

BULGARIANS TO DISMANTLE IRANIAN TERRORIST GROUP MKO IN IRAQ

By Massoud Khodabandeh, Terrorism Monitor

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As the United States advances steadily toward a confrontation with Iran, the fate of an Iraqi-based Iranian opposition group appears to have been sealed. It has now been confirmed that Bulgarian troops will assume control of the formerly-armed Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MKO) organization's Ashraf camp. This move likely constitutes the final stage of removing the MKO from Iraq, a process that began with the U.S. bombing of the organization's bases in April 2003.

The most important question is whether the dismantlement of the MKO (listed as a terrorist organization in the U.S. and Europe) in Iraq will have any impact on U.S.-Iranian relations, especially at a time when the latter is laying the foundations for a long-term confrontation with the Islamic Republic. Moreover, it is unclear whether the U.S. decision to dissolve the military component of the MKO will propel the Iranians to reciprocate with greater cooperation in the battle against al-Qaeda and other Islamic militant organizations.

Bulgarians in Ashraf

According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense, the mission of 154 soldiers, including 34 staff officers, will be a military-humanitarian mission and is not expected to last for more than 12 months (Xinhua, January 14). Bulgarian soldiers will travel to Iraq with their conventional equipment, including sub-machine guns, which would only be used in response to threats from outside the Ashraf camp.

Ashraf is close to Khalis (in Diyala province), an area that is considered to be a stronghold of Iraqi nationalist guerrillas. Not surprisingly, U.S. forces will be

deployed around Ashraf to ensure wider security, but the Bulgarians are expected to have "considerable" control over daily life inside Ashraf where several thousand aging Iranian dissidents remain in limbo.

This will be the first time that non-U.S. soldiers have been involved in dealing with the MKO in Iraq. Interestingly, the Bulgarians' primary task is to ensure security "inside" the camp. There is little doubt this signifies a major development relating to the status of the MKO in the near future, with the camp's complete dismantlement within 12 months a distinct possibility. After all, this is the first time coalition troops have been deployed inside Ashraf. Previously, U.S. forces have been stationed immediately outside the camp and rarely interfere in the daily routine of its inhabitants.

Gradual Dismantlement

The fact that it has taken nearly three years to decisively deal with the MKO in Iraq has led some observers to claim the group enjoys the protection of influential groups in the Pentagon and other U.S. agencies, which are anxious to use the organization as leverage against Iran. There is no evidence,

however, of collusion between any agency of the U.S. government and the MKO. In fact, careful review of how the U.S. has treated the MKO since April 2003 reveals a very skillful, subtle and almost passive approach to dissolve what is a remarkably cohesive and fanatical cult-army with the least amount of resistance.

From the outset, U.S. military intelligence was concerned about the possibility of carnage and mass suicides inside Ashraf in the event of a sudden move to dissolve the camp. A senior U.S. military source, speaking anonymously, told this author in September 2005 that from the beginning of negotiations with the MKO, the leaders began to issue vague but unmistakable threats of mass suicide should any action be taken to forcibly disperse members. The seriousness of this threat became evident when several members set themselves on fire in Europe to protest the detention of Maryam Rajavi and other leaders by French counter-terrorism forces in June 2003. By September 2003, a Temporary International Presence Facility (TIPF) was established just outside Ashraf to house the steady drip of disaffected MKO members who sought "refuge"

EDITORIAL



Our lead article this month has uncovered an interesting new development in the fortunes of the Mojahedin's armed forces in Iraq.

News of the imminent disbandment of the group there prompted a flurry of activity among the MKO's legion of lawyers in an effort to create more bluster and bluff. Exactly as when the Iraqi interim government voted to have the group expelled from Iraq in December 2003. The MKO's 'demand' – if it were in a position to make any such demand – has been for the total 3000+ combatants based in Iraq to be moved wholesale to another base, in another country. The absurdity of such a demand renders it obvious that such stances taken by the MKO are for internal consumption. The leaders - and probably their highly paid lawyers too - are well aware that no such option exists.

Bulgarian troops will start their mission toward the end of March or early April. We expect that the disbandment of the MKO's terrorist base in Iraq will be a priority. The 370 former MKO who have repatriated to Iran are being followed up to ascertain their current circumstances. This will no doubt determine whether it is possible that more of the MKO's rank and file could be successfully and safely repatriated to Iran to be reunited with their families.

Inside Iran, the execution of MKO member Hojat Zamani rightly attracted the attention of human rights groups who condemn the use of the death penalty and who point out that Zamani did not receive a fair trial.

Following the interrogation of all the MKO's combatants in Iraq after the forced disarmament, the USA has identified those who are known to have conducted terrorist acts in Iran which have caused death and injury. There is no doubt that these particular individuals will not be able to return home to Iran.

Interestingly, the Mojahedin's interpretation of Zamani's execution was not based on his terrorist actions. Ignoring the deaths of innocent citizens, the MKO has predicted Zamani's execution to be the prelude for a "massacre" of Mojahedin prisoners in Iranian jails. It is not known exactly how many such prisoners are still held in jails, but the MKO's need for fresh blood to maintain its fictional

position as the main opposition to Iran's regime has been well served by Zamani's death.

As the Open Secrets article shows this month, the MKO's ideology demands that members like Zamani be sacrificed, and this is not the first time they have deliberately created the conditions in which a member has been killed. Indeed, the Rajavis' bloodthirsty disregard for the lives of their members is taking on the status of legend.

