

## FADED HOPES FOR IRANIAN EXILES

Mahan Abedin

June 29, 2005



**Engulfed by various crises, and reeling from a Human Rights Watch report that branded it a serious abuser of human rights, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) still insists on touting itself as a credible alternative to the ruling political system in Iran. Its relentless propaganda notwithstanding, there is now every sign that the MEK will disintegrate some time in the next five years.**

For the past two decades the MEK had based its strategy on a carefully constructed three-tier approach encompassing a political coalition (in the form of the National Council of Resistance), a disciplined political organization at the heart of this coalition (ie, the MEK) and an armed force in Iraq (the so-called National Liberation Army). But rather than reflecting actual capabilities, this three-tier strategy was essentially propaganda and designed to consolidate the MEK's position as the leading enemy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This illusion worked well just as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power in Iraq. It is for good reason then that MEK observers identified the March 2003 US invasion as the biggest strategic setback in the organization's 40-year history.

The contention here is straightforward: deprived of its armed wing and its ideological leader, unable to organize effectively in the West due to its terrorist designation and with events in Iran developing on a trajectory that is least favorable to MEK designs (the big turnout in June's presidential election is one example of this), the MEK is faced with several fundamental crises that it cannot overcome. The only realistic scenario (and indeed solution as far as some of the more progressive forces in the MEK are concerned) is the dissolution of the organization as presently conceived.

### The 'third' way

Since the ouster of Saddam, the MEK has discovered "peaceful" politics. Previously insistent that the only roadmap to regime change in Iran was through an invasion of the country by its 3,000-strong force based in Camp Ashraf, in Iraq's Diyala province, the MEK had to revise this overly ambitious strategy after its forces capitulated to the American military

and surrendered their arms. The MEK's "third" way is refreshingly simple to the point of bewilderment. The only effective way of forcing change in Iran, according to the organization's spokesmen, is neither through war and an American invasion, nor compromising with the Islamic republic, but in empowering the Iranian opposition (ie, the MEK).

There are several fundamental problems with this reductive argument, not least because an American "war" against Iran is unlikely, and what the MEK terms "compromise" with the ruling regime is mired in ambiguity. Aside from this basic observation, the whole notion that the MEK can affect anything in Iran (let alone overthrow the Islamic republic) is no longer taken seriously by anyone. MEK spokesmen claim that if the organization was removed from US State Department and European Union terrorism lists, it would be in a position to effectively challenge the ruling regime. The problem with this argument is that before 1997 the MEK was not only not on any terrorist lists, but it also enjoyed the whole-hearted support of Saddam and could use Iraqi territory as it wished, and even in those highly favorable circumstances it could not advance its agenda even by a millimeter.

To advance this latest "third" way approach, the MEK has made some minor and cosmetic changes to its organization and tactics. Most importantly, the organization has resorted to establishing pressure groups and consultancies in North America. These organizations are run by veteran MEK members, and their primary function is to establish and manage relations with neo-conservative organizations and interests in the US.

The heads of these effectively fake organizations also contribute opinion pieces to sympathetic US dailies and publica-

# EDITORIAL



The long overdue exposure of human rights abuses inside the Mojahedin has so incensed the organization that it has concentrated a massive amount of energy into somehow making these ugly revelations disappear. Immediately, the usual tactics ground into action – persuade a 'respectable' person to denounce the report as the work of the Iranian regime.

One of the most diligent of the Mojahedin's supporters in this activity has been the respected defender of human rights, Lord Avebury from the UK House of Lords. With his long association with the Mojahedin Lord Avebury is, of course, known to several of those who have left the organization who, as members, remember visiting him at his home and delivering gifts from Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. By directing attacks at a handful of victims and demonizing them and those who publicize their stories, the Mojahedin hope this will make them and the whole issue go away.

The MKO's own Iran Focus website recently carried some scurrilous accusations concerning former MKO member Ebrahim Khodabandeh who is now in Evin prison. Fortunately Ebrahim is alive and well and has been able, from his prison cell, to unequivocally answer the accusations in an open letter to Lord Avebury. Those interested in reading this little spat can find both the article and the reply at:

<http://www.iran-interlink.org/files/info/MKO-Ebrahim.htm>

With the election of a new president in Iran new questions arise as to the future of the MKO. A significant indicator of the tenor of his new regime will be how, as president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad constructs the new Iranian opposition movement. That is, how his regime evaluates and deals with the threat posed by the myriad groups and personages which oppose it and him; whether from inside

the regime itself – perhaps Rafsanjani, certainly the moderates – or inside the country - journalists, Nehzat Azadi, students etc - or externally, Pahlavi, MKO, Jomhoorikhahan (to name only a few). In a sense, Ahmadinejad has the opportunity to set a new political agenda for Iran by 'creating' a new opposition construct which will take the country forwards not backwards. And while we can't expect a sudden turnabout in terms of human rights violations and suppression of political freedoms, there is a real possibility that the election of a new president can sweep away some of the past and allow something like an effective opposition movement to begin to flourish. If, that is, we are to believe Ahmadinejad's own publicity which says he will not fall into the trap of reacting to a US neoconservative agenda (that is, the demand for regime change). If what he says is true then we should see that Iran does not return to the extremes of the past and Ahmadinejad does not recreate the spectre of violent forces sitting over the border ready to attack and take the country by storm. This of course, is the scenario most loved by the MKO, Israeli rightwingers and the US neoconservatives. They would love to push Ahmadinejad's government into a crisis with threats and rumours of imminent bombing raids. All it would take is a little propaganda. Already we have seen the seeds sown with the MKO's duplicitous demonisation of Ahmadinejad.

What would benefit Iran, and also ultimately US-Iranian relations, better would

be to demonstrably demote in terms of threat some of the outdated and anachronistic opposition forces, and choose as 'enemies' instead opposition forces which actually have a chance of pushing forward elements of his own agenda - economy, living standards, etc by challenging his platform. If this sounds too sophisticated or radical or just plain crazy, look at what Khatami's administration started with the MKO in Iraq when the US captured them in Camp Ashraf (May 2003). Against all expectation Iran issued an amnesty to (terrorist) MKO members who were not implicated directly in crimes against individuals and who wanted to return home. Since then, over 300 have been repatriated and by all accounts have not come to any harm, but have been returned to their families and left alone. It remains to be seen if Ahmadinejad's government can see the wisdom in this, or whether the regressive cries for blood and revenge drown out the voices for progress and stability. If we see the returned MKO rounded up in the next few months and flung into jail, then we can expect to see an atmosphere in which the US can step up its threats. If, however, a great many of Ahmadinejad's critics continue to come from inside the regime itself and the most severely suppressed critics continue to be journalists and the civic society, then we will see which way the wind is blowing - and that is not the way the warmongers want. ■

tions, promoting the "third" way and the so-called Iranian resistance. Arguably the most well-known consultancy is Near East Policy Research Inc, which, according to a website that investigates MEK lobbying in the US, was established in May 2003 by Ali Safavi, a well-known and veteran MEK member. Another well-known MEK member, Ali Reza Jaafarzadeh (who was previously the MEK's official representative in the US) is currently working for the Fox News network as a Middle East analyst.

