

## WHEN WILL JUSTICE BE SERVED?

By Ebrahim Khodabandeh

June 2006



*Ebrahim Khodabandeh in Iran*

Three years ago, on Tuesday, 17 June 2003, over 1200 police officers carried out a huge raid in a Paris suburb. The target was a large complex of houses in Auvers-sur-Oise which had been turned into the international headquarters of the Mojahedin-e Khalq organisation (aka National Council of Resistance of Iran or NCRI). Up until March-April 2003, the Mojahedin/NCRI command centre had been in Iraq. It moved from there with the outbreak of war. Mojahedin co-leader Maryam Rajavi and about 160 of her closest aides were arrested during the raid.

In taking this action, France became the first Western country to take seriously the danger posed by the Mojahedin organisation (aka PMOI, MEK or MKO). The operation was aimed, according to the French Interior Ministry, above all, "at the leaders of an organisation which threatened public order and is planning or preparing to finance terrorist acts". Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin declared that the police operations were aimed, "at the central nervous system of a terrorist organisation". He made clear that, "it is in our national interest to make sure that all structures sheltering terrorists on our soil be dismantled." During an international meeting at the Prime Minister's office, Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior, emphasised that the materials seized at Auvers-sur-Oise justified the operation.

Immediately the MKO mobilised its supporters throughout Europe. They set off a well rehearsed series of actions which deeply shocked a European public opinion with little exposure to such extreme methods. French Government spokesperson, Jean-Francois Copé, characterised the self immolations as "obviously, extremely dramatic". He added, "Alas! It also tells us a great deal about the mindset of their leadership". The protests showed that the outright fanaticism of the MKO was true: that the denunciations of former Mojahedin who had escaped the organisation's clutches were reliable. These men and women had been speaking out for years about the internal practises of the MKO, yet they had been stigmatised by the leadership and their sympathisers as Tehran's agents.

Massoud Rajavi, the Spiritual Leader of the Mojahedin-e Khalq organisation, the Chairman of the National Council of Resistance (NCR), and the Commander-in-Chief of the National Liberation Army (NLA) found refuge first in France (1981) and then in Iraq (1986). He owes everything to Saddam Hussein: the funding of the NLA, arms and their training camps in Iraq, including their Headquarters in Camp Ashraf. The three to five thousand Iranian militants in the NLA operating from Iraqi territory, helped maintain a high level of tension with Iran. While no one is certain as to the whereabouts of Mojahedin leader Massoud Rajavi, his wife Maryam is the acting leader and practically the successor to her husband. This charismatic figure of the organization has been named "Future President of

# EDITORIAL



They were not in the Mojahedin's Iraqi camps under bombardment, nor were they in Europe being ordered to set fire to themselves to protest the arrest of MKO leader, Maryam Rajavi.

Although Rajavi's own arrest is the focus of Ebrahim's article, his and Jamil's situation is interesting in itself. For three years they have been in prison for acting on the orders of the Mojahedin cult and now, with their trial underway, a verdict is expected shortly.

Conversely, Maryam Rajavi and her leading cohorts are still awaiting trial in France on terrorism charges.

After three years the two stories could not have more different outcomes. Ebrahim, beyond the reach of the organisation's system of thought control, has become an outspoken critic of the Rajavi leadership.

Maryam Rajavi on the other hand still refuses to renounce violence as the only means at her disposal to achieve political power. Yet in spite of this, she continues to beg for the Mojahedin to be removed from global terrorism lists. Is she asleep? Is she dreaming? Or is she - as Maryam Khoshnevis describes Massoud Rajavi in her article 'Sleep-Stricken' - only pretending to be asleep so as not to be awoken from her dream of power.

Ebrahim worked in the Mojahedin's 'diplomacy' section and is known to many MPs in Britain and in Europe. Similarly, Massoud Banisadr will be known to many legislators in the USA. His interview with Mahan Abedin is one of the most revealing to have come out from a former member who once stalked the corridors of power on behalf of the Mojahedin.

When Rosemary Hollis of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, visited Iran, she spoke about western support

Three years ago this month the world was turned upside down for this month's lead contributor. It was in June 2003 that Ebrahim Khodabandeh and his Mojahedin colleague Jamil Bassam were extradited from Syria - following their arrest on smuggling charges - and imprisoned in Iran's notorious Evin. For their families it was a time both of distress and of a strange relief. At least now they knew where the men were.

for the organisation: "They have managed to get a very few irresponsible people, being MPs or others, to go along with them. These are very dangerous and ruthless people."

But while western supporters of the Mojahedin are certainly irresponsible, I don't believe this is sufficient to describe their support. Surely we want to know how and why, in defiance of all the documented evidence as well as the thoroughly researched assessments of their own governments, they come to support so obviously unsavoury a group.

While it might be possible to allege that some of the Mojahedin's supporters are 'paid' in some way, or it may be possible to conjure up some private or sponsored agenda behind their support, these arguments, again, are not sufficient. When all the world is agreed, why do a handful of individuals, who are not notable as rebels, turn their face away from all the available evidence, even the evidence of their own senses, and speak glowingly about a known terrorist organisation?

If we listen to former members, no matter what their role was inside the Mojahedin, one thing they agree upon unanimously; the Mojahedin operates as a cult. As it is known that one of the main characteristics of cults is that they employ known methods of psychological manipulation and thought reform, then it is reasonable to add to Dr Rosemary Hollis' description something from Ian Haworth's excellent introduction to cults, 'Cults, a practical guide'; "Too often rational people say, "It could never happen to me. I could never be recruited into a cult."...They do not realise that people do not 'join' cults, but are instead actively recruited... anyone can be recrui-

ted by a cult if they are not able to recognise the cult in advance and have the strength to walk away from it."

