

ParsBrief

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Hillary Clinton on Iraqi takeover of Camp Ashraf

Mehr News Agency – August 1, 2009

Following the attack to Camp Ashraf, MEK's base in Iraq, by Iraqi police and the takeover of the camp which had been at the disposal of the organization since the time of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, when asked at a press conference in Washington DC, the day after the attack on Camp Ashraf about the attack, said:

"... although the U.S. Government remains engaged and concerned about this issue, it is a matter now for the Government of Iraq to resolve in accordance with its laws'."

The Iraqi government had been talking to the heads of this little group for two years so they would recognize Iraq's national right to exercise sovereignty over this parcel of Iraqi soil.

Iraq changes name of MKO's Camp Ashraf

Fars News Agency –August 1, 2009

Iraqi authorities changed the name of a training base of the anti-Iran terrorist group, Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), after seizing full control of the camp.

"Camp Ashraf's name has been changed to Camp of New Iraq, after the Iraqi security forces assumed full security of the camp," Political Adviser of the head of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (SIIC) Mohsen al-Hakim told FNA on Friday.

Hakim underlined that the Iraqi government has reached its specified goals during the raid, and added, ""The security post which had been scheduled to be set up inside the camp, was established.""

"The Iraqi government has officially announced that it will confront any unrest and breach of law, and will not allow trespassing by the camp's residents anyway," Political advisor of Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim said.

Iraqi security forces took control of the training base of the MKO at Camp Ashraf - about 60km (37 miles) north of Baghdad - on Tuesday and detained dozens of the members of the terrorist group.

Seven members of an anti-Iranian terrorist group have been confirmed dead during the two-day Iraqi raid on Camp Ashraf.

Commenting upon the fate of the MKO's members, Mohsen Hakim told FNA, "The Iranian and Iraqi governments have made lots of efforts to draw a proper mechanism to transfer those who want to come back to Iran."

The official further noted that massive consultations are underway between Baghdad and 12 European states to expel 912 members of the group who have the citizenship or residency of those countries as soon as possible.

The MKO has been in Iraq's Diyala province since the 1980s. The Iraqi government and parliament has announced that it would not tolerate the group anymore and is seeking to expel the group from the country in the near future.

The anti-Iran terror group has been blacklisted as a terrorist organization by many international entities and countries.

The MKO is behind a slew of assassinations and bombings inside Iran, a number of EU parliamentarians said in a recent letter in which they slammed a British court decision to remove the MKO from the British terror list. The EU officials also added that the group has no public support within Iran because of their role in helping Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988).

Many of the MKO members abandoned the terrorist organization while most of those still remaining in the camp are said to be willing to quit but are under pressure and torture not to do so.

A May 2005 Human Rights Watch report accused the MKO of running prison camps in Iraq and committing human rights violations.

According to the Human Rights Watch report, the outlawed group puts defectors under torture and jail terms.

The group started assassination of the citizens and officials after the revolution in a bid to take control of the newly established Islamic Republic. It killed several of Iran's new leaders in the early years after the revolution, including the then President, Mohammad Ali

Rajayee, Prime Minister, Mohammad Javad Bahonar and the Judiciary Chief, Mohammad Hossein Beheshti who were killed in bomb attacks by MKO members in 1981.

The group fled to Iraq in 1986, where it was protected by Saddam Hussein and where it helped the Iraqi dictator suppress Shiite and Kurd uprisings in the country.

The terrorist group joined Saddam's army during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988) and helped Saddam and killed thousands of Iranian civilians and soldiers during the U.S.-backed Iraqi imposed war on Iran.

The MKO was put on the U.S. terror list in 1997 by the then President, Bill Clinton, but since the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the group has been strongly backed by the Washington Neocons, who also argue for the MKO to be taken off the U.S. terror list.

Camp Ashraf - Mojahedin Khalq - UK says Geneva Convention does not apply

Chris Bryant, House of Parliament, September 2009

Iraq: Human Rights

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Iraqi Government on the deaths and injuries to protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention following the recent attack on Camp Ashraf by Iraqi forces; and if he will make a statement. [290777]

Chris Bryant: Our ambassador in Iraq has written to the Iraqi authorities to ask for a review into the recent events at the camp. Officials from our embassy in Baghdad are continuing to follow developments, and will shortly undertake a further visit to the camp.

Our view remains that the residents of Camp Ashraf are not entitled to 'protected persons' status as the Fourth Geneva Convention ceased to apply in Iraq after 28 June 2004, following the end of active hostilities and occupation.