February saw yet another attempt by the MKO to be removed from the global lists of terrorist entities on which the organisation has been placed. The case brought by the MKO against the

Council for Europe in 2002 was heard on February 7th in the Court of First Instance of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. The Mojahedin's cynical attempt to claim to the Court that the organisation has renounced violence was proven an outright lie when it published pictures and film on its own website of the military parade held in Camp Ashraf. Disarmed combatants dressed in their new military garb and waving the flag adopted by the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) marched along with huge mock-ups of artillery pieces. The message was loud and clear. Give us back our weapons! ■

Bulgarians to Dismantle Iranian Terrorist Group MKO in Iraq

with U.S. military police during the identification interviews. The total number of detained MKO inside Ashraf was 3,855, including 800 women. Currently just over 3,450 remain in the camp itself. Of the disaffected and disident members who transferred to

TIPF, 370 have accepted an amnesty by the Iranian government and returned to the country with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights.

The advent of "voluntary repatriation" for disaffected members was seen as a major threat by the MKO, whose enmi-

ty toward Iran is so deep-rooted that for the past 25 years it has ordered its members and active sympathizers to sever all links with Iran. In the past, even peripheral sympathizers who traveled to Iran were shunned by the organization, fearing that its attempts to depict life inside the country as darkly as possible would be fatally

undermined by such travels.

Not surprisingly, the MKO began a vociferous propaganda campaign against TIPF, telling members the U.S. was running a "mini Abu Ghraib," where men and women are tortured and the latter would even run the risk of being raped by U.S. soldiers.

At a more sophisticated level, the organization projected TIPF as a bastion of Iranian intelligence, and tried to connect this to the wider reality in post-Saddam Iraq where pro-Iranian forces stand accused of exploiting the U.S. military presence to seize control of key aspects of Iraqi life. Interestingly, this kind of sweeping and banal analysis converges with the rhetoric of the nationalist insurgents in Iraq who bemoan a covert Iranian "occupation," masked by the highly-visible U.S. military presence.

Yet, the MKO's relentless psychological warfare against TIPF and its residents was essentially driven by credible fears of a complete collapse of morale inside Ashraf.

This fear was amplified by the remarkably quick process through which disaffected MKO left TIPF for Iran and then turned up in Europe to further expose the organization's bizarre cult-like practices. It is worth noting that Amnesty International has "concerns" about conditions in the Ashraf camp, while Human Rights Watch published a report in May 2005 detailing some of the serious human rights violations practiced routinely by the MKO in the years up to 2002, based on witness statements made by former members now living in Europe (Human Rights Watch, May 2005).

In spite of, or perhaps because of, this morale remains a major problem and defections have recently increased. Four former MKO members, who returned to Iran on January 14, said depression and desperation are endemic and that members are showing a greater propensity to disobey orders and refuse to attend daily brainwashing sessions

(http://www.nejatngo.org/news.php?news_id=1622, January 24). Behzad Alishahi, the most recent defector to reach Europe, told Voice of America: "if the Red Cross provides a safe haven, over 80 percent of the camp would leave and only a core of around 20 percent would remain" (Voice of America, November 13, 2005).

Endgame

An astute move to designate MKO members as protected persons in July 2004, rather than as prisoners of war—which the MKO wrongly interpreted as a favor—enabled the U.S. to diminish this small fanatical army to the point of dissolution before it hands them over to the Bulgarians, and subsequently to the Iraqis and the UN. The designation of July 2004 was an intrinsic part of a highly sophisticated policy of duping the MKO into believing it had influence with the U.S., while at the same time weakening its formidable internal command structure to the point that it can no longer control dissent inside Ashraf, let alone resist forced dismantlement.

Articles 25 and 26 of the Fourth Geneva Convention obliged the U.S. to facilitate visits to Camp Ashraf by the inhabitants' families. Some families traveling from Iran had not seen their relatives for more than 20 years. The emotional reunions inevitably led to more disaffection, leading the MKO to complain to U.S. military authorities that Iranian intelligence was exploiting the visits to gather information and recruit disaffected members. Moreover, as telephone and e-mail contact were established with relatives, news from the outside world increasingly penetrated the camp, alerting long-term inhabitants to the depth of their estrangement.

As MKO control gradually weakened, U.S. control increased. Last summer, restrictions were imposed on the movement of MKO leaders outside Camp Ashraf who had previously enjoyed freedom of movement under

escort. In the autumn, a letter was issued to every individual resident outlining their rights under the Fourth Geneva Convention and emphasizing their right to leave Iraq if they wish (Survivors' Report, November 2005). Moreover, while U.S. forces have allowed physical conditions in Camp Ashraf to gradually degenerate, they have taken care to improve conditions in TIPF, thus creating more incentives for disaffected members to defect.

Indeed, education programs, recreation facilities, paid work and the building of two new compounds indicate that the movement of greater numbers to TIPF is expected over the coming months. It is at this point that the U.S. military in Iraq is handing Ashraf and its inhabitants to the Bulgarian military. It is expected that a small Bulgarian military force, working alongside the ICRC and UNHCR, will dismantle the remaining internal command structure of the organization. Chief of the General Staff of the Bulgarian Army General Nikola Kolev, speaking informally to journalists in Sofia, said the mission included "maintaining order and rendering assistance to the refugees living there" (Focus News, December 22, 2005). In an interview with the author on January 14, the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense admitted the unit will be armed with electroshock truncheons and other equipment designed for crowd control. The use of such equipment indicates that U.S. authorities anticipate MKO commanders will foment resistance should the Bulgarians try to forcibly remove the rank and file members.

Implications for U.S.-Iranian Relations

It is ironic that the United States is dismantling the MKO at a time when relations with Iran have reached an all-time low. While the MKO is a listed terrorist entity and is widely regarded as a bizarre cult, it is also the only organized and noteworthy opposition to the Islamic Republic. Yet, the organization

has very little (if any) support inside Iran and is generally despised by Iranians, not least because of its former alliance with Saddam Hussein. Moreover, the Iranian security establishment has long let it be known it is not interested in the fate of the MKO, which it regarded as a spent force well before the 2003 war against Saddam Hussein's regime.