Why would members of parliament suspect that for years a dangerous cult has been able to openly and actively recruit in the very buildings where they make laws to protect the citizens of their countries? But Massoud Banisadr was just one of those recruiters - whether he was aware of it or not. And it would surely be naive to think that members of parliament cannot be recruited just by dint of their job. Indeed, because of their position, they are more likely to be targets for recruitment. As well as the core members which they use as dispensable slaves, a cult also needs recruits who can perform other activities on its behalf, people in positions of power, whether they be fundraising celebrities or legislating politicians.

Unlikely as it may seem, 'it really could be you'. ■



Iran" by the MKO.

Classified as a terrorist group by the State Department of the United States of America and by the British Government as well as by the Council of the European Union (since May 2002), the MKO is largely discredited today. It was based in Iraq since 1986 and suffered the full impact of Saddam Hussein's fall from power. Reality shows that the western governments were right all along. The accusation of terrorism is now accepted at the most authoritative international levels. "The People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI or MKO) planned to attack Iranian diplomatic missions in Europe", stated the Director of French Counter-Terrorism during a press conference. According to information gathered by this service (the DST), the Mojahedin organisation "was preparing for murder attacks outside Iran, including in Europe", stated the Director, Pierre de Bousquet de Florian. During the police search at Auvers-sur-Oise, "eight to nine million dollars in cash" was found, added the DST Director, before going on to state that the full accounting was still underway.

M. Bousquet de Florian confirmed that many MKO leaders had returned to France since the American intervention in Iraq, including Maryam Rajavi. "They had turned Auvers-sur-Oise into an operational headquarters for terrorism", he stated. The US intervention had "taken away the MKO's Baghdad Headquarters" as well as the financial support of Saddam's regime. The DST chief underscored how dangerous the MKO was. It was more like a sect, a cult of personality for Massoud Rajavi and his wife Maryam. In 2001, the MKO had claimed responsibility for more than 195 terrorist attacks on Iran from its base in Auvers-sur-Oise.

As Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the NLA, Maryam Rajavi had no hesitation in ordering armed attacks on Iran

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Three years after her arrest, Maryam Rajavi and her companions, out of jail and

on bail at present, are still awaiting their trial in Paris. The French judicial system alleges that they planned and funded terrorist operations. To understand the French case, we should review the organisation's misdeeds over the years in the process of its so-called struggle against the ruling system in Iran. Clearly, this case is not the sort that could easily be neglected. It must be dealt with

thoroughly and carefully. The reasons are as follows:

1. The internal relationships of the organisation and its cult status:

- The self-appointed, irremovable, lifetime leadership has unlimited power on decision making on every aspect of the organisational affairs including the most intimate personal matters concerning the members.
- The internal structure of the organisation is based on absolute totalitarianism. The spiritual leadership stays well above all, and is not to be criticised by anyone under any circumstances.
- An ongoing process of brainwashing, psychological coercion, and thought reform has been widely practiced inside the organisation under the direct supervision of Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. A range of very sophisticated physiological and psychological persuasive techniques have been used to engage the followers in conspiracy and fraud as well as the most bizarre acts such as self-immolation.
- Many people have been harmed and their rights have been abused by the organisation. Small children have been separated from their parents, families have been torn apart, and the possessions of the followers have been taken away. There are many psychological casualties still under treatment from the organisation's malfunctioning.
- The intimidation and harassment of critics inside (as well as outside) the organisation have become a common habit to silence dissenters. Defectors in particular have continuously been the subject of threats and character assassination.

2. The military, financial, and political relationship between the MKO and the deposed dictator of Iraq, Saddam Hussein:

- Video tapes acquired after the fall of Saddam Hussein clearly reveal that the MKO leaders and principally Massoud Rajavi received huge boxes of money

from the Iraqi officials, specifically the Security Services Chief Jaleel Tahir Habush, along with assassination orders to be carried out inside Iran.

- The National Liberation Army (the military wing of the organisation based in Iraq) has been financed, trained, facilitated, armed, and supplied with intelligence and ammunition by the Iraqi Army to counter the Iranian Armed Forces throughout the war between the two countries.

- Many ex-members of the NLA have given full statements bearing witness to how the organisation's military forces entered into the internal conflicts in Iraq; in particular suppressing the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south in 1991.

- According to many members of the organisation arrested inside Iran, they have been trained, facilitated and helped to cross the border by the Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Services to carry out assassinations and terrorist activities inside major cities in Iran.

- Many defected members have also witnessed that their discontented associates have been jailed, abused of their basic rights, tortured, and finally handed over to the Iraqi officials to be locked up in Abu-Ghraib prison under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship.

- It is worth considering that apart from being listed in various international terrorist lists, and being hated by the vast majority of the Iranian people for their cooperation with the enemy during the war, no government has ever supported the organisation in any form except for the Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein.

Of course the organisation has managed to gain the signatures of many members of parliaments (that is, the most uninformed politicians, especially in foreign affairs issues) in western countries on its petitions due to their lack of knowledge of the terrorist nature of MKO.

- According to many undeniable documents, the money collected in the USA and in Europe in the name of so-called charity and humanitarian institutes has been sent to Iraq (after its traces have been disguised by money laundering) to be used for the NLA on arms and military facilities.