This latest MEK initiative has all the trappings of the MEK's previous ambitious and failed programs and is unlikely to amount to anything in the long term. Its biggest success so far has been to mobilize neo-conservative support for the "third" way. At the forefront of this support is the Iran Policy Committee (IPC), an organization made up mostly of retired military officers with impeccable neoconservative credentials. The IPC published a white paper, outlining US policy options for Iran, in February. Although mostly a clumsy report written by non-experts, this white paper was remarkable for its whole-hearted support of the MEK.

The best way to understand the MEK's "third" way is to place it in a continuum of failed strategies in the past. The MEK's "first" way of gaining power in post-revolutionary Iran was to start a serious terrorist campaign in June 1981. The leaders of the organization had grossly overestimated their strength and conversely underestimated the determination of the Islamic republic to put down armed challenges. The result was the complete elimination of the MEK network inside Iran, to the extent that by late 1983 the MEK had no serious presence in the country. The failure of this "first" way led to desperate measures, which culminated in an alliance with Saddam, the invader of Iran.

The MEK's entry into Iraq led to the creation of a conventional, albeit very small, armed force along the Iran-Iraq border. The "second" way envisioned capturing power through an invasion of Iran backed by Iraqi air cover. This crazy strategy was taken to its mindless extreme in July 1988, when the MEK army launched operation "eternal light" and invaded Iran from the central border regions. Not surprisingly, the small MEK force was destroyed by Iranian forces after the Iraqis backed off from providing prolonged air cover. The MEK admitted losing more than 1,200 fighters in the operation, but the true figure was nearer to 2,000.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988 might have heralded the end of the "second" way had it not been for Saddam's wish to keep the MEK both as a strategic trump card against Iran and an internal security tool within Iraq. This ensured that the strategy of toppling the Islamic republic through an armed invasion was not abandoned, until the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 put an end to the MEK's tried, tested and failed plans. This paved the way for the concoction of a "third" - and most probably final - MEK strategy of overthrowing the post-revolutionary order in Iran.

### An organization in crisis

The MEK knows better than anyone else that the "third" way is a non-starter. Firstly, the organization has no presence inside Iran and little credibility with Iranians outside the country. At best, the organization is simply dismissed as decrepit and irrelevant, while a majority of Iranians regard its members as eccentric traitors who fought alongside their enemies in the Iran-Iraq war. The MEK also knows better than anyone else that it cannot gain recognition from the US government. It is not just because the MEK is the only Iranian organization that has murdered Americans and publicly boasted about it, but also because the US government is well aware of the checkered history, authoritarianism, limitations and hopeless future of this quixotic organization. The MEK's "third" way is simply a tactic to buy time and prepare the organization psychologically for the inevitable expulsion of its remaining members from Iraq. In the final scheme of things, the "third" way is designed to prevent the organization from disintegrating, but it is unlikely to work. Essentially, four factors drive the dynamics of organizational disintegration. First and foremost the loss of its armed wing and the effective end of the "armed struggle" is profoundly unsettling for the MEK.

The entire organizational ethos and world view of the MEK revolves around "armed struggle" and the romanticism and cult of martyrdom that surrounds it. All its slogans, insignia, flags and imagery are woven around this theme. Indeed, one of the main reasons that the MEK came into conflict with the Islamic republic was the organization's insistence that it maintain its own armed militia in the country. Moreover, the whole-hearted and obsessive attachment to political violence was a factor in the US State Department's decision to add and maintain the MEK on its terrorist list. Secondly, the disappearance of Massoud Rajavi, the ideological and spiritual leader of the MEK, deprives the organization of effective long-term leadership. Rajavi went into hiding the very day that Saddam abandoned Baghdad to American invaders, and not a word has been heard from him since. Whether or not he physically survives in the decisive months and years ahead is beside the point, for the fact is that he is now politically dead and cannot be revived.

As critics of the organization have been quick to point out, any leader who decides to go into hiding at a time when his organization is experiencing its most stressful period since its inception cannot expect to be rehabilitated. Rajavi has gone into hiding for good reasons, since the disasters that have engulfed the MEK in recent years have largely been a result of his decisions and style of leadership. But Rajavi's incompetent leadership notwithstanding, his loss is a big blow to the organization. Above all else it completely undermines its elaborate and complex ideology. To put it simply, the MEK believes that it is at the forefront of human evolution, and that its ideological leader, Rajavi, stands at the very peak of

historical evolution. The fatal damage that the loss of this so-called ideological leader inflicts on the MEK's eccentric world view is self-evident.

Thirdly, the MEK cannot resettle effectively in the West. The group's highly centralized and disciplined organization means that it needs a discrete territorial base from which to operate. The vast Ashraf camp in Iraq's Diyala province was ideal for the MEK and its loss cannot be over-estimated.

Following the downfall of Saddam, the MEK tried to relocate most of its people and resources to its European headquarters in the Parisian suburb of Auvers-Sur-Oise, but these plans were foiled on June 17, 2003, when French counterterrorism agents stormed into the sleepy village and detained more than 165 MEK members, including Maryam Rajavi.

Finally, political developments inside Iran have made it increasingly difficult for even the most hardcore of MEK members to believe that regime change is a realistic scenario. The MEK has consistently misread political developments in Iran for the past quarter century, partly because it has not had a presence inside the country. For instance, Rajavi, the disappeared ideological leader, was for three years telling his organization that the Islamic republic would collapse before the end of Mohammad Khatami's first term as president in June 2001. This wildly optimistic assessment turned out to be yet another example of wishful thinking on the part of the overly pretentious Rajavi.

This month's closely contested presidential election and the surprises it has thrown up - Mahmud Ahmadinejad - indicates, first and foremost, that the reformist discourse of making major changes to the country's political institutions has been eclipsed by more parochial and practical concerns with social justice and the nature and scope of economic development. Therefore, if the reformist program (which is inherently loyal to the Islamic republic and seeks to gradually reform it from within) is increasingly dismissed as irrelevant, groups that advocate the overthrow of the Islamic republic in its entirety are clearly beyond the pale as far as the vast majority of Iranians are concerned. The factors outlined above encompass core features of the MEK and go to the very heart of this organization as a coherent and viable entity. The fact that all these characteristics have not just been undermined, but simply eliminated from the equation, speaks volumes about the existential crisis that has engulfed the MEK. In fact, there are already signs that the organization's remarkable discipline is breaking down. Sources inside the British, Dutch and Canadian sections of the MEK speak of a sharp decline in the morale of supporters and a tendency by some peripheral elements in the organization to speak to other Iranian organizations. A few years ago, this would have been unthinkable, since the MEK bans any interaction with members of groups and organizations that are not under its influence.

