

# ParsBrief

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### Camp Ashraf residents announce readiness to leave Iraq

Tehran Times - April 17, 2011

According to a report published by the Fars news agency on Saturday, the members of the terrorist Mojahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) who are based at Camp Ashraf has announced their readiness to leave Iraq.

The Fars news agency quoted a close source at the United Nations office in Iraq as saying, "The senior members of the MKO sent a letter to the UN Special Representative (for Iraq Ad Melkert) yesterday (Friday), in which they expressed (the group's) readiness to leave Iraq."

"In their letter, the senior members of the MKO called on the UN representative to prepare the ground for the group's exit out of Iraq and their travel to a European country or the United States," the source stated.

According to the source, Melkert is discussing the issue with officials of the French, British, and U.S. embassies in Baghdad.

On April 8, following orders of the government and in line with the new Iraqi Constitution, the Iraqi army tried to dismantle the terrorist group's residential area, called Camp Ashraf, but the MKO members residing in the camp clashed with the Iraqi soldiers.

The Iraqi government has also set a deadline for Camp Ashraf residents to leave the country.

On April 13, the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad announced that Camp Ashraf residents can return to Iran under certain conditions.

"These persons can travel to Iran or any other country if they are willing to do so and if no criminal case has been filed against them in Iran or Iraq. They will also be given passports," Ambassador Hassan Danaiifar stated.

Backed by the U.S. and some European countries, the MKO started its activities as a terrorist group based in Iraq in the early 1980s. In addition to the assassination of hundreds of Iranian officials and citizens, the group cooperated with Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime in its repression of the Iraqi people

## Camp Ashraf clash leaves 3 dead-Two Mojahedin Khalq members set themselves alight prior to the clash

Aswat al-Iraq - April 09, 2011

BAGHDAD- A Youtube clip showed an Iraqi army force storming Camp Ashraf, which hosts the residents of the Iranian opposition group Mujahideen-e-Khalq, on Friday, leaving 28 people killed and dozens others wounded, according to MEK sources.

The clip, shot by MEK supporters, showed Iraqi forces using armor vehicles in their raid on the camp, which had been under the protection of U.S.

forces after they entered Iraq in 2003 prior to transferring the responsibility of its protection to Iraqi security forces.

Earlier on Friday, an Iraqi military source said three MEK refugees were killed and 13 more wounded by Iraqi forces inside Camp Ashraf in Diala.

"Three Iranians were killed when Iraqi forces from the 5th Division tried to set up a checkpoint inside Camp Ashraf," the source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

"The Iranian group clashed with the Iraqi forces, prompting the Iraqi security to open fire on them," he explained.

"Two Iranians set themselves alight in front of the Iraqi forces prior to the clashes, while others pelted the Iraqi soldiers with stones, injuring six of them," he added.

The Iranian group announced on its website that nine of its elements were killed in the attack by Iraqi forces.

MEK has been based in Camp Ashraf in Diala province, 57 km northeast of Baghdad, since 1980s during the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq war.

Several politicians within the Iraqi government have been striving to drive the organization out of the Iraqi territories, claiming that the Mujahideen-e-Khalq fighters took part in suppressing the Shiite uprising that broke out in southern Iraq after the second Gulf War in 1991 against the former regime.

The restive province of Diala lies 57 km northeast of Baghdad.

UNHCR: Camp Ashraf residents have to renounce violence before applying for refugee status

BBC - April 14, 2011

Iranian PMOI exiles 'must leave Iraq by end of year'

Iraq's government has said members of an Iranian exile group must leave the country by the end of the year, after deadly clashes with security forces.

The People's Mujahideen Organisation of Iran (PMOI) would be forced out of its base north of Baghdad, Camp Ashraf, "using all means", a spokesman said.

But its members would be deported to a third country and not Iran, he added.

The PMOI's political wing has said 34 people were killed and 300 injured in an "attack" on Camp Ashraf on Friday.

Medics say at least 10 died, while officials put the toll at three.

The PMOI, also known as Mojahedin-e Khalq, is considered a terrorist group by the US and Iran.

It set up Camp Ashraf in Iraq in the 1980s and was welcomed by then-President Saddam Hussein, who was fighting a war against Iran. He funded and armed the PMOI, which fought alongside Iraqi troops.

'No intention of staying'

During the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Camp Ashraf was bombed by coalition forces. PMOI leaders eventually agreed a ceasefire and its members were disarmed.