- 3. The systematic contact between the organisation's HQ in Paris (the establishment formed in Auvers-sur-Oise under cover of the NCRI) and the NLA bases in Iraq:

- According to the DST press releases and statements as well as the French authorities' press conferences referring to the materials found inside the Organisation's Paris HQ, the two bases in France and Iraq have been closely and continuously linked using very sophisticated devices.
  - Documents clearly show that there is no distinction between the different establishments of the organisation and they are all run under the close leadership of the Rajavis.
  - It is also clear that all activities in Western Europe and Northern America, including the political, publicity, and financial performance of the organisation have been directly guided from Iraq.
4. Establishing fake societies and associations to cover the organisation's illegal financial and other acts and money laundering in western countries:
- The members of the organisation are clearly and directly told that the money collected in western countries for the cause of homeless and orphaned children is destined to be used for arms and other expenditures of the organisation.
  - The organisation has many institutions that do not reveal their nature and their dependence on the MKO, but they are all directed and instructed in their activities directly by Maryam Rajavi.
  - In particular, it should be taken into consideration that the MKO (PMOI), the NCRI, and the NLA are alias establishments and cannot and should not be

dealt with separately. They all have the same terrorist nature which is well theorised and justified for the participants. Bearing in mind the above mentioned facts which are only briefly highlighted, it is now worth asking where the people of western countries stand on this case. Should it be their concern at all? Today even the most rigorous opposition to the ruling Islamic system in Iran does not approve the methods and manners imposed by the MKO. The Iranian opposition as a whole truly believes that the organisation's so-called struggle has severely damaged their own efforts to restore democracy and freedom in Iran. The truth is that many offences have been committed behind the legal presence of the MKO in western countries. These could have been prevented if the case had been dealt with sooner when many members - who had been under enormous physical and psychological pressure from the organisation - ruptured from it and warned western authorities about the subject. Many have been harmed by and suffered from the organisation's actions throughout the world. Victims of the Rajavis can be found everywhere, both inside and outside Iran. And the international community certainly bears some responsibility for that. The organisation claims that all assassinations and sabotage activities had taken place inside Iran during their armed struggle against the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this way they aim to discard the terrorist charges. They argue that they

have never used arms inside western countries where they have been proscribed as a terrorist group. But in reality the MKO is surely a terrorist organisation by nature, and, without doubt, believes in using violence for achieving political purposes. According to the Mojahedin's beliefs, the end justifies the means. So they have no limitation, as they have shown through the years, against committing any sort of crime to reach their goals. It should also be considered that the mastermind of the organisation has always been situated either in Iraq or in Paris and all activities inside Iran have been directed from these two places over the past two decades. Much has been said about the crimes and misdeeds of the Mojahedin and all its related institutes. Now it is time for a small amount of action to be taken in order to show that the authorities, particularly in France, have taken the matter seriously. Any person who was assassinated inside Iran, any combatant who was self-eliminated by pulling the trigger of a hand grenade or taking a cyanide pill, or any youngster who was self-immolated, are all similar victims of this notorious cultic organisation which is led directly by unaccountable, irremovable leaders who were based in Iraq and have now moved to France. World public opinion, the many victims of the organisation, and the Iranian opposition want to see everything justly put to rights. They want to see an end to this situation which has been ongoing now for so many years. ■

#### Further reading:

Row	Name of the book	Description	Author	Translator into English	Date	Publisher
1	Autopsy of an ideological drift:	Analysis and background on the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran	Antoine Gessler	Thomas R Forstenzer		
2	The People's Mojahedin of Iran:	A struggle for what	Victor Charbonnier	Thomas R Forstenzer		
3	Patterns of Global Terrorism		US Department of State		2000	US Department of State
4	Amnesty International Report		Amnesty International		2002	Amnesty International
5	Saddam's Private Army:	How Rajavi changed Iran's Mojahedin from revolutionaries to an armed cult	Anne Singleton		2003	Iran-Interlink (UK)
6	Masoud: Memoirs of an Iranian Rebel		Masoud Banisadr		2004	SAQI Books
7	No Exit:	Human Rights Abuses Inside the Mojahedin Khalq Camps	Human Rights Watch		2005	Human Rights Watch

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Two High Ranking Mojahedin Return to Iran [Nejat May 3, 2006](#)

Nejat Association has reported the voluntary repatriation from Iraq of two high ranking members of the Mojahedin-e Khalq.

The two are named as Marzieh Ghorsi (aka Arezoo) and Siamak Hatami. Both flew into Mehraband Airport on Tuesday, May 2 accompanied by officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. They had been among the 3,800 Mojahedin members held in Camp Ashraf after the allied occupation of Iraq, before leaving the MKO and taking refuge in the American run TIFP.



*Previous group of Mojahedin repatriated by ICRC plane*



*Marzieh Ghorsi reunited with her son in Iran after ten years*

### We would never cooperate with Mojahedin Khalq Organisation of Iran

[Press Briefing by Scott McClellan and US Homeland Security Advisor Fran Townsend](#) [May 3, 2006](#)

Excerpt

...

MR. McCLELLAN: I'll be glad to take your question and take a look into it.

Go ahead.

Q There are numerous reports about low-intensity operations ongoing in Iran from three different places -- PKK going over the border into Iraq, the MEK southern border of Iraq into Iran, and also certain operations from Balochistan involving also the Pakistanis. Does the U.S. have a policy, given also reports which I know you won't comment on, on possible special forces operations in Iran? Does U.S. policy, based on the notion that an enemy of our enemy is our friend, consider changing its policy towards the PKK or --

MR. McCLELLAN: Our policies haven't changed on those organizations. They remain the same. And you're bringing up organizations that we view as terrorist organizations.

Q We would never cooperate with them, in terms of --

MR. McCLELLAN: Our policy hasn't changed.