In the event of disintegration, at least two distinct groups

will emerge from the carcass of the MEK.

Veteran member Mehdi Abrishamchi (long considered Massoud Rajavi's right-hand man and the former husband of Maryam Rajavi, who divorced her so Massoud could launch his so-called ideological revolution) will most likely emerge as a leader of a breakaway faction. Abrishamchi will likely attract those MEK elements who want to go back to the roots of their organization, before Massoud Rajavi transformed them into an isolated cult. Veteran member Mohsen Rezai (better known as "Habib") might constitute another pole of leadership. Known as a pragmatist and realist, Rezai could attract the more talented members of the organization, especially those who currently perform political and diplomatic tasks. Maryam Rajavi is unlikely to emerge as a leader of any sorts since she derives all her legitimacy from Massoud. One of the arrangements that followed the MEK's ideological revolution in 1985 was that Massoud would be the "ideology" while Maryam would perform executive tasks.

The above scenario is clearly speculative, but in all likelihood factions motivated by the aforementioned agendas will emerge from the carcass of the MEK. The point to be made is that the MEK - despite all its faults - has 40 years of history behind it and to expect it to disappear entirely is unrealistic. Although the MEK is the oldest Iranian political group of modern times, the disintegration of the organization in its current form has been long overdue. Various factors have converged to ensure its survival to this point, of which the most important was the patronage of Saddam. And in the final analysis, whatever emerges from the carcass of the MEK, the greatest legacy of its demise will be the final and definitive repudiation of terrorism as a legitimate tool in Iranian politics.

*Mahan Abedin is the editor of Terrorism Monitor, which is published by the Jamestown Foundation, a non-profit organization specializing in research and analysis on conflict and instability in Eurasia. The views expressed here are his own.*

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MKO and the Ahvaz bombings

June 10, 2005

Four bombs exploded in Ahvaz in Khuzestan province followed by a bomb blast in Tehran. Observers say the blasts were apparently aimed at disrupting Iran's presidential elections. The terrorist group Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) immediately denied responsibility for the attacks. Although most of the MEK's combatants are being held in US custody at Camp Ashraf, the group's former headquarters in Iraq, it is rumoured that some have been recruited by the US Department of Defence to take part in covert operations in Iran, and for intelligence gathering on Iran's nuclear programme.

Massoud Khodabandeh commented, "I don't see this as the MEK having the political sophistication to distance themselves from any 'terrorist' activity because they want to be removed from the western terror lists. After all they never denounced 9/11 or Saddam Hussein or... and have still not actually said they have renounced violence to achieve power.

"This is more likely to be a stupid reaction from Massoud Rajavi (MEK leader-in-hiding), to mean 'we could have done it if we'd wanted to'. He is desperate to keep himself in the equation as far as Iran is concerned, but simply has no resources except propaganda to keep the Mojahedin name alive even on paper."

### U.S. court backs indictment on terror-list status

REUTERS By Jim Christie, June 17, 2005

SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters) - A U.S. appeals court upheld a federal indictment on Friday against a group that raised money in California for the Mujahedin-e Khalq, an Iranian opposition group designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. The ruling reverses a district court's dismissal of the indictment. A 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel ruled the Committee for Human Rights, which had solicited financial contributions at Los Angeles International Airport, wired money to the Mujahedin-e Khalq despite learning of the designation. A district court held the law covering how groups are designated terrorist organizations is unconstitutional because only one federal court may review the designations. The appellate panel rejected that position along with the Los Angeles fund-raisers' argument their financial support for the Mujahedin-e Khalq was entitled to free speech protections under the First Amendment.

"What is at issue here is not anything close to pure speech. It is, rather, material support to foreign organizations that the United States has deemed, through a lawful process, a threat to our national security," according to the panel's decision.

"The fact that the support takes the form of money does not make the support the equivalent of speech. In this context,

the donation of money could properly be viewed by the government as more like the donation of bombs and ammunition than speech," the panel added.

A lawyer for one of the fund-raisers described the ruling as "very disappointing." Under the federal indictment, Berzon's client faces up to 10 years in prison. He has not yet discussed a potential appeal with his client, Roya Rahmani.

### International Arrest Warrant for MKO Members

June 23, 2005



Swiss-based newspaper Le Temp revealed in a report that six MKO members who commuted in UN Commissions have been banned according to an international arrest warrant which was issued by Interpol. Le Temp wrote: "... six opponents of the regime in Tehran, who lobbied UN Commissions. A year ago, they were banned from entering UN buildings due to complaints by Iranian officials. In March 2003, Libyan head of Human Rights Commission at that time, replied to Iranian officials' letter that for preventing people from entering these buildings there should be convincing reasons, such as an international arrest warrant. In the next year, 2004, the warrant had been issued by Interpol. So, the doors of the UN were automatically closed on these dangerous terrorists."

### Iraqi Police Bans MKO Meeting

IRNA, June 23, 2005

Since the Mojahedin-e khalq is a terrorist organization, the Iraqi police didn't allow it to hold its meeting in Babel Hotel in Baghdad.

According to the Foreign Ministry's press office, after police interference, MKO officials asked US forces to support them but received no answer from them.

After this failure, they invited some tribesmen in Diali Province to take part in their meeting in Camp Ashraf. But when tribesmen rejected the invitation, MKO leaders experienced another blow and the meeting was cancelled.

Alberto Fernandez, spokesman for US embassy in Iraq had recently said to Al-Menar Al-Yaum newspaper that Mojahedin-e khalq terrorist organization has killed US soldiers and diplomats and has no place in Iraq's future.

"This organization was Saddam's mercenary and killed Americans, Shiites and Kurds.

Paul Bremer denied the Iraqi Governing Council's decision to expel this group since there was no place to transfer them to." According to Fernandez, this group will certainly leave Iraq. "We are looking for a place for them, but their exit from Iraq needs time," he said.

## Attack on Tahmasbi

June ? 2005

Interview with Roshana Association

I was traveling to Paris for the Anti-terrorism Conference. As I passed through Belgium I encountered several MKO members and supporters who immediately recognized me. I was attacked by this group which was coordinated by a woman called Mahin Afshar, also known as Leila, from the central leadership council of the Mojahedin. She is one of those arrested on June 17, 2003 and is on bail awaiting trial on terrorism charges. Unfortunately she and others have had travel restrictions lifted by French courts and this is how she came to be in Belgium continuing her activities for the Mojahedin.

They attacked me, I believe, because I am one of four named former members who are prosecuting their leader Maryam Rajavi for human rights abuses in France. Le Parisien wrote about this and it made them really angry. They are seeking revenge.

But, it isn't the first time they have attacked former members in European countries.

Before me, Javaheriyar and Shams Haeri were attacked. As the legal noose tightens around the Mojahedin's neck we expect more, and more vicious attacks on people who speak out against them. My question is, how is it possible that a designated terrorist organization, several of whose members are currently awaiting trial on terror related charges, is allowed to continue operating and engaging in physical attacks in Europe?

