

ParsBrief

Number 12

11. March. 2005

- Over 230 of Rajavi's hostages requested ICRC to return home
- More than 230 members of MEK returned home
- MKO Deserters Speak Out
- They have no place in Iran
- German police bans MKO rally in Berlin over fears of violence
- Dozens rejected at Canada-U.S. borders over terror links
- Iranian Opposition Group Seeks Legitimacy In US



NO: 12

www.nejatngo.com

11. Mar. 2005

Over 230 of Rajavi's hostages requested ICRC to return home

Iran Interlink

26th Feb. 2005

Yesterday Friday, 25th February 2005, an official of the ICRC in Geneva informed Iran Interlink that over 230 individuals - former members of the Mojahedin - have attended a meeting in the ICRI office in Baghdad to formally request to be freed and repatriated to Iran. These individuals will be transferred in three or four groups and reunited with their families said the ICRC official.

This group represents a small portion of hundreds of Rajavi's hostages who have escaped from the Mojahedin's hegemony and have taken refuge with the American Army.

Since January, Iran Interlink has gathered signatures to petition the ICRC to help free MKO members in Iraq. The petition can be found on the Home page of the website. Already, an unexpectedly large number of signatures and letters from both Iranian and non-Iranian supporters of human rights have been gathered. These are being forwarded on a weekly basis to the ICRC.

The ICRC official also told Iran Interlink off the record: "We now have a clearer picture of conditions in Ashraf camp. We have evidence that... suggests there may be a lot more people who are staying within the organisational hierarchy essentially against their will. We have been sent a large number of petitions, letters and contact - not only from the families of these people, but from people all over the world.

"They have been given protected person status under the Fourth Geneva Convention and we are talking to the US forces who are protecting them. We hope that eventually we will gain unfettered access to all the detainees in Ashraf camp."

More than 230 members of MEK returned home;

Nejat Society reported; more than 230 members of MEK who were installed in Camp Ashraf, separated from the group and were kept in Ashraf Camp. These separated members returned

home with the assistance of International Red Cross via two stages on March 9th and February 28th in the groups of 100 and 132 and were delivered to their families.

MKO Deserters Speak Out

Fars News Agency, January 16, 2005

Among 13 former MKO members who have returned to Tehran, there are two brothers and a brother and sister.

Ronak and Shahram Dashti (sister and brother), Mehdi and Mostafa Rajabi (brothers), Alireza Bahri, Ali Moradi, Nader Bani Farahani, Ali Amani Saheb, Ghorban Heydarnia, Hussein Morad Ali Nia, Ardeshir Darvishi, Habiballah Almasi, and Farhad Shirani constitute the third group of MKO members who return to the country with the assistance of international Red Cross.

Ronak Dashti, with her brother and two of his friends, were going to leave Iran for Europe. In Turkey, her uncle (supporter of MKO) took them to MKO's camp in Iraq.

She says: "They separated me from my brother and others and sent me to Iraq under the name of Italy's train and then I was transferred to Camp Ashraf."...

Referring to the suffocating situation of MKO and psychological tortures applied, she said: "people inside the organization have no contact with outside and, even when there were talks of interview with US State Department, they admitted me in the hospital as psychopathic and Americans eventually took me out of there by force."

Dashti claims that no one believes in the organization except Masoud and Maryam Rajavi and all the members are being kept there by force.

"A number of women entered the camp after me but they didn't know what was happening in the camp. They talked of some ideological issues they didn't believe in. They forced members to give pledges under psychological pressures."

Dashti says during 3 years in the camp she met her brother only 4 times. "We met two times for ten minutes. After this short time, they asked me about what we said and what we saw."

Mehdi Rajabi another former member of Mojahedin said: "although they always said that we would be prosecuted in the case of returning to Iran, we still tried to escape."

28 other MKO members have returned to Iran during past few weeks.

They have no place in Iran

International Herald Tribune - Letters

Tuesday February 2, 2005

The International Herald Tribune - Op-Ed Contributor page quoted Maryam Rajavi - who is fronting the National Council of Resistance of Iran on her husband's behalf as he is in hiding in Iraq trying to evade prosecution for crimes against humanity and war crimes - as saying: "the best option [for the world] is to initiate change through the Iranian people and the organized resistance movement."

The item brought this response:

This terrorist organization is headed by Maryam Rajavi . Their history clearly indicates that they committed crimes against the Iranian people and how they allied themselves with one of the world's cruelest dictators, Saddam Hussein.

This terrorist organization has no support among the Iranians. They have no place in Iran.

Amir Naghshineh-Pour, San Diego, California

German police bans MKO rally in Berlin over fears of violence

IRNA, February 10, 2005

Berlin, Feb 10, IRNA -- German police has banned Thursday`s rally by the MKO terrorist group in Berlin, fearing possible violent acts by the Iraqi-based group, a police spokeswoman told IRNA.

"The demonstration was cancelled by police because they had doubts about the peaceful slogans of the rally which was supposed to be about Iran`s human rights situation and its nuclear program," she said.

The MKO gathering was supposed to begin at noon in downtown Berlin.