Envoy: Iraq Conferring with UN on Expulsion of MKO Members

Fars News, August 19, 2009

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iraqi Ambassador to Tehran Mohammad Majid Sheikh announced on Tuesday that the Baghdad government is consulting with the UN over the expulsion of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) members from the country.

"We have had consultations with the UN to find a place for transferring the members of the group and we have announced that the Iraqi soil will not be a platform for terrorist operations against other countries, specially the neighbors including Iran," Sheikh told FNA.

Referring to the official announcement of the Iraqi government that the members of the MKO can go to a third country or return to Iran, he underlined, "The Iraqi government will not grant political asylum to these people."

As regards a number of MKO members who have committed crimes against the Iraqi people, he said that they will be tried in an Iraqi court.

He stressed that no country is ready to accept the MKO members, and said they will be transferred to a place far from Iranian borders until their fate is decided.

Iraqi security forces took control of the training base of the MKO at Camp Ashraf - about 60km (37 miles) north of Baghdad - last month and detained dozens of the members of the terrorist group.

The Iraqi authority also changed the name of the military center from Camp Ashraf to the Camp of New Iraq.

The MKO has been in Iraq's Diyala province since the 1980s. The Iraqi government and parliament has announced that it would not tolerate the group anymore and is seeking to expel the group from the country in the near future.

The anti-Iran terror group has been blacklisted as a terrorist organization by many international entities and countries.

The MKO is behind a slew of assassinations and bombings inside Iran, a number of EU parliamentarians said in a recent letter in which they slammed a British court decision to remove the MKO from the British terror list. The EU officials also added that the group has no public support within Iran because of their role in helping Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988).

Many of the MKO members abandoned the terrorist organization while most of those still remaining in the camp are said to be willing to quit but are under pressure and torture not to do so.

A May 2005 Human Rights Watch report accused the MKO of running prison camps in Iraq and committing human rights violations.

According to the Human Rights Watch report, the outlawed group puts defectors under torture and jail terms.

The group started assassination of the citizens and officials after the revolution in a bid to take control of the newly established Islamic Republic. It killed several of Iran's new

leaders in the early years after the revolution, including the then President, Mohammad Ali Rajayee, Prime Minister, Mohammad Javad Bahonar and the Judiciary Chief, Mohammad Hossein Beheshti who were killed in bomb attacks by MKO members in 1981.

The group fled to Iraq in 1986, where it was protected by Saddam Hussein and where it helped the Iraqi dictator suppress Shiite and Kurd uprisings in the country.

The terrorist group joined Saddam's army during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-1988) and helped Saddam and killed thousands of Iranian civilians and soldiers during the US-backed Iraqi imposed war on Iran.

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Hundreds in Diyala, Iraq staged rally against the MKO

IRNA –August 11, 2009

Baghdad - hundreds of people of Diyala province staged rally in protest against MKO on Monday in "Al -Khalis" 90 km Northeast of Baghdad where the MKO headquarters, Camp Ashraf is located.

As IRNA correspondent reports, the demonstrators included tribal leaders, intellectuals and students from different regions. The protestors chanted slogans against terrorist Mujahedin Khalq Organization and asked for their immediate expulsion from the Iraq territory.

Demonstrators also condemned U.S. military support of this terrorist group .Through placards held they asked for the release of Iraqi citizens who are banned, instead of supporting MKO terrorists.

Diyala people also condemned the recent acts of MKO members against the Iraqi Police and Army forces and considered it as violating the law and national sovereignty of Iraq.

The demonstrators also asked the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to expel this group from Iraqi soil as soon as possible.

Several Local and foreign Media, covered the widespread rally of Diyali People against MKO.

This is the first spontaneous rally of Diyali People after the incidents occurred two weeks ago and in protest to MKO acts against Iraqi forces in "Camp of New Iraq" (formerly called Camp Ashraf) .

Iraq denies blocking food to Iranian exile camp

Reuters, Baghdad, August 06, 2009

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Iraq on Thursday denied it was preventing food, water or medical supplies from entering an Iranian exile camp it wants to shut down north of Baghdad.

Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh denied reports by the camp's residents, the People's Mujahideen Organization of Iran (PMOI) dissident group, that its forces had blocked entry of food and water into the camp for at least 10 days.

"That is incorrect ... We do not block food or medical supplies, but we do block building supplies such as cement and metal," Dabbagh said.