It is perhaps this reality that led the U.S. to decisively deal with the MKO and remove it from Iraq. While the U.S. cannot expect to win praise from Iran

and its supporters, its skillful handling of the MKO file will win it much sympathy from victims of MKO terrorism in Iran who number in the tens of thousands.

Insofar as the war on terrorism is concerned, the Iranians have always denied rumors of near-deals with the U.S. to swap senior MKO members for al-Qaeda operatives allegedly in Iranian detention. On the more credible issue of Iranian support for Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it is highly unlikely that

any half-hearted gesture by the U.S. would entice the Islamic Republic to end its support for organizations that it regards as central to its national security interests in the Middle East.

Find this article at:

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369895>

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Straight From the Horse's Mouth...'

[Iran-Interlink, February 3, 2006](#)

Has the Mojahedin-e Khalq renounced the use of violence to achieve its political aims as Survivors' Report recently suggested?

A source close to NCR says officials in Europe were told: "The Mojahedin Khalq Organisation rejects armed struggle and commits itself only to non-violent means of struggle and therefore asks the relevant authorities to remove it from the lists of terrorist organizations."

Maryam Rajavi, leader of the National Council of Resistance - the name used by the Mojahedin in western countries - has authoritatively denied this. She told LA Times reporter, Sebastian Rotella, in an interview from Auvers-sur-Oise near Paris that:

...she declined to rule out armed intervention, saying, "The tactics and methods have been imposed not by us, but by the mullahs."

Military Parade in Camp Ashraf

[Mojahedin.ws, February 11, 2006](#)

On February 11 (the anniversary of Iran 1979 revolution), disarmed members of the MKO restricted in Camp Ashraf held special ceremonies called "The Anniversary of Feb 11th Uprising". These ceremonies largely included the parade of MKO members, which is a symbolic act to emphasize armed policies of the MKO to overthrow the Iranian regime. This symbolic move comes at a time when the MKO tries to convince Europeans not to resort to military options. Using mock-up artilleries and stressing the military discipline is in contradiction with their claims in Europe.

What was interesting in the ceremonies was that commanders were not present on the stage to review the parade. This move amid Iran-West tensions over nuclear issues indicates that Mojahedin tries to flaunt its military abilities.

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

Human Rights Watch – reaffirms its findings on MKO abuses

[February 15, 2006](#)

Human Rights Watch issued a statement answering a coordinated series

of responses it received after publication of its May 2005 report 'No Exit', which highlighted human rights abuses carried out by the Mojahedin in its Iraqi bases up to the year 2002. The statement by Human Rights Watch affirmed that re-examination of its original findings confirmed the human rights abuses which took place inside the Mojahedin's bases in Iraq.

Opposing MEK Lobby in UK Parliament

[IRNA, February 15, 2006](#)

Former defense minister Peter Kilfoyle is urging the British government to hold more talks with Iran to resolve issues over Tehran's civilian nuclear program.

Kilfoyle said that while recognizing the "delicate situation" in relations with Iran, he was calling for "restraint by the international community in its dealings with the Iranian government with regard to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

In an Early Day Motion filed with the British Parliament, signed so far by six other MPs, he said that the parliament should note that both Israel and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons in the region.

"Diplomacy is the sensible way to resolve any difficulties with the Iranian government," warned the former defense minister, who strongly opposed the war against Iraq.

In the petition, which was also supported by former Conservative foreign office minister Douglas Hogg, he said that he was urging "further dialogue between Iran and the international community under the auspices of the United Nations."

In respect to a campaign by sympathizers of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) to deproscribe the group, Kilfoyle said that parliament should maintain its con-

demnation of the group that has carried out numerous terrorist attacks in Iran over the past 30 years.

Some MPs, linked with the MKO's umbrella group, the so-called National Council of Resistance, have been pressing the government to support the MKO as a symbolic gesture against Iran's elected government.

Bulgaria to Spend EUR 8 M on Camp Ashraf Security

Sofia News Agency, February 17, 2006

Bulgaria will grant about EUR 8 M for the non-combat unit, that will guard the Ashraf refugee camp, Defense Minister Vesselin Bliznakov said Friday during the regular Parliamentary Control.

The United States will also grant the same amount of money for the cause, he added.

This money will cover the non-combat unit of 120 as well as up to 35 more people who would service the unit. The troops will take part in securing the camp for no more than a year, Bliznakov said. The US will cover all transport, logistics, and medical expenses, while Bulgaria will take care of the pay-checks and insurance.

Bulgaria's unit will most likely leave for Iraq in the beginning of April.

Former MKO members ask Iraqis to rescue cult victims

February 19, 2006

A delegation of Iraqi tribal leaders and lawyers who visited the holy city of Mashhad were presented with a statement signed by 280 dissociated members, with their request from the Iraqi people:

"We - the people who have emerged from behind the walls of this terrorist cult - stress that many of those still in Camp Ashraf are being kept against their will; they are being kept there by force.

"The malignant leaders of this organization have been able to keep these people and deprive them from thinking and choosing freely, due to the flexibility of the Red Cross and the support of the occupying forces.

"Therefore, we ask the Iraqi government and Iraqi people to shut down this organization in their country and to no longer allow the leaders of the group to practice control over its members; there are hundreds of people who, like us, can take advantage of the pardon of the Islamic Republic and return to their families.

"Once again, we stress that the main obstacle to the return of these people will exist as long as the leaders of the group are able to exert pressure on members by taking advantage of international regulations and have the support of the occupying forces."

Iraqi Tourism Minister says MKO will be expelled

February 21, 2006

Following the visit of an Iraqi delegation to the city of Mashhad, Deputy Iraq Tourism Minister, Mr. Zia'aldin Abdulkarim met with some of the victims of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq organisation.

During the meeting, Mr. Hasheminejad raised the issue of terrorism, which threatens both countries: "The two countries are threatened by other phenomena including terrorism, and the presence of terrorist MKO in Iraq is a sign of such threats.

Mr. Abdulkarim replied: "... the government and the people of Iraq are fully aware of the issue of the MKO, which has remained in Iraq with the support of foreign countries."

Mr. Abdulkarim, referring to lies told by the Mojahedin (which considers itself above the laws of Iraq) said:

"Hopefully, in the near future the Iraqi government will order the expulsion of the group from Iraq, and no one will be able to prevent that.

God willing, we will get rid of these terrorists."

Two More Flee Rajavi's Cult

Nejat Association, February 21, 2006

Nejat Association reported yesterday that two more disaffected members of the Rajavi cult arrived safely back in Iran.

Having suffered from mental pressure inside the cult, the two subsequently took refuge in the American camp (TIPF). They returned to Iran with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross and found a warm welcome there.

Bulgarian Parliament Agrees Mission to Guard Camp Ashraf

Sofia News Agency, February 22, 2006

Bulgaria's parliament has approved a government decision to send up to 155 troops to guard an Iraqi camp.

Earlier this month the Socialist-led government agreed to deploy a non-combat unit of 120 lightly armed soldiers plus support staff to guard a camp of mainly Iranian refugees in Ashraf, about 70 km north of Baghdad.

The lawmakers whose approval is adamant for any major troop deployments voted Wednesday 151 to 15 in favour of the move.

The unit is due to depart by the end of March for a year-long mission.

Mojahedin member executed in Iran

Human Rights Watch, February 27, 2006

New York -- Hojat Zamani, a member of the opposition Mojahedin Khalq Organization outlawed in Iran, was executed on February 7 at Karaj's Gohardasht prison, Human Rights Watch said today, after a trial that did not meet international standards. ■

MKO LIES TO EUROPEAN COURT TO SAVE ITS SKIN

January 30, 2006

The following letter, signed by nearly 80 former members of the MKO resident in western countries, was sent to the European Court of Justice.

At 09:30, on February 7, 2006 in the Second Chamber of the Court of First Instance of the Court of Justice of the European Communities, hearing T-228/02 Organisation des Modjahedines du peuple d'Iran v Council (Common foreign and security policy) will take place.

<http://curia.eu.int/en/actu/calendriers/index.htm>

This action against the Council of the European Union was first brought before the Court on 26 July 2002 by the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) - also known as Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK).

In simple terms we understand that through this action, the MEK wishes to be removed from the European list of terrorist entities.

Some of the main arguments brought by the MEK are that it is:

- 1- Conducting legitimate resistance against the Iranian regime
- 2- Complying with the fundamental principles of democracy
- 3- Complying with the fundamental principles of respect for human rights
- 4- Supported by the international community
- 5- Never undertaken actions against civilians
- 6- The only resistance movement which is now acting within Iran's borders
- 7- Defending peace in the region

In response, and in opposition to this action, the people signatory to this letter all declare themselves willing and able to bear witness to the facts set out in this letter thus:

1 From its inception, the MEK has been the main anti-western force before and during the 1979 revolution in Iran. The MEK killed six Americans in Iran during the 1960s. During the 'hostage crisis' in 1980, the MEK advocated killing the American hostages. The MEK openly took up arms against the regime of Iran again only after its coup d'état against the new revolutionary government in 1980 failed.

Since then, the MEK has carried out multiples of mortar attacks against civilian targets, resulting in the deaths of shopkeepers, passers by and etc. The MEK has bombed factories, schools and residential areas. The MEK received orders from Saddam Hussein to attack targets chosen by his regime and were paid accordingly.

2 The MEK is organized internally as an autocracy, with Massoud Rajavi the sole, self-appointed leader for life. He occupies the role of supreme leader and is above the law. No one has the right to remove or even criticize his leadership. Below him in

rank is his wife Maryam Rajavi, also appointed by Massoud Rajavi. He presented her to the National Council of Resistance (NCR) for 'election' to the position of 'president elect' of the NCR. The 'election' took place in an open meeting in which there was no secret ballot, the vote was 100% in her favour. The NCR comprises at least 95% MEK members who claim to be independent members but who, without exception, believe in the MEK ideology and are devoted to Massoud Rajavi.

3 There are countless examples of suppression and repressive measures inside the MEK. The MEK has practiced forced marriage and now practices forced divorce, separation of children from parents, gender apartheid, imprisonment for criticizing leaders or even the leaders' strategy. Victims inside the MEK have been sent to Abu Ghraib prison. Extrajudicial punishments include torture, death under torture, long term imprisonment in solitary confinement and sentencing to execution - not carried out by express order of Massoud Rajavi. The Human Rights Watch report of May 2005 'No Exit', details only a small sample of such human rights abuses carried out systematically inside the Mojahedin. Former members will bear witness that not one of the Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are practiced inside the MEK organization.

4 The MEK claims to have collected hundreds of signatures from western parliamentarians. However, the names have never been published and no-one has had sight of the signatures. The MEK has a known history of forging signatures.

The MEK collects signatures through lies, deception and misinformation.

Signatories, such as do exist, do not have immediate access to necessary information by which to make a balanced and informed judgment about the MEK.

5 There are numerous instances of civilian deaths and injuries caused by the deliberately imprecise methods of armed attack used by the MEK in Iran. The use of mortars, fired in civilian areas, have led to schools, public parks and residential buildings being hit. The largest number of civilians killed by the MEK was in the Eternal Light operation of 1988. In this operation, the organization sent thousands of untrained civilians into battle with Iran's Revolutionary Guards in Rajavi's bid to pursue regime change by armed means. Thousands were killed and injured in this abortive operation. Rajavi is culpable for war crimes based on his orders and decisions during this operation.

6 The MEK is not supported inside Iran - most of Iran's younger generation have never heard of the MEK except as a historical group which betrayed their country by fighting alongside Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war. The MEK does not

mention its twenty year existence in Iraq and its dependence on Saddam Hussein during that time. No opposition group (inside or outside Iran) has ever accepted the group which is universally regarded as traitorous. The lack of support for them outside country by exiled Iranians is a clear indication of how much support they have inside the country. The only beneficiary of the MEK's existence has been the hardliners of the Iranian government who refuse to accept any other opposition except them because they are known as terrorists, assassins and traitors to their country. This allows the hardliners to continue a policy of repression against any legitimate opposition.

The MEK's most recent public stance is to support regime change involving war waged against Iran by the USA or Israel. The MEK's 'third way' states clearly that the MEK can bring about regime change only if its forces in Iraq are re-armed.

Since 2002 many things have changed.

Since the Mojahedin was forcefully disarmed in Iraq after the fall of benefactor Saddam Hussein, the organisation has now begun to use this to claim that it has renounced violence.

"The Mojahedin Khalq Organisation claims that it rejects armed struggle and commits itself only to non-violent means of struggle and therefore asks the relevant authorities to remove it from the lists of terrorist organizations."

(from Survivors' Report, February 2006)

The MEK claims that in future it will only engage in political, social and cultural activities against the Iranian regime.

Firstly, this claim has never been made publicly and has only been made in private to the officials involved in this court.

Secondly, this is a lie. The MEK has no intention of abandoning armed struggle: the Mojahedin's third way requires that the organisation is re-armed.

As recently as two months ago, the MEK clearly issued death sentences [threats] against their critics in European countries. This was broadcast on their clandestine TV program, copies of which are available.

The MEK continues to advertise its National Liberation Army (currently disarmed by US forces in Iraq) as the only possible way of achieving regime change in Iran.

The MEK openly promotes the use of violence in Iraq, Iran and in western countries.

Information from a source close to the MEK states that the organization is now actively collecting signatures from its members who swear that:

- armed struggle is the only possible means to achieve regime change and take power in Iran. (The real meaning of this is the belief that Camp Ashraf in Iraq should be preserved and the combatants rearmed.)
- they adhere to every step of the Ideological revolution and pass through it consciously and believe in every part of it. (The real meaning of this is that they accept the conditions of slavery imposed by the MEK's cult culture.)

- they declare total and unswerving loyalty to the ideological leader, who is Massoud Rajavi. (The real meaning of this is that Rajavi will never be removed from leadership of the MEK, thus denying any semblance of a democratic process.)

These three articles, which every member is being asked to affirm and sign to, are exactly the opposite to the conditions necessary to prove their case in this court.

Indeed, the MEK is more committed to these principles than ever in its history as this is the only means by which the organization can be kept intact.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, reams of evidence has come to light concerning the MEK's behaviour in Iraq and elsewhere. Examples include: video evidence of payments made by Saddam to the MEK in payment for the assassination of specific people; selling oil illegally for Saddam in the west (under the UN oil for food program); involvement in the suppression of the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings in March 1991 which involved the massacre of civilians.

The MEK have never condemned their fallen benefactor Saddam Hussein and refuse to refer to him as anything less than "the ex president of Iraq". The MEK has not cut its ties with the remnants of Saddam's regime in Iraq and elsewhere, including the Baath Party and tribal leaders loyal to Saddam Hussein. The MEK celebrated the 11 September tragedy in their camps in Iraq. The MEK leaders directly ordered members to commit self-immolation in European cities in June 2003, resulting several disabilities and two deaths.

If the MEK wishes to refute the evidence which led to its inclusion in the terrorist lists of every major western country, it must:

- 1- publicly and unequivocally renounce violence as a means to achieve political aims – including publicly agreeing to the dismantlement of Camp Ashraf in Iraq;
- 2- abandon the practice of collective living, compulsory divorce, separation of people from their children and families, cutting people off from their finances and stop the use of psychological manipulation to indoctrinate members; the MEK must free its members from conditions of slavery;
- 3- respect democratic principles by holding real elections for the first time – which allow for the removal and replacement of all its leadership cadre through secret ballot; run the organization as a normal political group;
- 4- provide answers in public to the issues arising from MEK behaviour over the past twenty five years, including; the massacre of Iraqi Shiites and Kurds in 1991; the massacre of thousands of civilians in the Eternal Light operation of 1988; the incarceration of dissidents in its own prisons and in Iraq's infamous Abu Ghraib prison. ■

DELEGATION VISITS EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE

On 2nd February 2006, Mr. Abbas Sadeghi headed a delegation to the European Court of Justice in Luxemburg, to emphasise the concern expressed previously in a letter signed to the court by tens of people over the action by the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) organisation against the Council of Europe.

The Court of First Instance will hear the case on Tuesday, 7th February, 2006. Mojahedin-e Khalq organisation lawyers will represent their client against the decision made by Council of Europe in 2002 to include the group in the European list of terrorist entities. The group claims 'breach of its rights of defence in that it was not given the opportunity to be heard before being included in the contested lists.'

The delegation on Thursday brought documents and evidence to the Court exposing the organisation's twenty five year history of financial, military, intelligence and terrorist cooperation with Saddam Hussein, and raised the concerns of many about what has apparently been a new, duplicitous move by the organisation in which their lawyers would declare to the court that:

As the forces of the MEK surrendered their arms to the Special Forces of the American Army during Operation Free Iraq, they have therefore rejected violent means to achieve their political aims since that date".

Mr. Sadeghi explained and produced documents and clear evidence to show that the MEK surrendered only after it was bombarded by allied aircraft and suffered severe casualties. He also emphasised that the disarmament took place only with coalition forces aircraft flying constantly over the military camps of the MEK.

Since its disarmament, the MEK has continued to depict its so-called "armed struggle" as the only possible way to struggle against the Iranian ruling regime, and has refused even to accept that there may be any other

means to achieve democracy and freedom in Iran.

The delegation went on to explain and produce evidence of countless cases of imprisonment, torture and murder of disaffected members under the full protection of Saddam's intelligence services, as well as cases of targeting civilians in Iran and elsewhere during armed attacks. The delegation also explained how the MEK, headed by Massoud and Maryam Rajavi, participated in the massacre of Iraqi Shiites and Kurds during their uprising against Saddam in 1991.

The delegation produced evidence which clearly show that the Mojahedin-e Khalq organisation and the National Council of Resistance (NCR) headed by Massoud and Maryam Rajavi, have, in their propaganda outlets as recently as a few months ago, publicly issued death sentences against their critics who are the citizens of European countries. Mr Sadeghi also referred to the clandestine activities of the 'Intelligence Section' of the National Council of Resistance (an alias which the MEK uses to hide the illegal activities of the military cult in the European Union), in particular in London and Cologne. One instance of such activity resulted in attacks against reporters who may have written negatively about the NCR and MEK. Another case led to the assault and injury of ex-members who have openly criticised the NCR and MEK.

The delegation emphasised that the answer to the MKO's lawyers who would claim the group has changed its strategy from violent means to peacea-

ble means, comes from the NCR leader Maryam Rajavi herself who told an LA Times reporter from Auvers-sur-Oise that:

...she declined to rule out armed intervention, saying, "The tactics and methods have been imposed not by us, but by the mullahs." (LA Times, February 01, 2006)

Mr. Sadeghi was welcomed and assured that the Court of First Instance would thoroughly consider all relevant information presented by both parties. He was also advised that should the Court of First Instance decide to progress the action against the Council of the European Union, then more documents should be submitted to its offices in Strasbourg, and an application should be lodged for the concerned parties to directly take part in the procedure through an appointed lawyer. Mr. Sadeghi said, "We will wait for the verdict on this case, which the MEK brought in 2002, and if necessary we will raise our own legal arguments in the Court. Our first issue will be whether the MEK's claim to have renounced violence is genuine by asking for the MEK to make a public statement accepting the dismantlement of its military Camp Ashraf in Iraq as a first step." Mr Sadeghi also said, "we hope the MEK will give up its cult practices before too long." ■

AVOIDING AN ERROR OF GREAT HISTORICAL PROPORTIONS

Saeed Hazrati, Iran-Pars, Canada

February 6, 2006

As a concerned Iranian, I am dismayed that the European Court is considering removal of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK/MKO) from the list of organizations participating in acts of terrorism and violence. The prospect of support for this group is not only a grave foreign policy error in the ongoing war on terror but a great dishonor to the victims of September 11th and a disgrace to the civilized world.

The MKO's terror record is extensive and includes assassinations of American citizens and widespread bombings in Iran throughout the 1970s. Following the revolution of 1979, the MKO claimed some credit for the seizure of the U.S. embassy and subsequent hostage taking, and later demonstrated against their release. In the 1980s and 1990s, the group conducted attacks against targets of the Iranian regime in countries such as Canada, Denmark, Italy, Spain and the United States. The MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base www.MIPT.org has recorded 16 verified incidents of terrorist activities by the

MKO, which resulted in a total of 80 injuries and 34 fatalities. Furthermore, the MKO acted as Saddam's private army and received millions of dollars in financial and military support from the Ba'athist regime and participated in the massacre of the Iraqi Kurds in an operation code named Morvarid, soon after the Iraqi army was evicted by coalition forces from Kuwait in 1991. According to Human Rights Watch May 2005 report 'No Exit', the MKO routinely imprisoned, tortured and executed its dissident members for either criticizing the MKO leadership or wanting to leave the organization.

Although Tehran's attempts to acquire nuclear technology, its efforts to fund radical groups in the Middle East, and its stifling of democratic currents in Iran need to be addressed through diplomacy and dialogue, European policy makers need to know that the vast majority of Iranians absolutely despise the MKO for taking sides with Saddam's Ba'athist regime during the Iran-Iraq war, therefore any shift towards a policy in support of the MKO would simply mean turning a pro-European Iranian public against the west; an error of great historical scale. ■

MARYAM RAJAVI'S GAFFE SABOTAGES MKO'S HOUSE OF LORDS PUSH

Iran-Interlink, February 9, 2006

Thursday February 9, 2006. In a debate on Iran, several members of the House spoke about the immediate problems concerning Iran, and British policy toward that country. But the main thrust of the debate was to lobby for the de-proscription of the MKO from the UK's list of terrorist entities.

As usual, the MKO's supporters portrayed it as democratic, defenders of human rights, active inside Iran, non-terrorist and the only opposition group of any note.

All of which are easily refutable with evidence already in the public domain. It appears that the MKO's supporters in the House of Lords are woefully ignorant as to the true nature of the organisation and in particular its leaders.

However this ignorance is not a unique phenomenon, it is also endemic among the neoconservatives' of the US Government.

Fortunately some members are not ignorant of the Mojahedin. Lord Phillips of Sudbury was able to bring real knowledge to the debate when he said:

"I should remind those who want to bring back the PMOI, give it support

and let it loose that it was harboured, supported and sustained by Saddam Hussein—scarcely the most benign of patrons. The idea that we could do that and encourage regime change in a way that will really bring about that for which we devoutly hope—a fully democratic Iran in which human rights are fully respected—is pie in the sky and a dangerous illusion."

Toward the end of the three hour

debate, the MKO's supporters became desperate for any mention of the MKO. Unwilling to leave Maryam Rajavi empty handed, Lord Taverne interjected:

"My Lords, the time allocated for the noble Lord's speech is running to an end. I hope that he will not ignore the point made by many speakers about the deproscription of the PMOI."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Triesman) replied:

"My Lords, I have not the smallest intention of doing so. I shall turn to that point immediately.

"It is clear that there is a range of concerns, and I hope that that will not turn into uncritical enthusiasm for groups opposed to the Iranian regime, particularly those calling for the repeal of proscription currently in place. The MeK, or the PMOI, now tends to describe itself as a democratic party wor-

king for human rights, but there has been a history of involvement in terrorism. I have looked at the balance of the information available. In 2001 there were two armed attacks for which it accepted responsibility. It was accused of a further armed attack in June 2002, about which it has said nothing.

"Let me bring us right up to date. In an interview with the LA Times in February this year, Maryam Rajavi was asked whether the use of violence was a PMOI option now and answered, "The tactics and methods have been imposed not by us, but by the mullahs".

"Some may say that that is ambiguous rather than direct, but noble Lords have provided interesting information about the new disposition of these groups—as they have described it. I am willing to look at this group in particular.

Fundamentally, of course, the whole of the question would need to be put to the review commission, although there are regular reviews. That is in the hands of the group itself. If it has things to say about a non-violent trajectory, that must be the way in which it carries it forward."

Read the debate in full at:

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldhansrd/pdvn/lds06/text/60209-04.htm#60209-04_head2 ■

"...WE ARE NOT GIVING ANY THOUGHT TO TAKING THEM OFF THE LIST"

State Department background briefing with two senior administration officials – as released by the State Department February 15, 2006

Q "...you know, last month they were members of the MEK; today they're the Coalition for Democracy in Iran, and they're still raising money that is suspected of going to the MEK?"

...

Mr. Erel: Last question.

Q To follow up on the Steve's question about unsavory characters and the MEK, there's kind of this unusual situation with the MEK that it's listed as a terrorist organization; you don't do business with them. But there are groups that are under different aliases aligned with the MEK, raising money in this country, individuals that are holding press conferences, that used to be members of the MEK that now have another name that are talking about

the nuclear issue. Could you kind of flesh that out? And is there any thought to taking MEK off the list? I'm not sure what their support is in Iran, but the diaspora around the world seems to have a very large following?

Senior Administration Official Two: Elise, I don't want to go beyond, you know, what our policy is which is that they're on the terrorist list. We consider them a terrorist organization, and we are not giving any thought to taking them off the list at this point.

Q But how do you reconcile the fact that there are members that use -- you know, last month they were members of the MEK; today they're the Coalition for Democracy in Iran, and they're still raising money that is suspected of going to the MEK?

Senior Administration Official Two:

You know, we're concerned about any activity that provides funds for terrorist organizations. And funds for the MEK would fall under that same rubric. Thanks.

Q And you're vetting these groups you're meeting? You're vetting these groups you're meeting with to make sure they don't have these MEK connections?

Senior Administration Official Two: Yes. Absolutely. We're vetting these groups to ensure that they don't have any unsavory connections, and not just the groups we meet with, but groups that we're going to be providing funds to. ■

Open Secrets

reformist government. Hojjat Zamani was deployed into Iran as part of this effort. Zamani was a member of a terrorist team sent by the MKO to plant a bomb at the Revolutionary Prosecutors Headquarters in Tehran. The bomb killed three people and injured twenty-two. After completing this mission, Zamani returned to the Mojahedin's bases in Iraq. Two years later, in 2001, Zamani was again deployed to Iran to carry out further mortar attacks. This time, Zamani's mortars hit a residential area. Zamani was arrested after this second operation. His arrest prompted wide ranging efforts to help him, including trying to get consent for his pardon from complainants (the families of the victims).

The Mojahedin recently released a statement which read: "In the summer of 2004, Hojjat had been sentenced to 4 times execution by the 6th chamber of injustice [sic] reactionary court of so-called Islamic Revolution. Then, in early 2005, a chamber of the Supreme Court, comprised of Mohseni Ezhei and Nabi Raji, sentenced him to two times execution and paying a full fine."

From an Iranian legal point of view, this change would have happened because two of the complainants in the case had agreed to withdraw their complaints.

During his imprisonment, Zamani was several times granted holiday leave from prison [times when prisoners are able to visit their families at home]. In the summer of 2003, taking advantage of one of these occasions, he absconded and escaped to Turkey. From there he made contact with the Mojahedin in Europe.

Zamani telephoned the MKO to declare his escape as a victory for the organisation.

Explaining that he had used his prison leave to escape, Zamani expected to be heralded as a hero by the MKO. But the reaction of the organisation was typical.

They told Zamani that they knew he

had become an agent of the regime and that this was merely a tactic – that the regime had sent him to Turkey as an agent to infiltrate the organisation. Zamani's action shows clearly that he didn't know or understand the Mojahedin or its ideology. On page 96 of the book written by one of the Mojahedin's founders to explain the organisation's ideology, it reads: "if we are not executed then we have not performed our responsibility as a Mojahed. We have to hit [the enemy] so far and so hard that they would have no choice but to execute us. That is when the enemy will have to answer for its actions."