## Mohammad Mohaddessin wants to visit the UK

June 2005



Critics of the terrorist MKO objected to the proposed visit of Mohammad Mohaddessin to the UK in July. Mohaddessin, a leading MKO member, is currently freed on bail in France pending terrorist

related charges.

On 6th June, Massoud Khodabandeh wrote an open letter to Prime minister Tony Blair about Mr Mohaddessin's proposed visit to the UK. The letter pointed out that:

Over the past few months, several leaders of the proscribed

terrorist group, Mojahedin-e Khalq, who are currently on bail awaiting trial on various terrorism related charges in France, have been trying to reduce the conditions of their bail so they can continue their activities in Europe.

In the case of Mr. Mohammed Reza Mohades (aka; Seyed al Mohaddessin, Behnam, Mohammad Mohaddessin, Mohadessin, Mohaddessin), the court rejected claims that he needs to visit other countries for at least 3 days, once a month. The court rejected his claim to visit Belgium at the end of May 2005 as he did not have credible evidence for the necessity of this visit (such as an official invitation). MKO lawyers dropped another claim by Mr. Mohaddessin that he needed to visit Germany, but insisted on his need to visit the UK at the beginning of July 2005.

Mr Mohaddessin obtained an invitation from Lord Corbett a well-known apologist for this terrorist organisation.

The French judge who reviewed his bail conditions has respected the position given to Lord Corbett by the Queen, and out of respect for the British Government has ruled that:

"His claims .... have been refused... except that the person under investigation can exceptionally leave the French territories for a period of 3 days to go to Great Britain to visit British Parliamentarians at the start of the month of July 2005 (which coincides with the new round of EU3 negotiations) . He should give the magistrate at least 15 days notice before leaving the country and state the exact day of his return with the exact address... he will report to the gendarmerie of Auvers sur Oise on the morning after his return..."

## Fourteen more MKO returned to Iran from Camp Ashraf

July 2, 2005

Fourteen more disaffected MKO members have seen no future for the organization and returned to Iran with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Iraqi government. One report from inside Iran quoted the returnees as saying the MKO leaders had forced them to stay until June 2005, but when this time arrived and nothing happened, they realized that MKO leader Massoud Rajavi had lied to them. They left the organization immediately and returned to Iran under the auspices of the ICRC and Iraqi government. The fourteen returnees have been named as:

Mahmoud Aseman Panah; Massoud Ahmadi; Gholamreza Behrouzi; Karam Kheiri; Seyed Shoja Seyed Latifi; Jamshid Sarayee; Bijan Shahmoradi; Habibollah Rezapour; Jalal Golmoradi; Ali Azizi; Nosratallah Mohammedi; Ali Morad Mehdipanah; Nima Mehrjoo; Hadi Nagravi.

Under president Khatami, Iran had issued an amnesty to MKO members who were not implicated in crimes against individuals. Since then, over 300 dissatisfied former members have returned to their families in Iran. Around 3,300 remain under US control in Camp Ashraf. Their future is still uncertain. ■

# 'TANK GIRL' ARMY ACCUSED OF TORTURE

## Guardian and Human Rights Watch find evidence of abuse by Iranian revolutionaries under US protection

David Leigh in Nijmegen, Netherlands

Tuesday May 31, 2005 The Guardian

**A bizarre revolutionary army supported by British politicians who want more "regime change" in the Middle East, has been accused of torture and brainwashing. Evidence obtained by the Guardian backs a report by Human Rights Watch. This makes detailed accusations of abuse, including deaths under interrogation, against the "People's Mujahideen" of Iran (MKO).**



The Mujahideen are a 4000-strong anti-Iranian dissident army, currently under US protection in a camp in Iraq. They have a vociferous public relations campaign in Britain and the backing of some Washington neo-conservatives. The group, known as the "tank girls" because of the preponderance of women in its ranks, has also won the support of the Daily Telegraph, which wants it to help overthrow the mullahs in Tehran. It says in a leader: "We should back the main resistance group, the People's Mujahideen ... Give them the tools and they will finish the job". There is a growing right-wing campaign in parts of Washington and London for regime change, citing Iran's nuclear ambitions. But leftwing UK figures have also joined the campaign

to legitimise the Mujahideen, whom they see as freedom fighters. An advertisement by supporters in the Guardian last month quoted Labour peer Lord (Robin) Corbett, as well as Liberal Lord (David) Alton and Tory backbencher David Amess in support, along with human rights lawyers Imran Khan and Geoffrey Bindman. However, the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, calls them a "a nasty terrorist organisation" and British officials are barred from contact. The Mujahideen are officially proscribed but their British backers want the terrorist designation lifted. Refugees from the Mujahideen we traced in the Netherlands include Ardeshir Pahrizkari, who walks on crutches. His back and feet were broken, he told us,

when he was punched, kicked and had chairs thrown at him at a mass meeting to denounce him organised by his commander.

His crime, he says, was to object to "self-criticism" sessions and the beating up of internal dissidents. "They use Stalinist methods to get rid of even a spark of opposition".

At the time, the "tank girls" were being financed by Saddam Hussein in camps in Iraq.

The army was allocated illicit cash from the UN oil-for-food programme, according to Iraqi ministry documents.

Mr Pahrizkari says he was handed over to Saddam's secret service, who took him to Abu Ghraib prison. There were continual beatings there, he said.

"When the Red Cross came round, we were told: 'Any contact with them and we will break every bone in your hands and feet.'"

His fellow refugee, Akbar Akbari, says he was tortured extensively, and is still having psychological counselling, after three years in Abu Ghraib.

"The moment you arrived, you were beaten on the soles of the feet.

Prisoners were used to hoist your feet in the air with ropes."

Later, he says, his toenails were pulled out. Pepper and salt were forced into his anus.

He says he was falsely accused by the

Mujahideen army of being an Iranian spy.

Eventually both men were handed over to their enemies in Iran.

They claim they escaped, and deny they are working for the Iranian regime. "My father, brother and sister were imprisoned for six months after I escaped," says Mr Akbari. "The regime took their house."

Mr Pahrizkari says: "I want to warn people not to fall into this trap. If the Mujahideen are the next potential regime in Iran, then that regime will be a dictatorship".

The two men's testimony is supported by last week's New York-based Human Rights Watch report. It says telephone interviews with 12 other former Mujahideen soldiers "paint a grim picture of how the organisation treated its members". Witnesses alleged two cases of deaths under interrogation. A former English soldier in the MKO,

Anne Singleton, now living in Leeds, talked to the Guardian last week. She said the MKO was a brainwashing cult, which ordered its members alternately to divorce and re-marry. As a "Tank girl", she says she wielded a Kalashnikov in the Iraqi deserts with a battalion of women equipped with tanks and revolutionary slogans. They are run by Maryam and Massoud Rajavi, who are married.