### Bulgaria's Unit Assumes Ashraf Camp Control May 6 [Sofia News Agency](#)

Bulgaria's guarding unit will assume control over the Ashraf camp in Iraq on May 6, the Day of the Bulgarian Army, it appeared during a videoconference with Iraq Friday. The head of the unit lieutenant-colonel Marin Marinov told during the videoconference that so far Bulgaria's servicemen

were assisted by the Americans but as of May 6 they will guard the camp alone. Bulgaria's non-combat unit, which will perform tasks in a military-humanitarian mission at Camp Ashraf in Iraq was deployed in the camp area on April 11. The 153-strong contingent will be responsible for order and administration at the repatriation centre, for the escort of refugees in the camp, and will also guard facilities within its perimeter.



### Concerns Over MKO Terrorist Activity in World Cup [BBC Persian Service, May 6, 2006](#)

A senior German official said that Iranian leaders have meanwhile voiced concern that there might be plots to attack their national football side during the World Cup in Germany.

Bavaria's interior minister Günter Beckstein said that Germany's Interior minister has been informed of Iranian concerns.

Mr. Beckstein who was talking to a German newspaper didn't tell who maybe beyond attacks but reports quote him saying that Iranian opposition groups including MKO, which is on EU's terror list, maybe plotting for terrorist attacks. Iran's concerns are expressed at a time when the ministers of 16 states of Germany are going to hold a meeting on coordination of security measures.



Beckstein says the world cup matches could be target for terrorist attacks because of its popularity.

Günter Beckstein Bavarian Interior Minister

### Germany reaffirms Mojahedin's terrorist status [Payvand.com](#) [May 23, 2006](#)

Germany has reaffirmed the terrorist status of the MKO group in its 2005 terror report released by the German domestic intelligence service Verfassungsschutz on Monday. The report pointed to the fact the MKO (Mojahedin Khalq Organization) was "responsible for numerous (terrorist) attacks in Iran."

Berlin has so far resisted intense MKO pressure tactics to have the terror group removed from its official terror blacklist.



## Iranian Detainees Have Applied for Asylum

Unhcr.com

May 23, 2006

According to a recent report released by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on its Iraq operation, a number of Iranian detainees, Mojahedin-e Khalq members, kept at Camp Ashraf near Baghdad have applied for asylum. In a part of the report dealing with the issue of Iranian detainees under the objective of "Protection and assistance to refugees in Iraq" we read:

**Ashraf Facility:** Some Iranian detainees at this facility near Baghdad have applied for asylum.

UNHCR has been requested to verify their status and pursue solutions for those who qualify as refugees. Due to lack of access to Ashraf by humanitarian agencies, UNHCR has piloted the first Refugee Status Determination interviews using

video tele-conferencing facilities.

**Targets:** Some 180 asylum-seekers from Ashraf are interviewed in the first half of 2006, their status is determined and solutions are identified for those who are recognised as refugees.

## Blast Kills 11 Iraqi Laborers from Bulgaria-Guarded Ashraf

Sofia News Agency, May 29, 2006

Eleven Iraqis were killed and a dozen more were wounded in a volatile area north of Baghdad on Monday.

Police the Iraqis were travelling to work in the camp of Ashraf, which is guarded by a 120-strong Bulgarian contingent.

## EXPERTS AGREE – MOJAHEDIN ARE FINISHED

### "A very few irresponsible people go along with them."

A group of western analysts and experts on Iranian and Middle Eastern affairs visited Iran in early May.



The group met with some of the victims of Mojahedin terrorism in Iran. Here is what two of the delegates had to say.

**Rosemary Hollis**, Director of Research at the UK's independent Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), also known as Chatham House.

"I am very sorry to see the depth of these crimes committed by them [Mojahedin] and wish all of you who are exposing this and seeking justice good luck in achieving your goals.

"... the Mojahedin are well known everywhere nowadays. They do not have any real support in any country, but of course they try hard. You know that

they are in the list of terrorist entities in the UK and other countries so there is no contact from any governmental body with them and no European governmental person would accept to meet with them.

"They of course try under different names to mislead parliamentarians and NGOs. They even came to me. It was obvious they are mad people. They came to me but did not succeed. They have managed to get a very few



irresponsible people, being MPs or others, to go along with them. These are very dangerous and ruthless people."

**Mark Fitzpatrick**,

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nonproliferation Controls in the Bureau of Nonproliferation, The United States Department of State.

"The Mojahedin Khalq organisation in the list of terrorist organisations in the US. They have been disarmed and kept in a confined place. Iranians should not worry about their danger any more. They are being kept, like Al Qaida people, until they are dealt with, and do not pose any threat."



*Lord Corbett of Britain a veteran supporter of Maryam Rajavi*

## MOJAHEDIN IN IRAQ

### "Where did the Mojahedin find 12,000 lawyers in Iraq?"



## Women's Rights Violated in Mojahedin Camps

Maryam Al-Rais May 8, 2006

Maryam Al-Rais, former member of Iraqi parliament, member of Iraqi's Al-Vatan Community, political activist and a lawyer, talked about the MKO's deceptions under the name of "women" and how this group sometimes exploits Iraqi women:

"First, I should say that we also know this group as hypocrites not Mojahedin; the Iraqi people and government considers the group as a terrorist and unpopular organization and ask for its expulsion.

However, some Ba'athists and a number of groups tried to

initiate talks with the government on this group; they said the group was innocent, but the government rejected their claims and put the group in its terror list."

Referring to the efforts of some people in order to keep MKO in Iraq, Ms. Al-Rais said:

"The issue of Mojahedin-e Khalq won't be resolved by holding talks and conferences because they have used (and use) other means to achieve their goals. However, as a lawyer and activist, I believe that their presence in Iraq should be ended through legal ways."