In 2009, the US military handed responsibility for the camp to Iraq's Shia-led government, which has repeatedly vowed to close it.

On Monday, Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said that in the wake of last week's violence the cabinet had "committed to implement an earlier decision about disbanding the terrorist group, the People's Mujahideen Organisation of Iran, by the end of this year at the latest, and the necessity of getting it out of Iraq".

"This organisation must be removed from Iraqi territory by all means, including political and diplomatic, with the co-operation of the UN and international organisations," he said in a statement. Iraq was "taking into consideration the wish of the PMOI members to choose the country in which they wish to reside", he added.

"We have to find a nation where they can go, and we will look to the UN to help."

A spokesman for the UN High Commission on Refugees, Andrej Mahecic, said residents of Camp Ashraf could apply individually for refugee status, which would help them find a permanent home.

But before that could happen, they would have to renounce violence as a means of achieving their goals, which some have refused to do, he added.

Shahin Gobadi, a PMOI spokesman based in Paris, said the camp residents would be willing to move to the US or EU member states willing to grant them asylum.

"We have no intention of staying in Iraq, but there has been no response," he told the Reuters news agency.

Mr Gobadi said they were also willing to return to Iran, but only if it could be guaranteed that they would not be punished by the authorities.

Iraqis continue to protest Mojahedin Khalq camp

Wisam al-Bayati, Press TV, Diyala, February 19, 2011

People in Iraq's Diyala province organized a protest in front of Camp Ashraf where the Mojahedin-Khalq Organization or MKO members are residing.

Iraqis have been urging the government to deport the MKO members for a long time now...

Most Iraqis jeer at the MKO and are concerned about its secret terrorist plots and other illegal activities. So much so that, in everyday conversations, Iraqis describe the MKO's presence in their country as a chronic disease.

Some important figures turned out for the protest including tribal leaders, clerics and local government officials.

Protesters shouted, "leave our country", and carried placards with anti-MKO slogans to express their intolerance towards the presence of a terrorist group that they say has caused so much trouble in their country.

The tribal leaders want the government to respect public demands and expel the MKO once and for all.

Some Local officials accuse the west of influencing the Iraqi government to let the MKO stay in Iraq.

MKO has been in Iraq's Diyala province since the 1980s. It's been blacklisted as a terrorist group by most countries in the world.

Many accuse the MKO of murdering Iraqi civilians during the 1991 uprisings and so helping Saddam Hussain stay in power.

The group is widely frowned upon in the region for having sided with former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the 1980-1988 war against Iran.

#### MKO; New Chalabi for the West

Flynt Leverett & Hillary Mann Leverett (source: Race for Iran ) - Sunday, February 20, 2011

Supporting MEK; West feckless attempts to manipulate Iran's politics

WHITE HOUSE SUPPORT FOR MIDDLE EAST 'UPRISINGS' DEPENDS ON HOW AND WHETHER THEY CAN BE USED AGAINST IRAN

Our friend David Frum published an interesting post, "America Can't Afford to Ignore the Chaos in Bahrain", see here. David makes some points with which we agree, as when he writes that "An entire American carrier battle group is based in Bahrain—there is no way the United States can avoid being implicated in the actions of the Bahraini government." But we were disturbed by his bottom-line policy recommendation for the United States:

"Always and ever: Iran is the big play in the Middle East...Every regional decision has to be measured against the test: Is this moving us closer to—or further from—a positive change in the Iranian political system? That test should guide decisions about Bahrain and about a lot more than Bahrain."

One of the reasons we were struck by David's recommendation—and keep in mind that he is one of the most prominent and thoughtful neoconservatives to be found—is that it already seems to have been taken on board by President Obama and his administration (though they have not explained it anywhere near as clearly as David did). On that point, David Sanger of The New York Times told National Public Radio's Diane Rehm on Friday, see here, that President Obama believes the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere “could create an alternative narrative to Al-Qaeda and an alternative narrative to Iran that the United States ought to make use of”.

It is in this context that we should understand why the Obama Administration, literally seven hours after Omar Soliman announced that Hosni Mubarak would step down as Egypt's President after all, called the White House press corps back in and, as Sanger put it, “all but urged the protestors” in Iran, such as they were, “to get out and do more”. The Administration has clearly decided, as America's strategic position in the Middle East erodes before our eyes, to “push back” against the Islamic Republic, in multiple ways.

