to the Mojahedin Khalq. Up to now, AI has not discussed its concerns with the American officials as it has not yet seen the necessity to do so.

Fourth Geneva Convention

Article 25

All persons in the territory of a Party to the conflict, or in a territory occupied by it, shall be enabled to give news of a strictly personal nature to members of their families, wherever they may be, and to receive news from them. This correspondence shall be forwarded speedily and without undue delay.

Article 26

Each Party to the conflict shall facilitate enquiries made by members of families dispersed owing to the war, with the object of renewing contact with one another and of meeting, if possible. It shall encourage, in particular, the work of organizations engaged on this task provided they are acceptable to it and conform to its security regulations.

Article 116

Every internee shall be allowed to receive visitors, especially near relatives, at regular intervals and as frequently as possible.

Asylum helps find safety for Hossein Mashoufi

The Wire, Amnesty International monthly magazine, March 2004

Hossein Mashoufi was reportedly beaten severely and detained on disciplinary grounds by the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) in July 2001. The PMOI was, at that time, an armed group based in Iraq, from where it opposed the authorities in Iran. It has been an illegal organization in Iran for over a decade.

Hossein Mashoufi said the beatings he received from the PMOI severely damaged his kidneys and that he was hospitalized for a time in Baghdad. In July 2001, AI wrote to the PMOI about the reports that Hossein Mashoufi had been tortured in Iraq and received a prompt reply from the organization. It included a letter, allegedly in Hossein Mashoufi's hand, claiming that he had not been detained and that the allegations were false. The PMOI offered to arrange for AI to speak with him - while he continued to be under PMOI supervision - if there were further concerns.

Following his eventual escape from the PMOI, Hossein Mashoufi sought refugee status in a European country. Research undertaken by AI helped support his successful asylum claim and Hossein Mashoufi is now safe. AI has been able to speak freely with him.

He confirmed that he was forced to write the letter stating that he was safe. He also confirmed that he still requires medicine to control the functioning of his kidneys, which remain damaged as a result of the beating he claims to have received at the hands of the PMOI.

According to unconfirmed reports received by AI, the PMOI, now disarmed and under US supervision in Iraq, continues to hold prisoners at its facilities in Iraq. These reports have been vigorously denied by the PMOI, which is banned in the European Union, USA and many other countries. AI's work on opposition groups does not imply any legal

or international status or recognition and is aimed strictly at securing the protection of human rights. AI calls on all political groups to uphold fundamental human rights standards and international humanitarian law. <http://web.amnesty.org/wire/March2004/PMOI> ■



THE LEGAL PROCESS AGAINST MRS MARYAM RAJAVI

Karim Haghi



Sometimes the recollection of some of these scenes has been intensely painful and difficult for the victims. The atmosphere of these meetings was often

very emotional and usually ended with people weeping while remembering the exact details of their own particular histories. But if they would not bear this pain and would not talk, the world could never know what has happened in Ashraf Camp.

Since 1991, after the uprisings of the people of Iraq and the start of several waves of defections from the MKO of dissenters and victims who took refuge in the freedom of European countries, the possibility of prosecution and legal action on the grounds of human rights abuses inside the Mojahedin has been one of the deepest wishes of these people.

The core motivation of this wish has always been to shed light on the truth, and to have justice served and never for revenge or self satisfaction.

For many years we were not able to achieve this because:

- 1- The MKO lived under the protection of Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime in Iraq, which did not accept any international law or treaty and was openly and widely supporting international terrorism. Support for the MKO, and others like them, was one of the fundamental principals of the Ba'ath regime.
- 2- The defectors, due to the debilitating conditions of physical and mental torture they had experienced before being able to escape, were generally in a very vulnerable, weak and exhausted condition. For a long time, they did not have the capacity to enter into such a struggle.
- 3- Their lack of experience also was another problem.

