

ParsBrief

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- Two defectors of Rajavi's cult repatriated
- Statement on Responses to Human Rights Watch Report on Abuses by the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO)
- MKO, A Threat Against Iraq
- "we are not giving any thought to taking them off the list"
- SECRETARY RICE: MKO, Awful Terrorists
- Opposition a stick against Tehran?



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Two defectors of Rajavi's cult repatriated

Nejat Society Reporter – Mehr Abad Airport Tehran

Two defectors of Rajavi's Cult returned, being under pressure since long ago could join American camp and by cooperation of IRC they returned to their homeland and welcomed.

Here we state the names:

- 1- Mohammad Reza Chovari
- 2- Faraj Allah Aghaiee

When the two defectors arrived Iran, through an interview declared that a large number of members in the cult are seeking a way to escape from the camp and separate from Rajavi's cult since the depression atmosphere and suffering treatment rule the camp.

Statement on Responses to Human Rights Watch Report on Abuses by the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO)

HRW, May 2005

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/02/15/iran12678.htm>

In May 2005, Human Rights Watch issued a report on alleged human rights abuses committed by an Iranian opposition group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO/MEK),¹ inside its military camps in Iraq from 1991 to February 2003, prior to the fall of Saddam Hussein's government. The report, No Exit: Human Rights Abuses Inside the MKO Camps, detailed allegations by twelve former members of the MKO who told Human Rights Watch of a range of physical and psychological abuses they had suffered and witnessed.² In addition, the report made use of the published memoir of the MKO's former chief diplomatic representative in Europe and North America, Masoud Banisadr.

Following publication of this Human Rights Watch report, individuals associated with the MKO and others, in communications to Human Rights Watch as well as publicly on Web sites connected with the MKO, raised objections to the findings of the report. We have investigated

with care the criticisms we received concerning the substance and methodology of the report, and find those criticisms to be unwarranted.

A number of critics of the report claimed that Human Rights Watch was calling on the United States, Canada, and the European Union not to remove the MKO from their respective lists of groups identified as perpetrating or advocating acts of terrorism, in the face of a campaign by the MKO to have itself removed from such lists. Human Rights Watch in fact at no point, either in the report or in responses to media and other queries, took any position whatsoever on whether the MKO should be on such lists or removed from them. Rather, we did no more than report what we believed to be credible testimonies alleging serious abuses perpetrated by MKO officials against dissident members of the group, including prolonged deprivation of liberty and torture.

MKO, A Threat Against Iraq

Hassan Alzamel/Sotaliraq

<http://www.sotaliraq.com/articles-iraq/nieuws.php?id=26163>

What is of primary importance for us, as Iraqis, is the interest of our nation and we should not lose our way. Past and present experiences prove that the Mojahedin-e Khalq organization is like a blade at the hands of occupiers against innocent Iraqis. We witnessed the brutality of this treacherous organization during Iraqis' Intifadah (uprising) in 1991. Members of this organization were pioneers in suppressing our nation. Former senior Iraqi officials counted on this group. MKO had a strategic place in security and intelligence issues.

After the fall of Saddam and his partners, most of the leaders of this group fled to Europe but currently, the members of this group plan terrorist operations inside Iraq and support such operations logistically and financially.

Mojahedin-e Khalq organization is a burden for Iraqis. The organization of hypocrites (MKO), under full protection of US tanks in military Camp of Ashraf in Iraq, receives the orders directly from the US army. The leaders and officials of this organization are in practical coordination with those Sunni tribes leaders who disagree with the current political process. The camp of this organization has become a workshop for preparing bombed cars; this camp is used for targeting mosques, kindergartens, hospitals, schools and crowded markets.

Therefore, we ask the Iraqi government, National Assembly and political parties and movements to take an immediate tough stance on expelling the terrorist treacherous group of

Mojahedin-e Khalq from Iraq. Our country has suffered enough from this organization and we can't see more destruction and terrorist operations anymore. We are free in our country. No more deals on the pure blood of Iraqis and their wealth.

You Iraqis, raise your voice to denounce all plots against our country. No one should be allowed to undermine our honor and we should be able to determine the future of our own country. The wealth of Iraq is today an opportunity for parties and organizations and some groups victimize Iraqis to get to their own goals; they do it to serve their own political ambitions.

"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. ERELI: 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.

MR. ERELI: Thanks very much.

SECRETARY RICE: MKO, Awful Terrorists

US State Department

<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/61545.htm>

In a roundtable with Arab Print Journalists:

QUESTION: (Inaudible). Madame Secretary, you -- a few days ago, you asked for \$75 million from Congress to be spent on Iran for democratic changes. What aspect of it -- you know, I saw in the papers -- you know, it was saying part of this money goes to creation of opposition, as well, in Iran. Could you elaborate on that?

And also, if I may add to these questions, the Iranians are saying, you know, if the U.S. is seriously trying to bring the regime change, for instance, in Iran, how can -- be seriously talk -- you know, with the rest -- these two questions?

SECRETARY RICE:...So, when we say that we will support democracy in Iran, it's no different than our view of supporting democracy any place else in the world. But it also says that -- you said, are we trying to create opposition. I think there is opposition in Iran and the question is, are they going to have a voice. Opposition ought to have a voice. And it's not opposition that the United States creates; it's opposition that the Iranian people themselves expressed and we just want to see them have a means to express it.

QUESTION: In the same context, you know, do you consider the Mojahedin Organization as an opposition, for instance, or as a terrorist group or --

SECRETARY RICE: MEK?

QUESTION: Mojahedin, yes.

SECRETARY RICE: MEK? No, MEK is listed as a terrorist group. They were involved in some pretty awful and bloody incidents, including -- involving American citizens.

QUESTION: It's Americans?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes. So, MEK, we do not have dealings with, but there are many voices of opposition in Iran. You know, the sad thing is that people say, "Well, Iran is further along than fill in the blank states." But Iran is going in the reverse direction. It's going in the wrong

direction, because a few years ago, there was a Majlis where voices of opposition were actually heard, where people felt that they could speak up. But that has now been all but silenced and so, there is opposition in Iran that is not associated with terrorism. And I think we have an obligation to try to give voice to that opposition.

QUESTION: Thank you.

Opposition a stick against Tehran?

ELIZABETH BRYANT/UPI/Feb.7/Paris

It has been variously described as a cult and the only significant Iranian resistance movement. The People's Mujahedeen is listed as a terrorist organization in Europe and the United States, yet the group continues to stage rallies and court lawmakers on both sides of the Atlantic. The U.S. military that bombed its Iraq-based armed wing two years ago now protects its camp north of Baghdad, where its members have been granted Geneva Convention refugee status. And in France, where the People's Mujahedeen established its political headquarters in the 1980s, it regularly hosts press conferences in Paris to level fresh charges about Tehran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

Now, as the standoff continues over Iran's nuclear enrichment activities, some suggest the People's Mujahedeen could play another role: As one of the few sticks available to Western governments -- short of U.N. sanctions -- to prod Tehran into compliance.

"I think the way we have treated the Mujahedeen has not been very intelligent," said Yves Bonnet, a former head of France's internal DST intelligence service, and author of a book on Iranian politics. "Instead of making the Tehran regime worried by supporting an opposition movement they fear, we're trying to sterilize the Mujahedeen. And in doing so, we're playing into the arms of their adversaries -- the Iranian government." Such a view is hardly universal. Critics argue that supporting the People's Mujahedeen grants legitimacy to a disreputable organization, dogged by allegations of human rights abuses and undemocratic behavior.

Other analysts point to a bad precedent: Bogus information on Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program provided by Iraqi opposition groups. "I think we need to view what the Mujahedeen is saying with some very healthy skepticism," said Bob Ayers, a terrorism expert at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. Still others suggest that using the Mujahedeen to pressure Tehran would have only limited effect.

For its part, the Mujahedeen has spared no effort to clean up its reputation. It organizes periodic rallies -- including one in front of the White House Thursday -- to get off the U.S. and

European terrorist lists, and to promote itself as a democratic alternative to the Mullah's regime.

Based in the picturesque Paris suburb of Auvers-sur-Oise, the Mujahedeen's political wing -- known formally as the National Council of Resistance of Iran -- has a formidable public relations machine. It publishes a slick magazine peppered with articles about the Western lawmakers and Iranians who support it.

"The Iranian community abroad is a microcosm of the Iranian community in Iran," said 53-year-old Ali Safavi, a member of the Mujahedeen's foreign affairs committee, in an interview in Paris. He claims the vast majority of those politically active in the Iranian diaspora support the group.

"If there were an election held tomorrow in Iran under U.N. auspices -- free of rigging and fraud and all parties could participate -- I think our movement would by far gain the most number of votes," Safavi added. Many scoff at such claims.

"They've managed to convince more than a few unsuspecting members of the European parliament and U.S. congressmen and women that they are a legitimate democratic opposition group," said Karim Sadjadpour, an expert on Iran at the International Crisis Group in Washington, DC, echoing the view of a number of experts. "But in reality, anybody who has been to Iran in the last 10 years would tell you they have little, if any, support on the streets." There was a time, however, when the Mujahedeen enjoyed considerable support on the Iranian streets. Founded in 1965 by Iranian students bent on toppling Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the group briefly allied itself with the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But the Mujahedeen, which mixed Islam with Marxist philosophy, soon fell afoul of Iran's new theocratic government. In 1981, after several of its leaders were executed, the group moved to an unsettled exile in France. When Paris began forging diplomatic ties with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in 1986, it expelled the Mujahedeen's charismatic leader, Massoud Rajavi.

Rajavi moved to Iraq, where Saddam gave him shelter and millions of dollars in funding. He established the group's military wing there, launching terrorist attacks across the border in Iran, and targeting Iranian interests overseas. In 2003 -- as French authorities again appeared to be seeking closer ties with Tehran -- police raided the Mujahedeen's sprawling compound in Auvers-sur-Oise, arresting 160 people on allegations of funding terrorist activities. Among those detained were Rajavi's wife Maryam, who heads the group's political wing. But today, Maryam Rajavi meets freely with French and other European politicians, and reportedly enjoys police protection whenever she leaves her home. A French judicial investigation peters on -- to save face, Mujahedeen members say, for lack of incriminating evidence.

Treatment of the Mujahedeen by other Western governments also appears pegged to shifting diplomatic relations with Tehran. In 1997, the Clinton administration classified the Mujahedeen's armed and political factions as terrorist organizations -- reportedly to score points with former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami. In 2002, the European Union put the group's armed branch on its terrorist list.

Today, however, some U.S. and European lawmakers are lobbying for the Mujahedeen to be treated as a credible weapon against Tehran. "We should use them for information on what's going on inside Iran," said Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado), who supports lifting the group's terrorist designation. "They're willing to do what's necessary to bring the regime down, and we could take advantage of that."

Supporters say the Mujahedeen could be used in providing intelligence information on Iran's nuclear program. That may be one reason, according to reports, why the U.S. military shifted from bombing to guarding the Mujahedeen's camp in Iraq. Indeed, the group's allegations three years ago about an Iranian enrichment facility in Nantanz were "on the mark," said a diplomat close to the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna. But the group's subsequent nuclear disclosures have been of dubious value, the diplomat added, speaking on background. "The IAEA certainly doesn't rely on them as a credible or regular source of information," she said, "even though it does read and check them out."

More worrying, perhaps, is the organization's reputation. The Mujahedeen has long been described as a personality cult revolving around its leaders, the Rajavis. Men and women at the Iraq camp sleep separately and are barred from marrying. Last year, Human Rights Watch published a report accusing the Mujahedeen of torturing and preventing some of its dissenting members from leaving the camp, during Saddam's time.

Some U.S. soldiers and European lawmakers say they have found no evidence of past abuse there. And the group argues former members interviewed by Human Rights Watch are on the payroll of Iran's intelligence service. But critics like Ervand Abrahamian, author of a 1989 book on the Mujahedeen, says that is its standard response to damaging allegations. "It would be a sign of desperation if Washington resorted to the Mujahedeen as an instrument against the Iranian regime," added Abrahamian, a Middle East history professor at Baruch College, in New York. "I can't imagine anyone more discredited in Iran than the Mujahedeen."