Some of those ways will be more feckless attempts to manipulate Iran's internal politics—as with the Obama Administration's exhortations for domestic unrest in Iran. We were appalled to learn recently that the Administration is considering lifting the MEK's designation as a foreign terrorist organization.

On that point, Bill Clinton's Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, retired U.S. Army General Hugh Shelton, added his voice to those of retired generals James Jones—President Obama's former national security adviser—and Anthony Zinni, calling for the MEK's rehabilitation, see here. Shelton argues explicitly that Iran could exploit the wave of pro-democracy protests in the Middle East, and that, to forestall such a scenario, “Iran's current regime is currently a government that needs to change”.

We have told every Obama Administration official and member of Congress with whom we have discussed the matter that it is hard to imagine a dumber, more counter-productive change in America's already deeply dysfunctional Iran policy than to lift the MEK's designation as a foreign terrorist organization and start supporting it as the “vanguard” of some mythical expatriate Iranian opposition. This would make the reliance of the Clinton Administration and the George W. Bush Administration on Ahmad Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress as the keys to successful “regime change” in Iraq look enlightened by comparison. But the chances of this happening are, sadly, increasing.

In its desperation to look like it can still shape events in the Middle East in some meaningful way, the Obama Administration is looking for other ways to press the Islamic Republic. Just a few days ago, Steve Coll—Pulitzer Prize-winning author and president of the New America Foundation—broke the story in The New Yorker that the Administration has started secret, preliminary talks with the Taliban, see here.

From an Iranian perspective, this is simply one more indicator of America's unique combination of perfidy and incompetence in Afghanistan. During 2001-2003, the Islamic Republic provided substantial cooperation to the United States in its efforts to unseat the Taliban from power in Kabul

and destroy Al-Qa'ida in its Afghan sanctuaries. Iran cooperated with the United States, in part, on the basis of U.S. representations that Washington wanted an independent and stable Afghanistan which would not be under the sway of the Taliban and its chief external backers, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

But Iranian officials warned that local populations would see a prolonged U.S. military presence in Afghanistan as occupation—a judgment borne out by subsequent events, as greater geographic penetration by U.S. forces since 2006 and the deployment of additional U.S. troops since 2009 have correlated directly with an escalating spiral of violence and instability. This, in turn, has once again empowered the Saudi- and Pakistani-backed Taliban, which has clearly made a comeback—to a point where Afghan President Hamid Karzai, now seemingly joined by the Obama Administration, judges that the only basis for a political settlement is power sharing with the Taliban.

As we have experienced directly, this leads Iranian policymakers to question not just America's intentions in Afghanistan, but also its competence—and with good reason. If Karzai and the United States move forward on power-sharing with the Taliban, without engaging the major non-Pashtun factions (many of which have close connections to the Islamic Republic), it could, as Coll notes, “ignite a civil war along ethnic lines”.

And it is becoming apparent that the Obama Administration will back the Bahraini royal family in whatever level of brutality seems necessary to keep Bahrain in the “American camp”. In other words, the Obama Administration is responding to the wave of popular unrest across the Arab world by intensifying its pursuit of the sorts of policies that have so thoroughly alienated most of the Middle East's inhabitants from U.S. foreign policy in the first place.

### An Unholy Alliance

Karim Pakravan. Finance Professor at DePaul University in Chicago - February 25, 2011

Strange days! A few days ago, Congressman Poe (T-Texas) introduced House Resolution 60 calling for the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) to be removed from the terrorist list by the State Department. At the same time, an unknown group calling itself the "Association of Iranian University Professors in Britain" took a full page ad in the major U.S. papers making the same demand. These efforts to get the MKO legitimized is just the last round of efforts by the MKO and its neocon supporters -- presumably as a reward to have "outed" the Iranian nuclear program. The effort is signed by such neocon luminaries such as John Bolton and former CIA director Woolsey, as well as Bush administration alumni such as former Attorney General Mukasey. What strange bedfellows! On one hand, you have the neocons, close allies of the Israeli right-wing and committed to a muscular war against global terrorism, and on the other, the MKO, a radical left-wing Islamist group involved in the 1970s in anti-Shah and anti-U.S. activities -- including a failed

attempt on the U.S. ambassador to Iran and the killing of several U.S. citizens based in Iran at the time