Despite the above mentioned constraints, some years ago we instigated legal actions in Germany, Holland, Britain and France and discussed the issues with our lawyers. But

because at that time the leaders of the MKO, the people clearly responsible for all the human rights abuses, were living in Iraq, pursuing legal action in the European courts of justice was virtually impossible.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, it was discovered that Mrs Maryam Rajavi had been sent into hiding in France with a false name and passport. When she was arrested by French police on terrorism charges, at last the victims and survivors of the MKO found the opportunity to start their claims and the pursuit of justice against her. After many, many meetings and discussions, and after comparing the laws of the various countries of Europe, and also considering that Mrs Rajavi is currently on bail in France, we decided in the end to pursue our claims through the French judicial system.

Over the preceding year, tens of victims and tortured people had been giving evidence of their experiences and producing documents to support their allegations for the lawyers. Sometimes the recollection of some of these scenes has been intensely painful and difficult for the victims. The atmosphere of these meetings was often very emotional and usually ended with people weeping while remembering the exact details of their own particular histories. But if they would not bear this pain and would not talk, the world could never know what has happened in Ashraf Camp.

After gathering the evidence, it was then for the lawyers to find the best possible ways and cases.

The file of individual claims against Mrs Rajavi was reaching its end when the momentous day, 17th June 2003, arrived. On this day hundreds of French antiterrorism police burst into the bases of the MKO in Auvers sur Oise and arrested Mrs Rajavi together with tens of other members of the MKO.

Top anti-terrorist judge, Jean-Louis Bruguiere, had given the order for the operation, which was one of the biggest anti terrorism operations of its kind in the history of France.

The legal process which Judge Bruguiere and the French government are pursuing is based on terrorism and related charges. The individual claims, on the contrary, are based on alleged human rights abuses.

From the time the MKO transferred to Iraq in 1986 and formed a close cooperation with Saddam Hussein, the Mojahedin's leaders have committed a variety of crimes which are in contradiction with basic human rights. Of course, it is widely known that the leaders of the MKO, the political path they have chosen, and the ideology they espouse has never accepted the laws or the spirit of human rights, even in theory.

A brief overview of the allegations of human rights abuses inside the Mojahedin Khalq Organization is as follows:

Extra judicial and mock court cases against its internal critics and disaffected members. Denying them the right to legal representation and using, as the heads and authorities of the court, people who did not have the qualification or capability to carry out the responsibilities of such functions.

Imprisonment of critics. (Some have spent up to 8 years in solitary confinement.)

Beating and torture of the prisoners to get confessions from them. There have been no limits to the tortures and some have resulted in the death of the prisoners, of which Mr Parviz Ahmadi and Mr Ghorban Torabi, and Mr Ali Khoshal ... are among some of these victims.

Unresolved cases of suicide and murder inside the MKO which no independent body has ever investigated. In this respect we can refer to evidence concerning:

Ali Naghi Hadadi

Nalan

Mir Hussein Mousavi

Davoud Ahmadi

Nader Ojani

And others...

The establishment of a cult in which the members were forced to accept:

- Forced divorces
- Separation of children from their parents
- Extracting public confessions, filming and recording them and imposing inquisition sessions.
- Forcing people to reveal their personal secrets in public.
- Transferring critics and disaffected members to Abu Ghraib prison (at the time of Saddam Hussein).

The above mentioned cases are just some of the allegations against Mrs Maryam Rajavi.

After completion of the file, the lawyers representing the victims handed it over to the judiciary of France. After around a month of investigation by the judicial system and consideration of the files, fortunately, the judiciary ruled that the cases against Mrs Maryam Rajavi can be considered.

The announcement by the French judiciary revived hope and joy in the hearts of the victims and restored their faith that it is possible to achieve justice in the world.

I ask all the people who read these lines, and everyone who believes in justice, to help us. Help us so that the ones who have more power and money will not be able to win over the ones who have suffered in their hands. ■

DWINDLING PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR THE MOJAHEDIN



The following news item was published by the Press Association in February.