Ms. Al-Rais criticized Mojahedin propaganda activities against Iraq's constitution and efforts to introduce it as being opposed to women's rights; particularly concerning the activities of Mojahedin-e Khalq that are aimed at accusing Shiites and attracting unaware and illiterate women and said:

"The Iraqi constitution is a modern law in which women's rights have been declared clearly. If hypocrites (MKO) and others who gather together under the name of "women's rights" were really concerned about women, they should have voiced their concerns when Saddam was in power.

I talked directly to those who had gathered on the issue of "women's rights" and on democracy and freedom.

What they said was really ridiculous. For instance, they talked about Hijab and I said that there was nothing about this issue in the constitution, or they talked about equal rights and I

answered that the constitution insists that women have equal rights with men. They claimed many other things that were a result of their ignorance. The Iraqi constitution leaves no place for such claims.

I should emphasize again that these people should have been concerned about these values when Saddam ruled Iraq if they are really concerned about them. The least of women rights are not observed in the MKO's own camps."

### Justifying their continued existence in Iraq

Saied Soltanpoor 6th May 2006

Day after day the Mojahedin issues propaganda to the effect that the Iraqis support Rajavi's organisation. They announced that 12,000 lawyers have supported the Mojahedin in Iraq and put adverts in the New York Times to say that 2,800,000 Iraqis have supported their remaining in Iraq...

In this regard, might I respectfully make the following points:

While we must congratulate anyone who lends his signature in support of freedom and democracy, are we to believe that these are people who do not know about the past and present of the Mojahedin and Rajavi?

Iraq is so unprotected and insecure that people don't even allow their wives and daughters out of their houses. In order to carry out elections there, American forces had to announce curfews and close all the roads. The numbers the Mojahedin publishes are highly suspicious, especially when they

have in the past justified any action which would help them against the so-called Khomeini regime (as they still call it). Adding a few notes does not even need justification for them when they announce over and over again that "in order to topple the regime we should even side with Satan".

Where I live in Canada (with a population of over 30 million) the number of lawyers who have some real effect in the day to day life of normal people is about 1400. Where did the Mojahedin find 12,000 lawyers in Iraq? In particular, lawyers who all support the Rajavis?

If 2,800,000 Iraqis and 12,000 Iraqi lawyers have supported the Rajavis (which counts for about 20 percent of the total votes in Iraq) why is it that this was not reflected in the Iraqi election for the constitution and in the parliamentary elections? Why is it that according to Rajavi's own speech, the supporters of the Iranian Islamic Republic, the Kurds and the Shiites have won the elections? ■



## SLEEP-STRICKEN

Maryam Khoshnevis

June 24, 2003



**It is said that you can wake a person who is asleep but you never can wake up someone who only pretends to be asleep.**

For many years, people have been trying to wake up Massoud Rajavi

because they think he is asleep; they sent him letters, they dared to criticize him, and in the end they thought that Rajavi's colleagues were preventing him from hearing the right voices because otherwise Mr. Rajavi is

a wise man.

They talked to him of rotten opinions and rotten weapons in new century; they reminded him that dissidents should not be sent to prison and should not be beaten; they said "why should we be mixed up in Saddam's affairs?" They shouted that rules should not be broken; they asked "why should obedience substitute for reason? What kind of organization is this in which relations are drawn according to the





rules of a cult?"

They said these words and their answer was pain, prison, torture and capital punishment... and Mr. Rajavi is still asleep!

Can we believe that he is asleep?

Absolutely not. If he knows the minimum (and I believe he knows this very well), he should not insist on ignoring all but his own way. But the real story is something different.

Mr. Rajavi only pretends to be sleep in order not be woken from his dream of power. He dreams of power at night and by day exercises with dictatorship - as the only lesson he has been

taught - so that he can go to sleep easily at nights. He witnessed the fall of Saddam's dictatorship but he didn't want to learn that the age of hoodlums has ended. He changed his master in order to preserve his dreams and in the hope of reaching the zone of 'new hoodlums' and also to keep himself from the revenge of the liberated Iraqis. If he was previously criticized by a few people, now he is being criticized by world public opinion, which asks him,

"what kind of organization is this in which the cost of your being sleep-stricken should be paid by the self-immolations of some or the imprisonment of yet others ...? Why do you live by the blood of others? You have acted so that France calls your organization a cult which only remains alive by resorting to hysterical methods!" Mr. Rajavi, there is no doubt that even those who support you now will sooner or later regret doing so because sowing seeds in a desert is useless. ■



## DISSENT AND DEFECTION: AN IRANIAN CONFESSION

An interview with Massoud Banisadr

by Mahan Abedin



Mahan Abedin

Interview first published by Asia Times Online, May 18, 2006

**"First and foremost, it is important to understand that physical separation from a cult might happen overnight, but emotional, spiritual and, most important of all, ideological separation needs time and hard work."**

Masoud Banisadr is an Iranian historian and political analyst. He is a former senior member of the Iranian opposition group the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MEK), and was its representative in the United States from 1990-96. Banisadr left the MEK in June 1996 and has lived in London since. He finished his PhD research in chemical engineering and engineering mathematics at

Newcastle University in 1981. Banisadr's book *Masoud: Memoirs of an Iranian Rebel* is widely regarded as the most authoritative ideological exposition of the MEK. The MEK, which in some countries, including the US, has been placed on a terror watch list, has been based since 1986 in Iraq. It has been backed in the US by right-wing lawmakers, hardline neoconservatives and



retired military officers, among others, who believe the MEK could be used to help destabilize the Iranian regime, if not eventually overthrow it in conjunction with US military strikes against selected targets. This interview was conducted on May 10 in London.