It is obvious that for the Mojahedin, the only way was for the blood of Zamani, or anyone like him, to be shed. Otherwise the alternative would be to have more dissenting witnesses like Ebrahim Khodabandeh, Jamil Bassam or Marjan Malek and many others, who survived their captivity. The Mojahedin labelled Zamani as an agent of the regime, leaving him in a Catch 22 situation. Zamani had no other option but to go back to Iran and prove that he wasn't. Zamani was recaptured in Turkey – it is not clear how his whereabouts were discovered – and sent back to Iran and to prison. The Mojahedin's reaction to Zamani's escape from prison – that they accused him of being a traitor and returning him to Iran to be killed – is the direct translation of their ideology, which is that if you can't kill or burn others, then you must kill or burn yourself – above all, you must not survive. Your blood must be shed.

Why is it that Maryam Rajavi and other Mojahedin leaders do not protest the execution of Zamani by burning themselves in front of the Iranian embassy in Paris, or staging a hunger strike?

When the Mojahedin 'gave' Zamani back to Iran to be executed, they 'celebrated' his death by adding his name to the tragic list of people who have shed their blood for the Rajavis. While doing so there is no mention of the

deaths of the Moslem and Christian Iranians who were blown up by the bombs he planted.

Describing the deaths of its followers as "the price paid by the Iranian Resistance" conjures up the unsavoury image of Massoud and Maryam Rajavi with their 'bank' of 'living martyrs', deciding when and where and for what gain they should shed more of this blood. Ultimately, according to their own ideology, the price paid by such martyrs is for the continuation of the Rajavis quest for power, not the freedom of their people. ■

Did you know... that the Mojahedin's ideology dictates that its members should give their blood in order to confront the enemy?

On February 27, 2006 Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that on February 7th, Mojahedin-e Khalq (MKO) member Hojat Zamani was hanged inside Gohardasht prison in Karaj, although the execution was not confirmed until a week later. HRW says his trial did not meet international standards, because he had no access to his lawyers.

Zamani had been accused of involvement in a bomb explosion in Tehran in 1998 in which three people were killed and twenty-two injured.

In its publicity following Zamani's execution, the MKO was careful not to deny his involvement in the attack. It was never stated that he did not commit the act or had never taken part in such an attack. The MKO were also careful not to offer any statement of regret at the loss of life and the injuries caused by the attack. The Revolutionary Prosecutors Headquarters where the bomb was placed was, of course, a public place. The Mojahedin has been careful not to identify the victims killed in the bombing, who were members of the public attending court sessions.

Two were Muslim and the third, William Wigen, was a Christian Armenian Iranian.

In its praise for Hojat Zamani the Mojahedin described him as "deeply respected and very much loved for his character, his compassion and above all his dedication to the cause of Iranian people, freedom and democracy." Commentators, however, raise the fundamental question as to how it was possible for the Mojahedin to turn a rural teacher into a terrorist who showed callous disregard for the lives of his own people.

Looking more closely into the activities

of Hojat Zamani leading up to his eventual execution raises even more fundamental questions: was Zamani simply a terrorist, was he a popular hero, or was he too, like many others before him, another victim of the Mojahedin-e Khalq, the organisation of which he was a member?

It is reasonable to ask how it came about that Zamani's death, like that of so many before him, has served the MKO so precisely in its efforts to prove its 'opposition' credentials.

In its haste to add Zamani to the list of martyrs to its cause, the MKO wrote: "One of his friends described his death as a price paid by the Iranian Resistance in its campaign to stop mullahs' program to acquire nuclear weapons". Zamani is, for the Rajavis, a symbol of sacrifice. But this does not satisfactorily answer, who sacrificed him and for what?

For instance, Neda Hassani 'sacrificed' her own life through self-immolation to pressure the French government to release Maryam Rajavi from prison following her arrest on terrorism charges, not for freedom in Iran.

Karim Haghi of Payvand Association lays the blame for Zamani's death at the door of the MKO's leaders, Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. "The MKO leaders stupidly believe that the number of their victims gives legitimacy to the group. The organisation has claimed for more than two decades that it has 120,000 martyrs, while it has no evidence to prove this claim. "Massoud Rajavi did not express regret or sadness when 1,400 members and cadres of the Mojahedin were killed in his murderous Forough-e Javidan operation. In early and mid 1985, all of the MKO's operational teams were being knocked out by the Islamic

Republic because the regime had tapped their phones. In spite of these obvious failures, Massoud Rajavi still insisted on deploying more and more operational teams into Iran."

Haghi opposes the death penalty as inhumane, but affirms that Hojat Zamani was not a hero as the Mojahedin depict him. "He was a miserable man who killed his own compatriots due to the brainwashing of the leaders of the terrorist cult into whose hands he had befallen," said Haghi. "Such people need time, education and treatment", says Haghi. "Escaping from the trap and manipulations of the religious terrorist cult of the MKO needs time."

Zamani did not have the luxury of time and, as we have come to expect of the MKO, the death of Zamani has a more sinister side to it; one which the Mojahedin would not want publicised or revealed. His is a story which typifies the ideological beliefs of the Rajavis and their organisation.

In 1998, the Mojahedin had stepped up its bombing campaign following the election of President Khatami. Massoud Rajavi planned a series of terrorist attacks that would create fear and chaos in an effort to destabilise and ultimately overthrow Khatami's

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SURVIVORS' REPORT

Association for the Support of Victims of Mojahedin-e Khalq ©2006

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