Back in January 2004, the Mojahedin had claimed that 305 UK parliamentarians from both Houses of Parliament had supported its demand to be removed from the list of terrorist entities. At that time, the Mojahedin was asked to publish their names as verification. No such list was forthcoming. This time, the Mojahedin have accepted that the names be published. But what has happened to the other 293 parliamentarians?

By way of explanation, we have also published below a brief extract from a recent interview with Ebrahim Khodabandeh from Evin prison [to be published later this month]. Mr Khodabandeh, a former member of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, is a well known figure in the UK parliament where he spent many hours lobbying on behalf of the MKO. Since his arrest in Syria on charges of smuggling money and documents out of Iraq for the Mojahedin, he has spoken and written several times about his experience of the MKO and the NCRI.

Parliamentarians Back Iran Opposition Plea
Wed. 23 Feb 2005 Press Association
By Chris Moncrieff

Twelve United Kingdom parliamentarians today supported a call for the main Iranian opposition group, the People's Mojahedin, to be removed from the international list of terrorist groups.

The plea is made in a half-page advertisement in the International Herald Tribune, in which they say: "At a

time of mounting international concern over Iran, we believe it is now time to end the blacklisting of the People's Mojahedin to help open the way for democratic change in Iran."

They claim they have been blacklisted at the behest of the Iranian mullahs. The parliamentarians, all Labour except where stated, and members of the British Committee for Iran Freedom, are Lord Archer of Sandwell, Lord Corbett of Castle Vale, Lord Clarke of Hampstead, Lord Alton of Liverpool (crossbencher), Baroness Gould of Potternewton, Kerry Pollard (St Albans), Dr Rudi Vis (Finchley and Golders Green), Roy Beggs (UUP Antrim East), John Cryer (Hornchurch), Harold Best (Leeds, North West), Win Griffiths (Bridgend) and Chris McCafferty (Calder Valley). END.

Excerpt from the interview with Ebrahim Khodabandeh

Q. You have worked for the NCRI in political circles in Europe. Could you explain the kind of work you undertook and evaluate how effective that work was?

...Although the Council still [post 9/11] had some effective support amongst parliamentarians due to their past connection and also due to their ignorance about events, it did not have any contact within the British government whatsoever. In fact, all foreign affairs departments everywhere were closed to its members. On one occasion, some British Labour MPs were asked why they had once supported the PMOI [People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran] which their Government denounces as a terrorist organization. Their answer was that as MPs in the opposition they had no information about the hard facts, but that in Government they have access to intelligence which clearly demonstrates that the Organization is terrorist in nature. In my opinion, the only effect our hard work collecting signatures ever had was just to lift the morale of our supporters to some small extent by advertising the worldwide support we had gained. This of course was to cover up our weakness in getting any results from our policy inside Iran of conducting military operations in the cities. The signatures collected from parliamentarians, which our department of International Relations had become so expert in, had no significant value in the real diplomatic world and had no effect on the policies of statesmen toward the organization in the relevant countries.

Q. If Iranians do not accept the MKO's claims to support democracy, do you think this means that Western politicians are being deceived?

I would categorize Western politicians in two groups.

Ineffective ones such as those in parliament and effective ones like those in the Foreign Office. The first group could be easily deceived since they are not necessarily expert in every field and do not have access to enough information. However, I believe that if all the parliamentarians in the world supported the NCR it would not make much difference to the political situation in Iran. The second group could not easily be deceived, but they do follow their short-term interests. In the West, this group has its own relations with the Islamic Republic and from time to time, they have found the NCR a useful tool. The NCR gained its relative popularity among Western public opinion in the past due to the mistakes made by Iranian diplomats rather than its own efforts; the sort of mistakes they no longer commit, having gained in maturity and experience through the years. Support for the NCR among western politicians has, as a result, gradually declined. Unfortunately, as the Iranian regime has moved towards moderation and self-control the PMOI has shifted to a more extremist policy. After the horrifying events of September 11th, it was possible for the Islamic Republic to take advantage of the PMOI's mistakes and to corner them politically on the international scene. ■



CAMPAIGN TO ALLOW FAMILIES TO CONTACT MOJAHEDIN MEMBERS IN IRAQ

By Anne Singleton

'Return Our Children To Us' (Paris demonstration slogan)

...any objection raised by the Mojahedin toward people who are trying to establish and protect the rights of individual members in the difficult circumstances of captivity in an occupied country must be looked at with the suspicion it deserves.