There is much more to the MKO story. During the early days of the revolution, the MKO promoted a Khmer Rouge-type policy of wholesale elimination of the previous elite and massive reeducation of the population. After losing the power struggle against Khomeini and reappearing in Iraq, the group's cult-like reputation and its personality cult around its leader Massoud Rajavi intensified. According to the CIA, the MKO was also used by a beleaguered Saddam to crush the Kurdish rebellion that came immediately after Iraq's defeat in the Persian Gulf War. The MKO organized regular media visits at its base in Iraq, Camp Ashraf, where it exhibited its military arsenal, which included tanks and artillery. Of course, most of this arsenal remained unused, since the MKO was unable to mount anything more than pinprick attacks against the Iranian regime. At the same time, the MKO's propaganda machine was working overtime in the U.S. and Europe. In fact, it has been quite effective, and the MKO has managed over the years to pull the wool over the eyes of some European politicians as well as Congress (on particular its most conservative GOP members) and present itself as a bona fide moderate and democratic opposition movement and an alternative to the theocratic government of Tehran. Following the Iraq war, they were unexplainably protected by the U.S. forces -- presumably because the Bush administration, with its less than profound understanding of Iranian political dynamics, wanted to keep the MKO as a potential weapon against the Islamic Republic. It is only recently that the Shi'ite-led government of Iraq felt strong enough to challenge the U.S. by taking control of Camp Ashraf.

It is no secret that the neocons have been pushing hard for years to get the State Department to remove the terrorist label from the MKO. As a result, there have been numerous efforts by Congress to remove them from the aforementioned list. However, these efforts have taken a new dimension in the past few years with the unholy MKO-neocon alliance. This campaign, which did not succeed even under the Bush administration, is surprisingly reaching a new crescendo under the Obama administration. Nobody can be fooled by the motivation of the MKO supporters in the United States, who have openly promoted either military action against Iran or the dismemberment of the country as the ultimate remedy. That the MKO is complicit in these policies is not surprising for a movement which has already betrayed the Iranian people by siding with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. For this, they have been universally reviled both by Iranians in Iran and the world.[...]

While the human rights issue of the refugees trapped in Camp Ashraf has to be dealt with in a compassionate way, the State Department must continue to resist pressures to legitimize the MKO. Pressure to remove the MKO from the U.S. terrorism list is a cynical ploy that can only have negative consequences for both the U.S. and the Iranian people. Legitimizing the MKO will not change the fact that it remains a terrorist organization, which has betrayed the Iranian people twice and is willing to go to any length to promote its undemocratic goals, including an unholy alliance with the neocons. The State Department must resist the pressure, for the interest of peace as well as the democratic movement in Iran.



Karim Pakravan is a member of the Faculty at DePaul University in Chicago.

### What's Behind the Campaign to Delist the Mujahedin al-Khalq Organization?

Michael Rubin – Commentary magazine – February 24, 2011

A growing number of former U.S. officials — both Republicans and Democrats — have hopped on the bandwagon to demand that the State Department delist the Mujahedin al-Khalq Organization (MKO) from its list of terrorist groups.

I consider the MKO a terrorist group for good reason. There is no doubt that the MKO has targeted Americans, and no amount of slick public relations should erase that. During my time in Iran, it was clear that while Iranians respect the United States and have little good to say about their own government, they all detest the MKO.

The enemy of my enemy is not always a friend: Iranian attitudes toward the MKO are analogous to Americans' views toward American Taliban John Walker Lindh. Iranians despise the MKO for siding with Saddam Hussein as he murdered Iranians. After liberation, the MKO embraced America not because it loves liberty and apple pie but rather because it is an ideological chameleon. Only fools would believe that the MKO is sincere in its pro-American rhetoric. While the MKO claims credit for intelligence coups, more often than not it is either a conduit for other countries to launder their own collections or the MKO simply makes it up.

One thing is certain: embracing the MKO is the surest way to make anti-American the 65 million Iranians.

Still, MKO lobbying is slick and, as a cult, it can rely on the entirety of its members' incomes to purchase support it might not otherwise receive. If American officials call for the delisting of the MKO, that is their right. For an honest debate on the issues, however, they should acknowledge the honorarium or consulting fees they receive from the group.

### Double standard on terror

Brendan Stone is cochair, Hamilton Coalition To Stop The War, The Spce, March 01, 2011

Mojahedin Khalq attacked its own country as well as ours

I write regarding a commentary article that appeared under the headline Egyptian protests provoke images of Iran, on Feb. 11 in The Spectator.