Swiss-based human rights activists, including senior U.N. expert Jean Ziegler, said on Wednesday Iraqi authorities were blocking food and water.

Iraqi forces last week took control of the camp on the Iranian border, home to the PMOI for about two decades, sparking clashes with residents in which at least seven exiles were killed. Camp residents said 13 were killed.

Iraqi police arrested 36 Iranian exiles on rioting charges after the clashes.

Iraq has said it wants to close the camp and send residents to Iran or a third country, a proposal they bitterly oppose. The government has not said when it might evict them.

Iraq's Shi'ite-led government, which includes many former opponents of Saddam Hussein who were exiled in Iran, has close ties to Tehran and is unsympathetic to the PMOI.

The group began as Islamist leftists against Iran's Shah but fell out with Shi'ite clerics who took power in the 1979 revolution.

Iraq, like Iran and the United States, sees the PMOI as a terrorist organization. On Tuesday, Iraq's state security minister said none of the camp's 3,500 residents would be granted asylum in Iraq.

Reporting by Mohammed Abbas

Reuters: Iraq says Iranian exiles not allowed to stay

Reuters - Aug 4, 2009

Iraq's state security minister said on Tuesday that no Iranian exiles living in Camp Ashraf on the border with Iran would be granted asylum in Iraq, including 56 he said were wanted in Iranian courts.

Iraqi forces last week took control of the camp on the Iranian border, home to the People's Mujahideen Organization of Iran (PMOI) dissident group for about two decades, sparking

confrontations between police and residents who fear eviction. At least seven exiles were killed in the clashes.

Iraq's Shi'ite-led government has said it wants to close the camp and send residents to Iran or a third country, a proposal they are bitterly resisting. The dissidents fear they will be imprisoned or executed if they are sent home.

Iraqi Minister of State for National Security Shirwan al-Waeli said his country had no qualms about sending them back.

"Iraq will not give asylum (to them) as refugees in its territory and we cannot tolerate groups that cause problems in their countries of origin," Waeli said, but he declined to say when Ashraf would be shut and its 3,500 residents evicted.

Iraq, like Iran and the United States, sees the PMOI as a terrorist organization, although they surrendered most of their weapons to U.S. forces after the 2003 invasion to oust Saddam Hussein.

Iraq took formal charge of Ashraf from the U.S. military in January, under a bilateral security pact.

Some human rights groups and PMOI sympathizers in the West, who have been highly critical of the way Iraq has handled Ashraf, say closing the camp and driving residents out against their will would violate international human rights law.

"Our information says there are only 56 wanted by Iranian judicial courts and the others won't have a problem if they go back to Iran," Waeli said.

The PMOI was given shelter in Iraq by Saddam, who fought an eight-year war against Iran in the 1980s. Iraq's government, which includes former Saddam opponents who lived in exile in Iran, has a close relationship with Iran.

"We don't want problems with our neighbors," Waeli said.

By Tim Cocks and Muhaned Mohammed

35 Iranian dissidents sent to Baghdad for questioning

AFP – August 04, 2009

Thirty-five Iranian dissidents arrested by Iraqi security forces during a takeover of their base were transferred to Baghdad for questioning on Sunday, a senior Iraqi official told AFP.

"Today, 35 of the people arrested at Camp Ashraf were moved to Baghdad for questioning," said the official in Diyala province's security operations centre.

A spokesman for the People's Mujahedeen group, whose Camp Ashraf base was stormed by Iraqi security forces on Tuesday, said 36 residents had been arrested, of whom 32 had been sent to provincial capital Baquba, with the whereabouts of four still unknown.

Mujahedeen spokesman Shahriar Kia in a statement repeated allegations that Baghdad's actions were being carried out at Tehran's behest.

Eleven residents of Camp Ashraf have died since Iraqi forces stormed the site on Tuesday, an Iraqi security official has said, although the Mujahedeen say 12 have been killed. Camp Ashraf, in Diyala province northeast of Baghdad, is home to 3,500 People's Mujahedeen members and their families.

The People's Mujahedeen, a Marxist and Islamic movement, was founded in 1965 in opposition to the shah of Iran and has subsequently fought to oust the clerical regime which took power in the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The group set up Camp Ashraf in the 1980s -- when former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was at war with the Islamic republic -- as a base to operate against the Tehran government. Amnesty International, meanwhile, has "called on the Iraqi government to investigate the excessive use of force by its security forces."