We started Iran Interlink with the specific aim of helping people like ourselves who have become trapped inside the MKO because they can no longer accept the outlandish commands of the organisation's leaders. The methodology of coercion and intimidation as well as psychological manipulation employed by the Mojahedin have been written about elsewhere, but suffice it to say that the atmosphere of repression created inside the Mojahedin made it extremely difficult to first establish and then to maintain these contacts.

The normal channel of national Red Cross Tracing Services was instrumental in many families discovering the whereabouts of their relatives sometimes after many years of not even knowing if they were alive. But, of course, the Mojahedin has total control over its forces and the systematic reply from contacted people was that they did not wish to have further contact.

Family contact is of vital importance for cult members. It establishes a bridge to normality and to their emotional roots. It is this bridge which often enables the person to break the taboos and false beliefs which have kept them in thrall for many years as slaves of the cult leadership. Inside the Mojahedin it must not be forgotten that conditions constitute a form of modern slavery in which the slaves are not constrained by manacles but by isolation and by sophisticated mind control techniques. The members have no possessions and work for no money, they do not enjoy freedom of thought,

belief or expression, and fraternization is strictly monitored and controlled. A strict gender apartheid operates inside the organization. Punishments for dissent include mass humiliation and physical punishment sessions, followed by solitary confinement with simple torture techniques such as 24 hour lighting and loud noises to prevent sleep. This can be continued for many months, in some cases for years. The last stage of punishment became of course the use of Abu Ghraib prison to confine those unable to suppress their dissent and submit to the Rajavis' regime.

The Mojahedin continues to deny the allegations of human rights abuses levelled against its leaders. It should be noted that even members of many years do not become aware of these abuses. Even those who take part in punishment sessions do not recognise them as human rights abuses because they believe that Massoud Rajavi can do no wrong.

For some time, Iran Interlink continued its efforts to establish family contacts. The disproportionate reaction of the organisation was evidence itself of the threat which this simple, basic human right posed to the fabric of its infrastructure.

With the outbreak of war in Iraq in March 2003 the Red Cross' work became extremely difficult. Instead, families took control of their own destinies. Now that the MKO combatants were all confined to Camp Ashraf north of Baghdad and were held captive by US forces, relatives of the captives travelled from inside Iran and

from Western countries, to search for their relatives in the Mojahedin. Many suffered much hardship to make the journey, whether physical, financial and emotional.

The Mojahedin reaction was extreme. They barricaded Camp Ashraf against all external influx. The families, including elderly persons, whose reasonable request was simply to meet with their relatives, were met with obscenities and beatings by the MKO guards at the camp gate. A few who persisted were able to see their MKO relatives, but the circumstances of the meetings were far from adequate. None were able to meet without supervision from not one, but several MKO officials. None were able to speak for more than minutes.

From the time of their capture, international observers lobbied the US Administration and US forces in Iraq for the status of the Mojahedin combatants to be made clear; were they, for instance, prisoners of war or civilians. The importance of this distinction for the families and for the potential rescue of dissenting members should not be underestimated. So, it was in this atmosphere of frustration and desperation that on July 26th 2004 the US Department of State announced Protected Persons status had been granted the combatants under the Fourth Geneva Convention. The announcement stressed that this applied only to their status in Iraq and that the US continues to regard the Mojahedin as a terrorist organisation. In spite of this proviso to the US State

Department statement, the Mojahedin typically claimed this as a victory, as vindication and affirmation of their armed struggle, and as a prelude to removal of the MKO from the terrorist lists. It was a typical misreading both of the document itself and the intent of the captors. The US Department of State has at no time even hinted that it views the organisation as anything other than a terrorist outfit. Indeed, the document itself provides for the gradual dissolution of the organisation because it allows for the individual removal of combatants from the camp, and their dispersal to various destinations as appropriate to their personal status.