Almost anything critical of Iran seems to find a place in your newspaper, and the origin of the information does not seem to matter. The article tried to legitimize an anti-Iranian terrorist group. MEK, the Iranian People's Mojahedin Organization, which the author argues should be taken off the U.S. list of terrorist organizations, was founded after the 1979 Islamic Revolution by out-of-

power groups. Here's a partial list of its terrorist activities, which have resulted in 1,200 civilian deaths in Iran:

- June 1981: the bombing of the Islamic Republican Party headquarters, killing Iran's chief justice, 19 members of the Iranian Parliament, five cabinet ministers, and 47 other people;
- June 1981: the attempted assassination of Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini;
- August 1981: the bombing of Iranian President Ali Rajai's office, killing him, the prime minister and another person;
- The exploding of bombs in marketplaces and taxis around the capital city, Tehran.

MEK's international reach extends to Canada. On April 5, 1992, Iran's Ottawa embassy was stormed by a group of Iranian exiles linked to MEK. The mob ransacked much of the interior and broke the ambassador's arm. It was part of a co-ordinated series of actions that saw Iranian embassies attacked in Europe that same day.

MEK has no popular base in any country. It relies totally on foreign sponsorship. During the 1980-88 war against Iran launched by Iraq's late dictator, Saddam Hussein, which was funded partly by the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf states, MEK was allowed to set up a military base, Camp Ashraf, inside Iraq. Its own country under attack, MEK was given refuge inside the aggressor's territory.

The Spectator clearly has a double standard when it comes to terrorism. During the 1970 October Crisis, when ordinary civilians were wounded by FLQ bombs in Quebec and officials kidnapped and killed, The Spectator took a strong stand against terrorism in Canada. Why publish the call for MEK's rehabilitation now?

MEK is a small sect, united only by its capacity for violence, loyal to no country. However, in the Mideast, there are broadly based popular movements in various countries that the article lists as "extremists." One of these is Hezbollah in Lebanon, which boasts the largest bloc of members of the Lebanese parliament. Another is Hamas in Gaza, which came to power through election.

How is it that The Spectator can print an article endorsing a terror cell's call for democracy in Iran, while criticizing movements and governments that represent some of the only democratic processes in the Mideast?

Israel using Mojahedin Khalq (MKO, MEK, NCRI, Rajavi cult) to push pre-emptive war against Iran agenda

Mark Dankof, San Antonio - March 02, 2011

Memorial Day from San Antonio: The Final Resting Place of Marquis J. McCants and the Death of the American Republic

For my readers and broadcast listeners worldwide:

I was in attendance on February 27th, 2011 at the Chapel of the Four Chaplains award ceremony in San Antonio, Texas, where the presentation involved two (2) mainline clergyman, a lady Jewish rabbi serving as a Captain in the United States Air Force, an African-American United States Air Force chaplain/retired, and the United States Army's chief official for personally notifying family members at Fort Sam Houston/San Antonio of more American casualties in what was Mr. Bush's War, and is now Mr. Obama's War.

Since I was asked by several people about my views on the war after the end of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains event in San Antonio, let me be absolutely clear that my 2007 essay on the death of Army Specialist Marquis J. McCants remains definitive in articulating what I feel about the American military's War for Empire in the Middle East. Since that time, the tragedies of thousands of additional deaths, the Gaza and Mavi Marmara debacles, the deepening quagmire in Afghanistan, and a running money meter on the Iraq/Afghanistan conflicts which has now arrived at \$1 trillion dollars and counting, simply underscore why I wrote what I did in 2007.

In this 2007 essay, I warned of the False Flag Incident of the Century. I sound that warning again in early 2011. Israel's machinations for preemptive war with Iran have reached new heights and depths with their employment of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) to undertake a series of terrorist actions in that country, which includes the internationally publicized cases of the assassinations of Iranian scientists in the last two years, and other acts of violence in Tehran, and Azerbaijan/Diyala/and Balochistan Provinces.

The recent spread of revolutionary fervor throughout the Middle East, chiefly aimed at sleazy regimes in league with Israel and its Neo-Conservative agents for war in the American National Security Establishment, now combines with flagging domestic American political support for the War for Empire and Eretz Yisrael. While these developments are essentially positive, they have ominously created a level of desperation among the denizens of the Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) and its lapdogs in the American government and media, which may lead these servants of the Hidden Hand to a new and terrifying level of employment of the unthinkable to achieve their diabolical objectives.