She pointed out that MKO supporters have been told via police loudspeakers that the rally has been banned and that they have to leave the demonstration site. Refusal to heed police orders could lead to subsequent arrests, the spokeswoman added.

The MKO is on the official terrorist list of the German government.

Dozens rejected at Canada-U.S. borders over terror links

Associated Press -- OTTAWA - Dozens of people from Canada have been turned back at the U.S. border or prevented from boarding U.S.-bound airplanes in recent months because of suspected links to terrorism, sensitive U.S. government documents show.

The incidents are detailed in a series of daily briefs published between September and this month by the Department of Homeland Security's operations center. They contain no classified information but are generally intended to remain secret.

The briefs reveal details of numerous individual cases and provide insight into the close co-operation between Canadian authorities and the U.S. security department...

...25 Canadians with possible links to Iran's opposition Mujahedin e-Khalq military force were stopped November 19 while trying to attend a Washington D.C. protest rally. The State Department has classified the group as a terrorist organization.

Iranian Opposition Group Seeks Legitimacy In US

Associated Press

24 February 2005

WASHINGTON (AP)--A cult to some and freedom fighters to others, the National Council of Resistance of Iran and its affiliate groups typify the gray areas in the often black-and-white world of the war on terror. While they've been designated foreign terrorist organizations by the U.S. State Department, the groups' members still maneuver between the restrictions aimed at disabling them.

The organization's former U.S. representative freely walks the streets and has a contract with Fox News as a foreign affairs analyst. Lawmakers write letters on the group's behalf. And former intelligence officials say the group maintains contacts in defense circles, although the Pentagon denies it.

The former U.S. representative for the council, Alireza Jafarzadeh, says the U.S. government listed his organization as terrorists to appease moderate elements within the Iranian government. He's hoping the Bush administration will lift the terrorist designation...

The mission of the National Council and its military wing - the Mujahedin-e-Khalq or MEK - is to overthrow the Iranian regime, an aim increasingly in line with the Bush administration. Yet the administration has stopped short of calling for regime change.

In last month's State of the Union speech, President Bush called Iran "the world's primary state sponsor of terror." In Europe this week, he maintained the pressure, calling suggestions that the U.S. is preparing to attack Iran "simply ridiculous," but quickly adding, "having said that, all options are on the table."

Yet the MEK is far from a U.S. ally.

As soon as the State Department created a list of terror organizations in 1997, it named the MEK, putting it in a club that includes al-Qaida and barring anyone in the United States from providing material support. By 1999, the department designated the MEK's political arm, the National Council of Resistance, and related affiliates.

The State Department says the MEK groups were funded by Saddam Hussein, supported the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and are responsible for the deaths of Americans in the 1970s.

Despite the listing, the council and a related offshoot continued to file foreign agent registration documents with the Justice Department, cataloging meetings with dozens of members of Congress, media interviews, rallies and speeches.

It saw successes. In 2002, 150 members of Congress wrote a letter to the State Department advocating the organization be removed from the terror list.

But 2003 was a rocky year. After Saddam was toppled, the administration struggled with how to handle MEK fighters detained at training camps in eastern Iraq. They were eventually disarmed, but remain in limbo today at the camps.

In August of that year, the State and Treasury departments also froze the council's assets and shut down their Washington offices, blocks from the White House.

A State Department official said U.S. policy toward the MEK and its affiliates has not changed. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the group is still considered a threat because of its history of launching terrorist attacks.

Some, including Kenneth Katzman, a Middle East specialist at the Congressional Research Service, say they don't consider the group to be the most dangerous to U.S. interests. "I don't see evidence that they purposely target civilians," said Katzman, who provides analysis to lawmakers.

But others find the sometimes soft approach to the MEK alarming. Further complicating the issue, the report from the top U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq said the group received oil as part of the scandal-tainted oil-for-food program, earning it millions of dollars in profits.

The MEK calls the appearance of its name in seized documents a smear campaign.

As U.S. focus on Iran increases, some wonder whether the MEK will play a role. A former senior intelligence official said some in the Pentagon see the MEK as a potential ally in their efforts against the Iranian regime.

But a defense official denied contacts with the MEK are occurring. Michael Rubin, who used to handle Iran issues at the Pentagon, said those he knew there hated the group.

"Even if they are not terrorists, although I believe they are, any group that tells its members who to marry and when to divorce, the United States should not be doing business with. They are very cult-like," Rubin said.

Rubin notes that, while council officials revealed the existence of two secret Iranian nuclear sites in 2002, they nevertheless have an inconsistent intelligence record, often getting information "dead wrong."

Yet the council's former U.S. representative, Jafarzadeh, highlights the intelligence successes as evidence that the U.S. should support the Iranian opposition and advocate a policy of regime change in Iran. In an hour-long presentation this month, he laid out details of Iran's nuclear program at an intelligence conference in Northern Virginia.

"There is a lot of serious searching, to find the best options in dealing with Iran," he said. "I can sense it in different government agencies. I can sense it among the think tanks. I sense it among the U.S. Congress."