She believed she was joining a feminist marxist battle group dedicated to the overthrow of Iran's misogynist clerics. But she says she was deceived and is horrified UK politicians are backing dangerous fanatics.

Young supporters burned themselves to death in 2003, one in London, in coordinated protests after the arrest of some leaders, and the Mujahideen army is accused of numerous bombings inside Iran.

The group raised up to £5m a year in

Britain through a charity called Iran Aid, until the Charity Commission closed it down in 2001, saying it was unclear where the money was going. Lord Corbett's response to the Human Rights Watch report is: "All the people they interviewed are agents of Iranian intelligence. A bill is going through the US Senate allowing financial aid to opposition groups in Iran. People are desperate to stop the Mujahideen getting any of the money".

He attacks the methodology of the report and accused Ms Singleton of also "having links with the Iranian ministry of intelligence".

Ms Singleton denies this, saying: "To claim that every western government and humanitarian organisation which criticises the Rajavi cult is somehow connected to the Iranian secret services shows Lord Corbett's own refusal to take responsibility for supporting this terrorist cult." ■

## PARIS CONFERENCE – FORMER MEMBERS ACCUSE MARYAM RAJAVI OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

Le Parisien June 20, 2005

**Former members of Mojahedin-e Khalq organization take action against the leaders of this organization in France.**



According to Le Parisien, Massoud Khodabandeh, Karim Haqqi Moni, Massoud Tayebi and Jamshid Tahmasebi-four former members of MKO-have accused MKO leaders of violating human rights and freedoms as well as torturing and endangering the lives of other people.

About their complaint in French Judiciary, Le Parisien wrote: "Maryam Rajavi and her husband allow themselves to interfere in the private lives of the members and break their marital relations."

This paper notes that these four men were former members of MKO,



adding: "The leaders of this organization had issued execution orders for Tayebi and Haqqi to prevent them from leaving the organization but they were able to escape to Europe and get political asylum from the Netherlands government."

According to Le Parisien, Khodabandeh was Rajavi's body-guard. When he decided to leave MKO, they injected narcotics into his body and Tahmasebi was under heavy mental tortures.

Le Parisien quotes French security service: "this organization never allowed its members to open an account. It has been listed as a terrorist organization by the US and EU."

## Voice of America

June 20, 2005

On the anniversary of Maryam Rajavi's arrest and the self-immolations in Paris, Mojahedin-e Khalq held a ceremony in Paris on Saturday. At the same time, former members held a one-day meeting in Paris "Discussing Human Rights Violations in MKO".

In the meeting, past methods of Mojahedin-e khalq were criticized and discussed by former members. They discussed the process of getting into

the organization and then leaving it. Massoud Tayebi says: "We entered the organization for justice, freedom and individual rights, for independence and freedom-seeking. But we didn't stay in the organization since we didn't find our ideals and desires in the organization and since [Rajavi's] leadership and individual dictatorship was being imposed in the MKO under the name of leadership. Ideology constrained all the members, and more importantly, its worst expression was being performed in the organization." Individual independence is another issue; the two sides accuse each other of lacking it. In this regard, Hadi Shams Haeri said: "in the MKO, there's no individual independence because the organization is not based on democracy. That kind of democracy the organization is claiming, is never applied in the organization itself and 98% of members are affected and have no influence; because the ideas of the members are not considered as valuable. The organization is based on the principle of "ideological leadership" and others are "sheep" who should only listen to the leader; there are no elections in the MKO. The leader is lifelong. It is even worse than a monarchy and no one can question it.

If someone questions the leader, they would be criticized and would be accused of "betrayal".

Mojahedin-e khalq organization has protested strongly against the Human Rights Watch report.

Ali Akbar Rastgou, former foreign affairs chief of MKO, says: "the foreign relations of any organization are a reflection of its internal relations. For years defectors have accused the Mojahedin-e Khalq of violating human rights in its internal relations. However, this time an external organization has come to investigate this case. This has had an effect on the MKO's foreign relations. Until now, the organization has tried to cover its internal relations by tricks and deception. I mean the organization has always hidden the fact. But now those whom we contact (including members of parliaments and foreign representatives), they say they want nothing to do with the MKO." ■



## POINTS OF VIEW

### Brainwashing

Shahin Torabi

#### The fundamental feature of human rights abuse inside the Mojahedin is brainwashing.

Unfortunately this was not mentioned in any detail in the Human Rights Watch report.

A dictionary definition of brainwashing is: 'to impose a set of usually political or religious beliefs on somebody by the use of various coercive methods of indoctrination, including destruction of the victim's prior beliefs.' In the Mojahedin brainwashing is systematically employed using well-known physical and psychological

methods to destroy the personal morality and psychology of each individual so that this can be rebuilt according to the needs of the brainwasher, in this case, Massoud Rajavi. In armed organizations like the Mojahedin-e Khalq and Al Qaida, this brainwashing has a worse outcome than simply individual acts of physical terrorism because it covers more than one person. The subjects of brainwashing are themselves 'terrorized' day-by-day and in the end each one becomes a terrorist. In this respect the perpetrators and the victims of brainwashing should be studied much more carefully than those individuals who have killed someone.

## POINTS OF VIEW

### A Sacred Bomb

Massoud Jabani June 16, 2005

**Whenever we hear about a bomb explosion in Iran everyone remembers Saddam Hussein and Massoud Rajavi.**

For over two decades the most modern and up-to-date tactics were used by these two dictators to kill Iranians. It is logical to assume then that if a bomb explodes in Iran it is a result of Rajavi's strategy of armed struggle. Rajavi has always said that the strategy of armed struggle represents the honour of the Mojahedin and the tools for this strategy have always been sacred. When a bomb is believed to open the way for democracy – as the Mojahedin claims – then the individual who performs the bombing feels marvelous and believes the whole country should bow down to them and

pay homage to their courage. In this atmosphere of 'the end justifies the means' Rajavi gives his individual cult members sacred medals so that they won't question themselves or him. Now the heads of the three big terror cults, Al Qaida, Ba'athists and the Mojahedin are on the run in the region, the followers of their ideologies have turned to revenge and recognize no limits to their activities and killings. To stop this madness, the key point is not to deal with these people like businessmen and, according to short term interests, divide them into good and bad. Instead, try to expose them and do not lend them any legitimacy. Otherwise, the same terrorist you might categorize as good in the short term, tomorrow will place their sacred bomb in front of your house. ■

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN OPERATION ETERNAL LIGHT

Massoud Khodabandeh

May 25, 2005



**The Human Rights Watch report about human rights abuses by the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization has quoted in several places from Massoud Banisadr's book 'Masoud, Memoirs of an Iranian Rebel'. Concerning the MEK's disastrous military operation in 1988 Banisadr wrote:**

About Operation Eternal Light, Rajavi said: We will not be fighting alone; we will have the people on our side. They are tired of this regime, and especially since the ceasefire, they have every incentive to get rid of it forever. We will only have to act as their shields, protecting them from being easy targets for the [revolutionary] guards. Wherever we go there will be masses of citizens joining us, and the prisoners we liberate from jails will help us lead them towards victory. It will be like an avalanche, growing as it progresses. Eventually the avalanche will tear Khomeini's web apart. You don't need to take anything with you. We will be like fish swimming in a sea of people. They

will give you whatever you need.