Mark my words. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's McCollum Memorandum of October 1940 is now underway again in this new historical and political context of the 21st century.

Pat Buchanan and Ron Paul Republicans must unite as never before in exposing and opposing this great evil, which threatens the American Republic and our Constitution, even as it threatens the innocent around the planet.

## Ex-Officials Say They Were Paid To Attend Pro- Mojahedin Khalq Events

Eric Lach, TPM, March 04, 2011

Former Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-IN) and retired Gen. Anthony Zinni

Former Indiana Congressman Lee Hamilton (D) and former CENTCOM Commander Anthony Zinni told the Inter Press Service that they were paid to appear at recent events supporting the MEK, an Iranian opposition group currently considered a terrorist organization by the State Department.

Hamilton and Zinni are among the many big time former government officials and military leaders who have appeared at recent pro-MEK events sponsored by a group called Executive Action, LLC. (The events true organizers remain unclear, Executive Action's CEO Neil Livingstone would only tell TPM they included Iranian American groups.) Speakers at the events have portrayed the MEK as critical to any chance of regime change in Iran.

Hamilton, who once chaired the House Foreign Affairs Committee and was a co-chair of the 9/11 Commission, told reporter Barbara Slavin he was paid "a substantial amount" to appear at a panel in Washington D.C. in February. Zinni, who spoke at a similar event in January, said he had been paid his "standard fee," without detailing what that is.

According to Slavin, both men said they were unaware of the cultish elements attributed to the MEK. The State Department's 2008 Country Reports on Terrorism, for example, reported the following:

In addition to its terrorist credentials, the MEK has also displayed cult-like characteristics.

Upon entry into the group, new members are indoctrinated in MEK ideology and revisionist Iranian history. Members are also required to undertake a vow of "eternal divorce" and participate in weekly "ideological cleansings." Additionally, children are reportedly separated from parents at a young age. MEK leader Maryam Rajavi has established a "cult of personality." She claims to emulate the Prophet Muhammad and is viewed by members as the "Iranian President in exile."

The MEK's cult tendencies have also been noted by The New York Times, The New Yorker and The Council On Foreign Relations.

"They presented me with a platform that was thoroughly democratic," Hamilton told Slavin. "Were they misleading me? You always can be misled."

Zinni was firmer:

"De-listing ought to be done much the way we handled the PLO and the IRA," Zinni said in an interview.

[...]

Zinni, who famously inveighed against the U.S. invasion of Iraq and was a fierce opponent of Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi, seemed to have no similar compunctions about Iranian exiles.

"The Iranian community outside Iran has much more influence inside than the Chalabis of the world that we ended up supporting in Iraq," he said.

Over the years, the Iranian government has arrested and executed thousands of MEK members. Still, experts say that the group actually has very little support in Iran, where people remember how it fought for Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war. Iranian studies scholar Ahmad Sadri told TPM in February that U.S. support for the MEK would anger ordinary Iranians.

Although it was put on the U.S. terror list in 1997, the MEK has a history of support in Congress. While it originally blended elements of Islam and Marxism, the group and its supporters say it has renounced violence and now advocates for a secular and democratic Iran. After the fall of Hussein, who armed and funded the group for many years, about 3,400 MEK members were consolidated at Camp Ashraf, north of Baghdad. MEK backers also insist that U.S. forces should be permanently stationed at Ashraf, for protection. (Camp residents have been subject to attacks they blame on the Iraqi and Iranian governments.)

On Tuesday, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appeared before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where several lawmakers urged her to delist the MEK. Clinton said that the State Department is reviewing the MEK's designation in accordance with a Washington D.C. District Court of Appeal's recent ruling, after a suit brought by the MEK.

"You know it's proceeding," Clinton said. "These are very important considerations and reviews and you know as soon as we can we will make such a decision."

TPM reached out to both Zinni and Hamilton for comment.

#### Don't Support the Mojahedin Khalq (MEK, MKO, NCRI, Rajavi cult)

Daniel Larison, The American Conservative, March 03, 2011

Jason Rezaian makes a strong case against lending any support to Mujahideen-e Khalq:

..I would venture to say that there are still thousands, perhaps millions, of Iranians completely willing to speak openly about their attitudes on the 2009 election — but good luck finding a single person who is pro-MEK.