Mahan Abedin: This June will mark the 10th anniversary of your defection from the MEK. What is your feeling toward this organization today?

Masoud Banisadr: I am sad for the organization's members and supporters and those who lost their lives on this path. I am also sad to see the organization in its current state, when they are fighting for survival and have abandoned all their original core principles. At the same time, I am happy that I have at last freed myself of them, physically, emotionally and ideologically. When I left the organization I did not have a deep understanding of what was wrong with it. After 10 years I am confident I know what went wrong.

MA: And what is wrong with them?

MB: We were attracted to the organization for two reasons: its sacrifices during the struggle against the shah's regime and its sincere commitment toward the Iranian people. By changing from an ideological and political organization into a cult with a political agenda, the Mojahedin[-e-Khalq] fully disconnected themselves from this heritage. Many Iranians do not understand the concept of a "cult". This is partly rooted in language; the word "cult" is *firqah* in Persian and as such it has no negative connotations. When hearing the word *firqah*, Iranians immediately think of innocuous Sufi orders, so they don't fully appreciate the implications of this word.

The MEK is a cult in the conventional sense of the word, and as such it has no respect for the values to which it was originally committed. The organization had five original goals and aspirations for the Iranian people: (1) independence; (2) freedom (as in individual rights); (3) democracy; (4) progress and social justice, including some elements of socialism borrowed from Marxist-Leninist ideology; (5) Islamic culture.

When it changed into a cult, the interests of the cult entirely eclipsed those of the country and the people.

To advance the interests of the cult, they were prepared to collaborate closely with the worst enemies of the country, in particular Saddam Hussein, thus jeopardizing our independence.

A cult that is deeply committed to an "ideological leadership" cannot believe in equality, social justice and democracy. The first rule of membership in a cult is sacrifice of personal individuality; therefore a cult cannot believe in Western concepts of freedom and democracy based on individualism. Merit and personal ability are prerequisites for progress in any realm, but in a cult where lack of individuality and blind obedience toward the guru are conditions of membership and promotion, real progress is impossible.

For instance, despite the proliferation of talent, the Mojahedin have been unable to solve their financial problems, thus relying on Iran's enemies for funding. The Mojahedin's deeply rooted cult culture came to the fore in June 2003 when Maryam Rajavi and dozens of her closest advisers were detained by French counter-terrorism police. The Mojahedin's response was to encourage their members to set themselves on fire in major Western capitals.

How can you justify this level of submission and servitude toward another human being within the framework of Islamic monotheism? The real tragedy is the Mojahedin's acceptance that all their sacrifices and commitment [are] to the leadership and no other entity. This, by itself, highlights the depth of their ideological decline and is a stark reminder of their abandonment of all original values and objectives.

MA: How do you assess the MEK's activities against Iran's nuclear program?

MB: This goes back to the most important value outlined above, namely independence. When it was formed back in the 1960s, the organization was a vociferous champion of Iranian independence, but since its transformation it is exclusively preoccupied with the interests of the cult rather than the country. It was this transformation that led it to cooperate with Iran's national enemy Saddam Hussein, and is now leading it to side with those who want to

sabotage Iranian aspirations for a peaceful nuclear program.

MA: But some people say the MEK has provided a valuable service by exposing aspects of Iran's nuclear program, not least the August 2002 exposure of the Natanz and Arak facilities.

MB: Despite being a cult, the organization has a distinct political agenda, and it uses a variety of methods to promote that agenda. For instance, it is well known for gross exaggerations and downright fabrications.

MA: But on that occasion its exposure proved accurate. My question is whether the MEK is providing a valuable service to international stability by exposing aspects of the country's nuclear program that the Iranian government wants to conceal.

MB: The Iranian nuclear program - as long as it remains peaceful - is a truly national aspiration regardless of the nature of the Iranian government. This is a national asset, and as such it belongs to all Iranians.

Given this state of affairs, the MEK's activities are treacherous through and through. Even if there is any truth to its propaganda, every sensible and conscientious Iranian is well aware of our country's military weakness, vis-a-vis the Western powers and our immediate neighbors.

Moreover, every sensible observer knows that Iran has not committed a single act of aggression in the past 200 years and has, in fact, been invaded by a coterie of Western and regional enemies. Given this state of affairs, I don't think many Iranians would object to possessing nuclear weapons for defensive purposes.

MA: You have recently given media interviews, and the MEK has hit back through character assassination. I refer specifically to your interview with the Persian service of Radio France. How do you assess its reaction to your interviews?

MB: Well, they are very predictable in this regard. I am happy that they are showing such reaction because it vindicates my decision to leave the organization. If their reaction was any different, I would have doubted myself and my achievements in the past 10 years.

MA: What does it hope to achieve by these character assassinations?

MB: Since their transformation to a cult in the past two decades, their only interest is to advance the interests of the cult. So whatever they do is guided by this central goal. Their first priority is to safeguard the reputation of their "Guru" (Masoud Rajavi), and they do this by labeling any dissident member as a traitor and agent of the Iranian government. This is standard procedure for them.

MA: What do you think the MEK's reaction to this interview will be?

MB: (Laughs) Probably the same as always!

MA: But your critics do raise an interesting point, namely that you left the organization 10 years ago and for most of that period you were politically inactive. It is only recently that you have come out to defend yourself and criticize the organization. How do you explain the long years of silence?

MB: That is a very good question. First and foremost, it is important to understand that physical separation from a cult might happen overnight, but emotional, spiritual and, most important of all, ideological separation needs time and hard work. I had to understand what had happened to me. I had to get to know myself all over again. Don't forget that I was a member of a cult and had spent more than 15 years suppressing my personality.

When I left in June 1996, my personality had been reduced to virtually nothing, and I needed time to recover from this trauma. I had to understand what had attracted me to the MEK in the first place, and this led me to review the organization's history and ideology all over again. I had to go through this journey to be able to explain to myself, my children and whoever wants to know, what went wrong. I am afraid I feel that some of those who have left the organization and are currently engaged in a single-minded struggle against it are (despite appearances to the contrary) still trapped in the Mojahedin's ideological cosmos. They are still living in the bipolar and black-and-white world of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq. It seems that their opposition to the Mojahedin is more born out of personal grudges than a desire to expose the organiza-

tion for its betrayal of our people. Furthermore, their activism (against the Mojahedin) is not even effective. It serves to make ordinary supporters more committed to the organization. MA: Curiously the Mojahedin did not attack you for writing the book. But they started an onslaught of character assassinations when your book was translated into Farsi. Why is that?

MB: The book (in its English version) was published about two years ago. When it was translated into Farsi, it became immediately accessible to ordinary supporters. The Mojahedin were terrified of the prospect of supporters questioning them because of the contents of the book. You should note that ordinary supporters (as opposed to members and cadres) are more valuable to the organization as their support is more effective and doesn't cost much financially. Furthermore, holding on to them doesn't require significant organizational effort. I believe the ordinary supporters are the real members of the Mojahedin, as they have not been forced to change their personality and individuality. Therefore, their support is truly meaningful. This is in stark contrast to the members who had to change into a new person to be able to remain fully committed to the organization.

Moreover, members have to be supported financially and have to be kept under constant ideological surveillance, to prevent them from "rediscovering" their old personalities.

MA: Have you now completed the journey of self-discovery?

MB: There is now much more clarity. But on rare occasions I find myself exhibiting some old organizational behavior. The difference is that I recognize this instantly and fight it accordingly.

MA: Let us now discuss anti-Iran lobbying in the US. You spent many years as the MEK's main representative to the US and developed impressive lobbying skills in the process. Please summarize your insights.

MB: First you have to understand the American system. I don't know how much Asia Times Online readers understand the American foreign-policy establishment. Direct and intensive lobbying has a lot of influ-

ence on the key foreign-policy centers in the US, in particular the Senate and the House of Representatives. As for the State Department, the NSC [National Security Council], the administration, Pentagon and the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], lobbying takes the form of common interests. There is a lot of common interest between some of these centers, in particular the Pentagon, and exiled Iranian opposition outfits, regardless of the meager weight of these organizations. But insofar as the Congress is concerned, you need conventional lobbying power.

MA: Explain what you mean by lobbying power.

MB: There are three components: numbers of constituents, money, and organizational strength. There are basically two anti-Iran lobbies in the US. The first belongs to the supporters of the former monarchical regime and the second to the Mojahedin. Both lobbies are very weak and would be completely ineffectual were it not for the support of the pro-Israel lobby. To take a hypothetical case, if you need 1,000 lobbying units to influence Iran policy in the US Congress, 999 of these are provided by the pro-Israel lobby or the American administration, and the remainder by the weak and fragmented exiled opposition. Those 999 units constitute the weight and the one unit provided by the exiled opposition brings a fig leaf of legitimacy to these anti-Iranian activities. It also enables the pro-Israel lobby in the US or other American entities to claim there is effective opposition to the Iranian government.

MA: Explain the dynamics in the MEK-Israel lobby relationship.

MB: If there is an anti-Iran petition on the table in the Congress, the two lobbies would work hand-in-hand to promote it, without necessarily communicating directly.

MA: Are the two lobbies organizationally linked?

MB: To give you an example, we knew which members of Congress were influenced by AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee], so when we needed signatures we'd go to these congressmen first.

AIPAC has a lot of weight in Congress, and without having to communicate

with them directly, we benefited enormously from their deep influence. We also copied their lobbying techniques. Consequently the Mojahedin's lobby in the US is organizationally strong but it lacks the two core elements I outlined earlier, namely numbers and money. They have a tiny constituency among Iranian-Americans, and even with the addition of imaginary names and addresses they cannot deliver votes or similar political advantages to congressmen. It also lacks an independent financial base. Much of its funding came from the former Iraqi regime.

MA: Your claim that there were no direct contacts between the MEK and the pro-Israel lobby is undermined by the organization's intensive and very direct cooperation with the "Iran Policy Committee", which seems to be a spin off of AIPAC. There are also regular media reports alluding to direct MEK-Israel ties.

MB: I would not be surprised if these links existed. As I said earlier, the MEK is exclusively motivated by the interests of the cult, and as such it will cooperate with any constituency. If there is any hesitation in collaboration, it stems from Israeli reluctance, since the Mojahedin, because of its close relationship with the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], is not fully trusted by the Israelis. On the other hand, from an Israeli perspective, the MEK is the only viable tool against Iran.

Monarchists are deeply divided and lack organization. However, Western and Israeli intelligence are well aware of the MEK's limitations. They are perfectly aware of the cult nature of the organization and know that it has - at most - around 5,000 members and active sympathizers (most of whom are stranded in the Ashraf camp in Iraq) and are in no position to seriously threaten the Iranian government. This factor - coupled with the organization's cult-like and totalitarian ideology - dissuades the US State Department from working with them.