About ten years later, when the organization published names and photographs of martyrs from the operation for the first time, the number of martyred was announced as 1,304. Our other losses were officially 1,100 injured, of whom 11 subsequently died.

Operation Forogh [Eternal Light] dashed our political hopes. Worse, it signified the end of ideology, of moral belief and expectation –for me and, as I soon discovered, many others. Our basic values no longer had any meaning and ceased to sustain us. We had all become actors playing to each other, encouraged by each other. This lie reached its intolerable climax when our "ideolo-

gical leader” failed to admit his predictions and judgment had been wrong...once, we had been told that belief in Mojahedin was based on two premises: the sacrifice they were willing to make and their honesty. After Forogh the well of honesty completely dried up, and from then on the organization rested on only one foundation: “sacrifice” and more “sacrifice.”

The first thing I was required to do in Baghdad was watch a videotape of an ideological meeting for “executive and high-ranking members.”

The meeting, called “Imam Zaman,” started with a simple question: “To whom do we owe all our achievements and everything that we have?”...

Rajavi did not claim, as I thought he might, to be the Imam of our times, but merely said we owed everything to Imam Zaman... The object was to show that we could reach Tehran if we were more united with our leader, as he was with Imam Zaman and God. He was ready to sacrifice everything he had (which in fact meant all of us!) for God, asserting that the only thing on his mind was doing the will of God,...we were expected to draw the conclusion that no “buffer” existed between Rajavi and Imam Zaman; yet there was a buffer between ourselves and him [Rajavi] ... which prevented us from seeing him clearly. This “buffer” was our weakness. If we could recognize that, we would see why and how we had failed in Operation Forogh [Eternal Light] and elsewhere. Massoud and Maryam [Rajavi] had no doubt that the buffer was in all our cases our existing spouse...

The atmosphere on the base was completely different....The mood was one of unremitting misery...It seemed everyone was in the process of the new phase of the “ideological revolution.” The only legitimate discussion was about the revolution and the exchange of relevant experiences. Apart from that nothing was important; there was no outside world....Even poor single people were required to divorce their buffers, having no idea whom that meant; apparently the answer was to divorce all women or men for whom they harbored any feelings of love. Only later did I realize the organization demanded not only a legal divorce but also an emotional or “ideological” divorce. I would have to divorce Anna [his wife] in my heart. Indeed I would have to learn to hate her as the buffer standing between our leader and myself.

Rajavi announced at the meeting that as our “ideological leader” he had ordered mass divorce from our spouses. He asked everyone to hand over our rings if we had not already done so. That meeting was the strangest and most repugnant I had ever attended. It went on for almost a week....

Afterwards my masoul [supervisor] advised me to go to

a bungalow and think. I had become a bangali, which meant being put in solitary confinement, ordered to do nothing but think and write. It was an extreme kind of mental torture, and there were members who preferred to kill themselves than to suffer it.

Massoud Banisadr speaks here of 'mental torture', to which indeed all members were subjected. As the representative of the NCRI in Europe and the US until 1996 he was not in a position – as he was not isolated in the camps in Iraq – to experience or suffer much from the brutal and immoral orders of Rajavi and his former master, Saddam Hussein. In addition, the HRW report itself is very brief and omits much of the plethora of witness testimonies and documented evidence of the widespread and systematic violations of even the most basic of human rights of MKO members.

In the above excerpt, Banisadr refers to the casualties of Eternal Light Operation and the Mojahedin's failure in this operation. According to his own words, he was sent to fight against a classic army with the experience of a bloody 8 year war, even though he had not received any military training. Though wounded, he survived. And now Banisadr, quoted by Human Rights Watch, talks of the outcome of that operation.

But what does not come out in the report, are the issues involved in actual pursuance of the operation, such as what led to that operation, and what happened in the Mojahedin and Iraqi joint operation room, and the words exchanged between four Iraqi generals and Massoud and Maryam Rajavi.

I was there in that room and now I would like to also add a brief account to expand on Banisadr and HRW's necessarily limited information.

Twenty-four hours after it was absolutely clear that the Mojahedin offensive would fail and when it was clear that the Iranian Army had withdrawn its forces in order to cut off any path for retreat, at that time, four Iraqi generals, with tears in their eyes, begged Rajavi to order a withdrawal in order to save the lives of MKO members. Rajavi did not accept. He believed that either everyone should die or Saddam must agree to give more air support. He wanted to secure air support with the price of the members' lives. But the Generals in the joint operation room said that even if Saddam wanted to help he could not because of international, political and situational issues. Massoud Rajavi was even taken by helicopter to visit Saddam himself. But he came back empty-handed. All those involved in the operation, particularly the commanders, remember very well that those who were saved were those who returned against their orders or who had narrow escapes from the blood and fire of the massacre. (Of course, except Mehdi Abrishamchi and other menials of Auvers sur

Oise, who were instructed privately to return to the camps before others).

If Massoud and Maryam had accepted the advice of the military experts at that time and had ordered a withdrawal, at least four-fifths of those dead now could have returned safely. Rajavi himself announced the number of dead as 1304 and the wounded as 1100. The real number, closer to 3000, is not due to the stupidity of the Rajavis (since the stupid can be forgiven) but is because of the evilness and outrageous turpitude of this couple. As far as I know, such a lunatic move has no earlier precedent in the history of human kind that a leader with no military knowledge or experience has commanded, against the advice of four war hardened generals, a group of largely untrained and insufficiently armed 'combatants' into battle with the enemy-

's army. Such an action, from any commander in any position, must be considered a war crime and should be investigated by an international court of justice. And when it comes to court, Izzat Ebrahim (former deputy of Saddam Hussein) can be another witness to this crime.

The Human Rights Watch report, the words of Massoud Banisadr, the testimonies of former Abu Ghraib prisoners, the testimonies of the children who were abused, the tears of the families of MKO captives and thousands of other reports and documents shed light on this sick hearted couple, each from a different angle. We hope that we can turn these projectors on in international courts and expose the real face of Maryam and Massoud Rajavi so that future generations in all the countries of the world take this as a lesson. ■

## REQUEST FOR INTERNATIONAL COURT TO INVESTIGATE MKO CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

### Announcement by 35 former MKO members

May 28, 2005

**The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on violations of human rights by the Mojahedin-e Khalq organization was published on May 18, 2005. The 28 page report was based on the evidence and testimonies of former members of the MKO and others and was widely covered by Farsi and international media.**

But the cases mentioned in HRW's report are only a very small fragment of the whole reality. The question remains as to why it took such a long time for the former members' cries of pain and torture to be heard by the people of the world and by an international organization? Former members and officials of this organization have repeatedly complained to Amnesty International, HRW and to the Red Cross (ICRC) about imprisonment and torture by the Mojahedin-e Khalq and Saddam's agents in Ashraf Camp and Abu Ghraib. Why are these allegations published with this much delay? Moreover, why in this report is there only a small part of the whole reality?

Why has HRW used the testimonies of only twelve former members of the Mojahedin? If HRW had issued an invitation to give evidence of the MKO's violations of human rights, there are hundreds who are ready to answer with their decisive testimonies. The HRW's report included a reference to the death of two MKO members under torture, which is valid and precise. But what about sending more than 1400 MKO members to die in the so-called Eternal Light operation? Is that not a war crime? We, the former members and officials of Mojahedin-e Khalq, ask the judiciaries of the US and EU countries as well as the Hague Tribunal to tho-

roughly investigate the crimes of the Mojahedin-e Khalq without delay. Here we should remind everyone that, since the HRW report was published, Maryam Rajavi and Mojahedin-e Khalq have increased their terrorist threats against former members and their families. Thus, we will pursue all new crimes of the Mojahedin-e Khalq through legal channels.

#### Copies to:

The office of UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan  
Interior Ministries of the EU countries  
Mr. Jalal Talabani, Iraqi president  
Members of the European Parliament

Members of the US Senate and Congress  
US State Department  
US Defense Department  
Human Rights Watch Organization  
International Committee of the Red Cross  
Amnesty International

#### The names of signatories:

1. Milad Ariayee, Germany
2. Samad Al-e Seyed, Netherlands
3. Batool Ahmadi, Sweden,
4. Jamshid Ahmadi, Sweden
5. Ali Bashiri, Norway
6. Jafar Baghalnejad, Norway
7. Ardeshir Parhizkari, Germany
8. Eduardo Termado, Germany
9. Parvin Hajji, Canada
10. Karim Haghi, Netherlands,
11. Mehdi Khoshhal, Germany
12. Massoud Khodabandeh, England

13. Hassan Khalaj, Norway
14. Habib Khorrami, Netherlands
15. Saeed Khodashenas, Canada
16. Farhad Javaheriyar, Germany
17. Massoud Jabani, Netherlands
18. Ali Akbar Rastgou, Germany
19. Nasser Rezvani, Sweden
20. Mohammed Hussein Sobhani, Germany
21. Anne Singleton, England
22. Hadi Shams Haeri, Netherlands
23. Robabeh Shahrokhi, Sweden
24. Abbas Sadeghinejad, Germany
25. Hassan Sadeghian, Denmark
26. Jamshid Tahmasbi, Germany
27. Yasser Ezzati, Germany
28. Majid Farahani, Netherlands
29. Ali Ghashghavi, Germany
30. Ayoob Kurd Rostami, Canada
31. Amir Moasaghi, Germany
32. Hassan Mohammedi, Denmark
33. Rasool Mohammednejad, Sweden

34. Masoomeh Yeganeh, Netherlands
35. Mitra Yusefi, Sweden

#### The names of supporting associations:

1. Iran-Interlink
2. Iran-Peyvand
3. Roshana
4. Ava

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES: Mrs Farah Karimi, MP, the Netherlands



In May this year Mrs Karimi published a book about her life called 'The Secret of Fire'. In it she talks about her involvement with the Mojahedin-e Khalq as a young woman. She became politically active during the 1979 revolution, believing at that time in a socialist interpretation of Islam. Soon after

Farah Karimi has been a member of the Lower House of the National Dutch Parliament since May 19, 1998. She has lived in the Netherlands since 1998 and studied International Relations at the University of Groningen. In 1998, she was eligible to vote for the first time in the elections for the Lower House and was at the same time elected to office. At present, she is the Green Party spokesperson for Development Aid, European Affairs, and Foreign Affairs (Africa, Surinam and Latin America) in the Dutch Parliament.

she joined the Mojahedin with her husband, Farrok. After her escape to Europe in 1983 she continued working with the Mojahedin. Then in 1996, she cut all her relations with the organization.

Ms Femke Halsma, leader of the Greens, says: "I believe that Farah Karimi writes about Mojahedin-e

Khalq very honestly. She now rejects the Mojahedin-e Khalq and believes it has become a criminal organization."

Mr. Hans Von Balen, Liberal Democrat member says that in his view Mrs Karimi has written very bravely about her past relations with the Mojahedin. "Criticizing the

past is a brave act", he said, "and other politicians should follow her example".

Asked whether she is afraid of the Mojahedin, Mrs Karimi has said she has no fear, adding: "the Mojahedin are campaigning in Europe to lift their name from the terror list. If they perform a terrorist act against me, it will be evidence against them."

### **Excerpted from The Secret of Fire by Farah Karimi, MP**

...And this is how the cult culture started...

To prevent people from being drawn into a normal western way of life the methods were becoming increasingly radical. We were asked not to show weaknesses and to not surrender to western ways of life... Once again I was lucky. A child was sick and I had to take him to hospital and therefore I had the excuse not to attend yet another brainwashing session ...

... our house in Hamburg had become an official base for Mojahedin Khalq Organisation (MKO)... We were increasingly accepting people who had run away and who were on their way to Paris [the MKO's new headquarters after the failed coup d'etat in Iran].

### **Farah is transferred to the Mojahedin base in Paris:**

I was mainly helping newcomers who had come from Iraq to Germany and I would prepare their cases for applying for asylum. We would give them our Identity cards and other documents in order to facilitate their continued travel. The only ID which did not need any change of photo, etc was the one belonging to Hooman [Farah's son] which could easily be used for other children.

We would use night trains and at the border checkpoints the custom

officers would not wake up sleeping passengers for random checks, especially if they had children with them...

A few times I was summoned to participate in ceremonies in Paris. In reality their base in Paris was a country inside France itself. In huge buildings all close to each other, hundreds of Mojahedin were living and working without attracting the attention of the outside world. They were ordered to respect the way of life of the French people. So, they would trim the grass in front of the building very neatly and would open and close the wooden window blinds exactly as and when the French citizens would do so. They would also respect the weekend rules and would not make too much noise, sometimes pretending that they are out for a short break like the others...

... I think that during that time the Mojahedin were checking my abilities and qualities. A short time after my return to Hamburg, I received a message to go to Paris taking Hooman with me. I was instructed to put more time into my work and to become more involved as a full time member. I gave my house to the regional branch of Mojahedin but at least on paper the house still was mine. I was asked to go to Paris to take on more responsibilities.

### **Farah with the Mojahedin in Paris**

I left everything in Hamburg and together with Hooman, on a warm summer day in 1985, took a train to Paris. I had not had much contact with Farrokh [Farah's husband] since the time he relocated to Paris.

This was the first time I was contacting the MKO directly, without the mediation of my husband. I believed that this time the invitation was solely due to my own abilities. After

my arrival in Paris, I was transferred to a house which was allocated to the work related to newcomers and refugees. It was named Qanooni [Legal]. This was where I was going to start my work.