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In fact, working with the MEK would mean to cease speaking to the Iranian people. Furthermore, it would provide validation for those voices in the Iranian regime that have long accused the U.S. of meddling in their affairs, unnecessarily strengthening the domestic position of hardliners within the system. In a country with varied opinions on all subjects, the contempt reserved for the MEK is nearly universal [bold mine-DL].

Sitting here in Tehran, the mere thought of the MEK becoming a legitimate contributor to the policy dialogue on Iran is laughable, except to those of us who would actually like to see an end to the more than three decades of animosity between the U.S. and Iran, and hope for a productive future relationship through real diplomacy. To us — and we are much stronger in number than the MEK could ever hope to be — the idea is insane, heartbreaking and reprehensible.

It is difficult to convey just how misguided the push to take the MEK off the government's list of terrorist groups is, but Rezaian does it better than anyone else I've seen. I agree entirely with Rezaian's assessment, and I would add that the idea of working with the MEK is part of an effort to prevent real diplomacy from ever taking place and to make sure that animosity between the U.S. and Iran remains and increases. The main problem isn't that some of the people promoting this idea are misinformed about the degree of support the MEK has in Iran, but that the MEK's support in Iran or lack of it doesn't matter to them. What matters to these pro-MEK Americans is that the MEK is hostile to the government in Tehran, which matches up with their hostility to the Iranian government. Yes, they're being short-sighted and oblivious to internal Iranian politics, but what else is new?

#### Iraq parliament recognizes chemical attack on Halabja as genocide

AK News, March 19, 2011

The Iraqi parliament has officially recognized the chemical attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja in 1988 as genocide. Halabja .

The decision came during a parliamentary session on Thursday where the proposal was put to vote and was approved by the majority of the parliament.

Halabja, situated 81km south east of Sulaimaniyah and 364 km north east of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, was subjected to an airborne chemical weapon attack in March 1988 by the former Iraqi regime. The death toll was widely estimated at 5,000, with more than 10,000 injuries.

On Tuesday, on the 23rd anniversary of the attack on the Kurdish town, the Kurdish MPs in Baghdad commemorated the gassing of Halabja by opening a photo gallery of images depicting the attack and displaying video footage showing the victims. They also called on parliament to recognize it as genocide.

On March 16, 1988 Iraqi jets swooped over Halabja and sprayed it with a cocktail of mustard gas and the nerve agents Tabun, Sarin and VX for five hours.

The Iraqi Supreme Criminal Court sentenced Saddam Husein's cousin, Ali Hasan Majid notoriously known as "chemical Ali" to death for ordering the chemical attack.

Mr Majid had been earlier sentenced to death four times for crimes against humanity, his last sentence was in January 2010 - the same month he was executed.

The Iraqi Supreme Criminal Court was set up to try former members of Hussein's government. It was the same one that sentenced Saddam Hussein to death.

Many people from Halabja still suffer the after-effects of the gas attack, and since 2007, 17 victims of the gas attack have died of resulting medical complications.

UK Government confirms – MKO leaders deny families' access to their captive relatives inside  
Camp Ashraf

UK Parliament, March 23, 2011

House of Lords - Written Answers

Wednesday 23 March 2011

Iraq: Camp Ashraf

Questions

Asked by Lord Corbett of Castle Vale

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Howell of Guildford on 9 March (WA 410), whether they will ask the United Kingdom ambassador to Iraq to establish the purpose of 200 loudspeakers put around the perimeter of Camp Ashraf.[HL7641]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford):

We are aware of reports that loudspeakers are being used outside the Camp Ashraf entrance. The Government of Iraq have publicly stated that the purpose of the loudspeakers is to allow family members to communicate with residents inside Camp Ashraf, as they have apparently been forbidden any contact by the camp's leadership.

On 20 February 2011, our representatives met UN representatives and the Iraqi Government's Ashraf Committee to discuss the situation at Camp Ashraf.

We urged the Iraqi Government to ensure the residents' human rights are respected and we continue to encourage both sides to engage in constructive dialogue leading to a lasting, and peaceful, resolution.

Asked by Lord Corbett of Castle Vale

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Howell of Guildford on 9 March (WA 410), what is the proper title, purpose, membership and position within government of the government of Iraq's Ashraf Committee. [HL7642]

Lord Howell of Guildford:

We understand that the Iraqi Government's Ashraf Committee is composed of members from the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Immigration and Displaced People. The Ashraf Committee reports directly to the Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri Al-Maliki. The Ashraf Committee is responsible for implementing the Iraqi Government's policies regarding Camp Ashraf.