To put it simply, the Americans do not trust Mojahedin-e-Khalq, for they know they have no principles, save the interests of the cult. This is why, despite all the efforts of the organization in the past quartercentury,

they have not been able to pass a single substantial resolution in support of the organization in Congress. Note also that the US government regards the Mojahedin as a terrorist organization and does not want to create another al-Qaeda.

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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.

This article has been shortened. To read the full version, refer to this link:

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/HE18Ak01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HE18Ak01.html)

Mahan Abedin ■

## Destroyed Dwellings

Then one day, on the order of Mitra Rahimi, Reza's personal cupboard was forced open without his knowledge and his personal family pictures, including pictures of his wife and his children, were removed.

These pictures had been the last things remaining for Reza. He would spend hours every day looking at them. Now he did not even have the opportunity to look at their pictures and cry for his wife and daughter.

In the Mojahedin ideology even thinking about them was a crime, a betrayal of Massoud and Maryam and

...

Some time passed. Reza could not do any work in my section and they transferred him to the television section of the organisation where he was expected to work as a photographer, camera man and makeup man. This was work he had been doing before joining the Mojahedin. This was where Reza was supposed to forget his family, his past and his memories.

In 2004 I saw Reza once again in Ashraf camp. His face had broken down. His back was clearly bent. But that was it and he had not changed otherwise. His eyes would give you the whole story of his years of suffering. There was no sign of Massoud and Maryam's Ideological Revolution in him and no sign of any energy that he would be willing to expend for the Mojahedin. Fear and a defeated lack of courage were visible in him. He was clearly waiting for a rescuer who could get him out of the hands of Mojahedin. A rescuer who could help him look for his wife and children. Deep in his eyes I saw the light of such a hope.

\* *The subject's name has been changed to protect his identity.* ■

# DESTROYED DWELLINGS: REZA

May 21, 2006 France.

**The time between 1990 and 1992 was one of the most difficult periods for any one of the members of Mojahedin Khalq Organisation who were in Iraq. Hardly anyone could remember a more difficult time in their lives.**

The Ideological Revolution of Massoud and Maryam Rajavi had started to be advertised for from early 1990. Little by little all the work which could have been stopped was stopped or at minimum work became half time. All the members were required to give their time to familiarising themselves with both the Ideological Revolution and Maryam. Everyone was required to enter into a sort of contract with her, by which they would divorce their spouses, leave all their belongings, homes, and even children in a bid to replace their past motivation, love and affection with love for Massoud and Maryam. This was demanded as the first step towards understanding Massoud and Maryam and getting closer to the ultimate truth and belief. About 18 hours out of every 24 would be spent in meetings, discussions and briefings about the Ideological Revolution, and this went on and on for many months.

Many Mojahedin have now been through the revolution and have "passed" and been accepted. Many others remained critical and eventually announced their distance from the organisation. Of the latter, some managed to run away and reach the outside world, and get political asylum in Europe and elsewhere, and some ended up in the detention centres and prisons of the Mojahedin or in Iraqi camps and prisons. It was a really hard time.

In 1991, after Saddam's military had attacked Kuwait and the war with the Americans was at its highest point, Saddam was on the brink of collapse. And the Mojahedin, in order to help prevent the collapse of the Iraqi dictator, had captured practically all the cities in Diyali province as well as some parts of Kirkuk using tanks, artillery, missile systems and by massacring local Iraqi Shiites and Kurds. Some members who had been witness

to the atrocities committed by the Mojahedin started to raise their voice but with no outcome except brutal suppression.

One of these voices was that of Reza about whom I am about to explain. In 1990, when I was responsible for all the repair centres of the Mojahedin's army vehicles in Iraq, I met Reza when he was sent to work for me. Reza had been an employee of Iran's television service before joining the Mojahedin and now in the Mojahedin's army, he was carrying out body work and painting on military vehicles.

He was one of the people who had resisted the Ideological Revolution of Massoud and Maryam Rajavi and would not cooperate. His wife and three children had already been separated from him. They had also been critical of the Ideological Revolution and that is why they had been sent to a European country without Reza. His wife, under enormous pressure, had practically lost her mind and Reza was, in effect, taken hostage in Ashraf camp in Iraq to do whatever the Mojahedin demanded of him, including work he had no knowledge of or training for. A few years passed. In 1993 Reza received a message through a supporter, a courier who used to come and go from Germany to Iraq. The message was clear; his wife and daughter were regularly seen in restaurants and bars known as hangouts for prostitution, and the family he knew did not exist any more.

Reza almost fainted on the spot. It was a huge mental blow and he ended up being kept in the Mojahedin's hospital for the coming week. The acting commander at the time, a woman called Mitra Rahimi, then called for him so as to investigate his demands. Reza, considering the previous break-up of his family and this latest news, had asked the organisation to be allowed to go back to Europe in an attempt to save

what was left of his family.

The response of organisation was not only to refuse to allow him to leave but to place even more pressure on him because he had been thinking about the past, and about his family, instead of accepting total devotion to Massoud and Maryam Rajavi and the Ideological Revolution they had brought for him. He was accused of withholding his emotions from Massoud and Maryam Rajavi and wasting it on an undeserving family. He was accused of resisting the revolution, of denying that the sun shone, of insisting he would not divorce his wife, and of wasting his energy on things except Massoud and Maryam. Reza would never get engaged in these accusations and would simply reply, "I want to get my life back and my family. I joined the Mojahedin with my wife and children. I need them and I want them".

Reza in this peculiar world of contradictions and nonsense could not even carry out the simplest of tasks, and day by day would sink more and more. He would now smoke over two packs of cigarettes a day and was becoming more and more agitated. His actions and even his face were completely changed. Child like actions were becoming a common feature in his day to day life.

## SURVIVORS' REPORT

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

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