Protected Person status under the Fourth Geneva Convention was an absolute gift to the relatives of members trapped in Camp Ashraf. This at last established a legal framework from which to pursue the basic right of family members to have contact with one another outside the coercive and repressive atmosphere of the Mojahedin command structure. As protected persons it means that everyone in the camp is given legal protection as an individual rather than as a member of an enemy army. As such, it provides the individual members rights which they have not enjoyed for years under the rules of the Mojahedin.

A layman's reading of the document shows that it meets the basic demands of the families. For instance, Article 116 states, 'Every internee shall be allowed to receive visitors, especially near relatives, at regular intervals and as frequently as possible.

As far as is possible, internees shall be permitted to visit their homes in urgent cases, particularly in cases of death or serious illness of relatives.'

Article 140 states: 'A Central Information Agency for protected persons, in particular for internees, shall be created in a neutral country. The International Committee of the Red Cross shall, if it deems necessary, propose to the Powers concerned the organization of such an Agency, which may be the same as that provided for in Article 123 of the Geneva

Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949.

'The function of the Agency shall be to collect all information of the type set forth in Article 136 which it may obtain through official or private channels and to transmit it as rapidly as possible to the countries of origin or of residence of the persons concerned, except in cases where such transmissions might be detrimental to the persons whom the said information concerns, or to their relatives. It shall receive from the Parties to the conflict all reasonable facilities for effecting such transmissions.

'The High Contracting Parties, and in particular those whose nationals benefit by the services of the Central Agency, are requested to give the said Agency the financial aid it may require.

'The foregoing provisions shall in no way be interpreted as restricting the humanitarian activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the relief Societies described in Article 142.'

Article 138: *'The information received by the national Bureau and transmitted by it shall be of such a character as to make it possible to identify the protected person exactly and to advise his next of kin quickly. The information in respect of each person shall include at least his surname, first names, place and date of birth, nationality, last residence and distinguishing characteristics, the first name of the father and the maiden name of the mother, the date, place and nature of the action taken with regard to the individual, the address at which correspondence may be sent to him and the name and address of the person to be informed. Likewise, information regarding the state of health of internees who are seriously ill or seriously wounded shall be supplied regularly and if possible every week.'*

Article 26: *'Each Party to the conflict shall facilitate enquiries made by members of families dispersed owing to the war, with the object of renewing contact with one another and of meeting, if possible. It shall encourage, in particular,*

the work of organizations engaged on this task provided they are acceptable to it and conform to its security regulations.'

Many families who have had no news of their relatives from inside the Mojahedin for many years, should now be able to discover whether they are indeed in Camp Ashraf and if they are, be able to visit them there. As Iranian nationals or nationals of Western countries, the protected persons also have the right to leave Iraq as set out in **Article 48:**

'Protected persons who are not nationals of the Power whose territory is occupied may avail themselves of the right to leave the territory subject to the provisions of Article 35, and decisions thereon shall be taken according to the procedure which the Occupying Power shall establish in accordance with the said Article.'

For the families and for the dissenting members, these basic protections are sufficient to appeal to the US forces and to the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as organizations for the protection of human rights, to free the individual combatants from the artificial and illegal restrictions imposed by the Mojahedin's leadership.

Given that the Fourth Geneva Convention is established in international law, any objection raised by the Mojahedin toward people who are trying to establish and protect the rights of individual members in the difficult circumstances of captivity in an occupied country must be looked at with the suspicion it deserves.

SURVIVORS' REPORT

Association for the Support of Victims of Mojahedin-e Khalq ©2004

Editor

Anne Singleton

Contact details

Iran-Interlink
PO Box 148, Leeds LS16 5YJ
United Kingdom
Telephone +44 113 278 0503
Email info@iran-interlink.org
Website www.iran-interlink.org