Mass grave links Mojahedin Khalq to Kuwait invasion

Press TV, July 03, 2009

A mass grave discovered in the headquarters of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization in Iraq casts light on the crimes the terrorists committed during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Police officials in the Iraqi province of Diyalah said Sunday that the mass graves contained Kuwaiti nationals who had fallen victim to the Ba'ath regime's seven month-long invasion of Kuwait.

"We have been informed that a mass grave has been found in Camp Ashraf. Of course we knew there was a graveyard in the MKO headquarters, but we had thought that it was a place of burial for MKO members," said Abdulhussein al-Shemri, a local police commander.

If confirmed, the reports would expose MKO complicity in Saddam Hussein's war on Kuwait, which killed more than 3,664 Iraqis and 1,000 Kuwaitis

MKO leaders are said to have kept the mass grave a secret so far by refusing the entry of Iraqi forces into their base.

The grisly discovery came at a time when scores of regional correspondents were granted a permit by the Iraqi government to prepare a report from Camp Ashraf, where MKO dissidents were stationed for more than two decades.

The incident, however, prompted Iraqi officials to withdraw the permits and prohibit the journalists from conducting video reports from the site.

The MKO is the most hated grouplet among both the Iranian and the Iraqi nations, and suffers from total unpopularity in these two countries.

The Mujahedin Khalq Organization, which blended elements of Marxism and Stalinism, was founded in Iran in the 1960s but was exiled some twenty years later over of terrorism.

The group masterminded a torrent of terrorist operations inside Iran, one of which was the 1981 bombing of the offices of the Islamic Republic Party, in which more than 72 Iranian officials were killed.

A 2007 German intelligence report from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution has identified the MKO as a "repressive, sect-like and Stalinist authoritarian organization which centers around the personality cult of [MKO leaders] Maryam and Masoud Rajavi".

Alireza Ahmad Khah's family appeal against MKO leaders

Nejat Bloggers, August 25,2009

Alireza Ahmad Khah, a resident of Camp Ashraf was killed.

Immediately after the publication of the news of MKO residents' clashes with Iraqi forces, families who are members of Nejat Office in Gilan including Ahmad Khalh family came over. They welcomed the act of Iraqi government to take complete control of Camp Ashraf, appealing the Iraqi government and all Human Right bodies for the release of captured residents of Ashraf from the bars of Rajavis' cult.

They are also looking forward for the fate of their beloved ones who might face a bright future, by visiting their families far from the deadly atmosphere of Camp Ashraf.

Ali Reza Ahmad Khah was among those Ashraf residents who were killed in clashes which were intensified due to MKO leaders' stimulations. His family was seriously concerned about his health. They regularly came to Nejat Society office to get news of health of their beloved son.

He was another victim of Rajavi's ambitions.

It is worth to know that MKO itself anticipated contacting Ahmad khalh family to inform them of the death of their son! Of course not for informing them but for abusing his blood to make a new show off in front of world witnesses but Ahmad Khah family who suffered years of being uninformed of their beloved son, insulted the caller that “ why you never called us to give the news of his health in all those past twenty years?!”

Now we see you as responsible for the death of our beloved one. You must be tried before all international courts.

As US Eases Out, Iraq Takes Control of Terrorist Camp

Associated Press - September 05, 2009

We cannot accept the presence of such organisation inside Iraq

The women formed a human chain while the men chanted, confronting Iraqi troops moving into their compound. Gunfire rang out, and the soldiers waded in with batons, wooden bats and automatic weapons.

By the end, officials said, 11 Iranian exiles were dead _ shot, beaten or run over by military vehicles.

Throughout the confrontation, American soldiers who once protected the Iranian opposition group stood by. According to U.S officials, they had no legal authority to intervene. One video taken by the exiles even shows soldiers get into a white SUV and roll up their windows as the bloodied men plead for help.

The deadly melee at Camp Ashraf, the base of the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran, provides a glaring example of what can go wrong as the U.S. military scales back and the Shiite-led Iraqi government flexes its muscles.

The U.S. military guarded the camp since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 under an agreement that made its 3,400 residents "protected persons" under the Geneva Conventions. The military stopped observing the agreement after a new security accord with the Baghdad government took effect in January, U.S. Embassy spokesman Philip Frayne said.

Responsibility for the camp then passed to the Iraqi government, which promised not to use force against the group. A small contingent of U.S. military police still monitors the camp, but the military said they were under orders not to intervene in the July 28 confrontation.