Farrokh, myself and Hooman had a small bedroom with two small bags containing all our clothes and some toys for Hooman, and that was all our belongings. There was no television, no radio and no news. The life was truly boring. In the building in which the Legal and Hospitality section of MKO had been based, I was working in a group responsible for bringing refugees into Europe and also for the relocation of these people inside Europe. The rules in this place were also very harsh. The restriction on transfer of information was very serious. I never found out which countries were part of our network.

The first contact with the organisation had a very deep effect on me. I was part of them and could see how every individual was part of a collective each with their own responsibilities. Even the day to day household responsibilities were coordinated and distributed on a planned program. The person responsible for your house would herself clean the toilets twice a week. Myself and two other mothers in the same house would take care of the children on a rotating basis. But after a few weeks I had to go back to Hamburg to sort out some of the newcomers. I had to leave Hooman for the first time. Others were supposed to take care of him and take him to a new nursery opened recently especially for the members' children. Hooman was only two years old and we were very much attached to each other. For me it was horrifying to leave Hooman with strangers but I left without saying a word...

In Hamburg, my role had been filled

by a much more experienced person. I took a group of newcomers and prepared their cases for seeking asylum. I went to Paris to where they were supposed to be transferred. When I arrived at the base in Paris, afraid of them thinking that I was a weak person, I did not mention how much I missed Hooman. I did not even ask about him straight after arriving at the base. I found him in the evening when we were gathering for supper. My little man with his backpack.

He ran towards me and threw himself into my arms. But I was expected to hide my emotions; pain and happiness.

I lived for a whole year in such a closed, inter-dependent society. My responsibility was similar to that of my husband. We both had to make acceptable refugee stories for our new colleagues who were coming from Iran and in some cases the ones who were being transferred from the US to France. We had to make ID documents for them so that they would be living like normal people without attracting suspicion. There we would falsify IDs and make false documents such as driving licences. The Mojahedin had their own driving instructions which was even stricter than normal driving rules.

Passing red lights, taking the metro without tickets and similar offences would attract attention and therefore would not be tolerated.

For the ones who had come from Iran or even the USA, the easiest way was to apply for political asylum. Those who came from the USA did not know anything about Iran. Usually they had left Iran when they were very young and had grown up in the US and were recruited by the MKO in the same atmosphere. When they would arrive in Paris, the first question I would ask them was if they had any story for

themselves to present when asking for asylum. Some of them would come out with stories which clearly were taken from Hollywood films. "I was arrested and sent to prison and then I ran away from prison and left the country!".

In the stories I would make, if two individuals would arrive say from Spain, the next one would come from say Germany. According to the orders of the organisation, most of the newcomers would and should hide their relations with the MKO or in extreme cases would present themselves as sympathisers of the organisation. We did not want anyone to know how fast the MKO was growing in the west and specially that a small country had been established inside France. Of course we had the top ranking MKO officials who would present themselves with their true identities and would join the others in Paris. They would be presented to the authorities as the public figures of the MKO, but following their cases was not part of my duties.

I alone during this one year made up about 150 stories for asylum cases. It was going forward very smoothly and the percentage of acceptance was very high. Some even would be accepted in a matter of less than one month...

...

I was trying to introduce changes to the stories of different people. But from the other side it was very difficult for me to accept that the French government did not know anything about our activities. There were thousands of our people active in Paris and it did not take long before the French newspapers started writing about it.

In the end, Massoud Rajavi went to Iraq...

although the Mojahedin were still active in Washington, Cologne and London getting their orders from

Paris.

They were very hard days in Iran... Long prison sentences and executions were taking place every day and opposite to the Iranian regime the Mojahedin was the most organised opposition. The Iranian regime was worried about the MKO's ability to organise its supporters in the west. The Mojahedin had a strong international lobby. It was a respected organisation which had relations with politicians in Washington. London, Paris and the United Nations.

The Resistance against the mullahs' regime, which was the most hated regime in the world, enjoyed wide support, whether this resistance was from the Mojahedin or Saddam Hussein...

Still, even with all this support, the Mojahedin carried out their activities in hiding and underground. Even in France. They would not trust anyone. They knew that, given the chance, the French would prefer their own interests to the Mojahedin's. Eventually this happened. In 1986, France expelled Massoud Rajavi to Iraq where he established his National Liberation Army as the military wing of the National Council of Resistance. This army of course was made with Saddam's support and was armed and trained by him...

At the same time Saddam Hussein allowed them to contact the PoWs [Iranian soldiers captured by Iraqis in the eight year war] and attract them to join the struggle against the Iranian regime. At the start, my husband and myself had similar responsibilities and worked together in the same place. We also shared a room in the same house that we kept the children. But even then we did not have much contact with each other.

The organisation would accuse us of being too dependant on each other.

In particular they would expect Farrokh, who was more senior and had more experience, to put aside his dependencies. They told him to move to the logistics section in order to solve his problems (dependency). He was moved to the central kitchen. His responsibility was to clean meat. For Farrokh who was an intellectual and in love with writing and music this was very degrading. My problem was that I had very little time for Hooman. I had arranged my work in a way that I could go home every night. When Hooman would go to sleep, I would return to work and sometimes work all night and go to him just before he would wake up ... We were working all the time. Weekends and holidays did not mean anything. We were not allowed to have any kind of friendship with anyone. We did not trust each other. You would try not to say a lot about yourself or others. Your relation with others would be just in the framework of the organisational relations. You would be under control all the time. Everyone had to write periodic reports about other people.

Every one of us had someone else as a supervisor. We were obliged to write daily reports about our own actions and about others surrounding us. We had to express our own and other people's thoughts and actions which were considered anti-revolutionary.

...In the places where we lived, we also had very restrictive rules... We had our own thoughts about and ways of bringing up our children, but these did not match the rules imposed by the organisation on us. I sacrificed my family life for revolutionary aims.

...

My dissatisfaction about the very unusual way of life we were leading and the framework in which we

were imprisoned was increasing day by day...

### Farah rejects the Mojahedin

After the first [military] operation I understood the situation the Mojahedin were in.

But due to my love toward my husband, Farrokh, I continued working with them. I believed that the regime understood no language except violence. I resorted to this strategy since there was no alternative.

In the end I left the organization because I couldn't match myself to their methods. I was tired of living in isolated conditions and I was concerned about my son, Hooman.

I hated using human beings. Suppressing individual personality in the Mojahedin and the unending praise for the leadership had deprived me of my life.

...They told me to sign a letter which said that I was no longer a member of the resistance and that I didn't have the ability to continue with the struggle, and that I would reveal nothing about the Mojahedin otherwise the Mojahedin have the right to punish me in any way they wanted. I didn't hesitate and signed it immediately. ■



## SURVIVORS' REPORT

Association for the Support of Victims of Mojahedin-e Khalq ©2005

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