"We could not become decisively engaged with a situation that really is up to the sovereign Iraqi government to settle in a peaceful manner as they have assured us that they would do," a senior U.S. military official said Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

"Even in a situation that allowed engagement, we didn't have nearly the amount of forces present to jump in the middle of this fray," he said.

Iraqi officials said they were trying to establish a police station at the camp. And there are numerous other issues on which the Iraqi government could go its own way _ like the fate of anti-al-Qaida Sunni militias, which are strongly supported by the U.S. but now seem to get less backing from Iraq's Shiite leaders, or the multiple disputes between Baghdad and the Kurdish north, which the U.S. has sought to mollify lest they explode into violence.

"These kinds of things are only going to happen more often and in other places, and the U.S. has to decide what are we going to do about it," said Army Reserve Col. Gary Morsch, who was stationed at Camp Ashraf and maintains close ties with the exiles there.

The bloodshed brought rare criticism by Washington of the U.S.-trained Iraqi security forces. But U.S. officials tried to balance it with the larger policy goal of handing over greater responsibility to the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki while U.S. forces reduce their presence.

Iraq was trying to extend its sovereignty to Camp Ashraf. We understood what they were trying to do. They did not do it well," State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley told reporters in Washington two weeks after the raid.

Camp Ashraf and the presence of the Iranian exile group have long been a source of friction between Washington and Baghdad. For years, Iraq's Shiite-led government has wanted to remove the group, because of its past ties to Saddam. Iran, a close Shiite ally of Baghdad, has also been pressing for the expulsion of the group, which seeks the overthrow of Tehran's clerical rulers.

The Iraqi treatment of the exiles could also be an indicator that Iran's influence in Baghdad is growing as Washington's wanes, though Iraqi officials staunchly deny the raid was at Tehran's behest.

"If you want to know how independent the government of Iraq is from the Islamic Republic of Iran, watch what happens to the people of Ashraf," said Raymond Tanter, president of the Washington-based Iran Policy Group and a member of the National Security Council in the Reagan administration.

Baghdad "wanted to establish its independence from the United States and possibly was motivated to show that independence by cracking down on Ashraf," he said, pointing out the raid coincided with a Baghdad visit by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

The People's Mujahedeen is deeply controversial. Critics call it a cult with an ideology mixing Marxism, secularism, an obsession with martyrdom and near adoration of its leaders. The U.S. considers it a terrorist organization, albeit one that has provided the Americans with intelligence on Iran. The European Union removed it from its terror list this year.

The group _ also known by its Farsi name the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq _ is the militant wing of the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran. It carried out a series of bloody bombings and assassinations in Iran in the 1980s, though it says it renounced violence in 2001.

The MEK fought alongside Saddam's forces during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war, and Saddam set up a number of bases for them _ including Camp Ashraf, their last remaining foothold in Iraq, located in a barren desert stretch north of Baghdad, 50 miles from the Iranian border.

After Saddam fell, U.S. troops took control of Camp Ashraf and disarmed its fighters, confining them to the 30-square-mile compound. In return, the military signed the agreement with the camp's residents giving them protected status.

The exiles transformed Camp Ashraf into an oasis of well-kept gardens, water fountains and palm trees along marked-out streets, where the residents _ including 900 women _ live in barracks-like housing segregated by sex. Morsch, 58, of Bucyrus, Kan., recalls how American soldiers guarding the camp got to know the residents well, sharing meals and inviting each other to celebrations.

The government has barred media visits to the camp since the raid.

The Iraqi government says it was exerting its right to establish a police station in Camp Ashraf and blames the violence on the resistance by Iranian exiles. Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh told the AP on Monday that the forces entering to set up the station were met by "demonstrations with people wielding sticks, swords and knives."

The U.S. military sent a medical team into the camp two days after the raid and 19 people were transported to an American hospital with serious injuries. Iraqi forces also detained 36 men accused of violently resisting the raid, prompting a hunger strike by some camp residents demanding their release.

The fate of Camp Ashraf's residents remains up in the air.

The Iraqi government has forwarded several proposals, including sending them to third countries other than Iran, where they would face possible execution. "The world has to help us find a place for them," al-Dabbagh said, reiterating the promise to treat them humanely and not to forcibly expel them. "We cannot accept the presence of such an organization inside Iraq."

The People's Mujahedeen insists that the protected status agreement has not expired because of a clause saying it is valid until the situation is resolved. The group has called on the Americans to reassert control over the camp until another arrangement could be made, such as the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers.