

ParsBrief

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70 MKO terrorists defect after arriving in Albania

PressTV , September 18, 2013

According to an official at the Iraqi prime minister's office on Friday, out of over 159 MKO terrorists granted asylum by the Albanian government, 70 members announced their separation from the group.

The unnamed Iraqi official revealed that these MKO members had been transferred from Camp Liberty, a former US military base in Baghdad.

The Albanian government has accommodated the 70 defectors in some apartments.

The MKO is listed as a terrorist organization by much of the international community and has committed numerous terrorist acts against Iranians and Iraqis.

The group fled Iran in 1986 for Iraq, where it received the support of Iraq's executed dictator, Saddam Hussein, and set up a terror camp known as Camp Ashraf in Diyala Province near the Iranian border.

In December 2011, the United Nations and Baghdad agreed to relocate some 3,000 MKO members from Camp New Iraq (former Camp Ashraf) to Camp Liberty.

On March 16, Albania's Prime Minister Sali Berisha announced in a statement that the Albanian government is ready to accommodate 210 members of the MKO group in Tirana "for humanitarian reasons."

Political experts, however, warn that Albania's decision to grant asylum to the MKO members has nothing to do with humanitarian concerns, and will give the terrorists a safe haven where they can work with former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

The KLA is notorious as a murderous group of drug traffickers and terrorists who receive training from NATO and the United States for operations around the world.

US Denies Visiting Allegedly Missing Iranians

Associated Press, September 22, 2013

BAGHDAD - The U.S. Embassy in Iraq says it has no information on the whereabouts of seven Iranian dissidents allegedly missing following a deadly shooting on their compound north of Baghdad this month.

The parent organization of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq dissident group says it has information that an American delegation has met the seven people held by Iraqi forces near Baghdad airport.

U.S. Embassy spokesman Rodney Ford told The Associated Press by email Sunday that the claim of an American visit is "categorically untrue." He says no one from the U.S. government has seen or visited those said to be missing.

Iraq on Friday denied that it is holding the seven former residents of Camp Ashraf said to be missing. A disputed shooting on the compound Sept. 1 left 52 MEK members dead.

UN mission in Iraq witnesses aftermath of Camp Ashraf attack

UN News Centre, September 3, 2013

The United Nations human rights office and the UN mission in Iraq today strongly condemned the killing of dozens of people in Camp Ashraf north of Baghdad, urging the Iraqi Government to investigate what happened.

The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) visited the site yesterday, meeting separately with the camp's surviving residents and the commander of Diyala's Police.

"Inside the camp, the delegation witnessed 52 bodies in a makeshift morgue," UNAMI said in a news release, with seven people still missing after Sunday's attack.

"All the deceased appeared to have suffered gunshot wounds, the majority of them in the head and the upper body, and several with their hands tied.

"The delegation also saw several damaged buildings, including one burnt, and was shown quantities of explosives," according to the statement.

UNAMI said it mediated between Iraqi authorities and camp's residents to persuade the residents to allow Iraqi ambulances to transport the bodies of the deceased to the morgue in Baquba. The Chief of Human Rights Office and other members of the delegation remained in Camp Ashraf for further monitoring, the Mission said.

"I call on the Iraqi Government to ensure that a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into this atrocious crime is conducted without delay and that the results of the

investigation are made public,” urged Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Gyorgy Busztin, who led the visit. He was joined by UNAMI heads of the human rights and of medical sections.

Meanwhile, the United Nations human rights office today urged the Iraqi Government to ensure that medical assistance is urgently provided for the wounded. According to the UN Assistance Mission in the country (UNAMI), Iraqi authorities have confirmed that medical support is being delivered to the Camp.

Camp Ashraf is comprised of Iranian exiles, many of them members of a group known as the People’s Mojahedeen of Iran.

More than 3,000 residents have been relocated to a transit facility know as Camp Liberty while the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) carries out a process to determine their refugee status, and resettle them outside of the country, in line with an agreement signed in December 2011 between the UN and the Iraqi Government.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also urged the Government to guarantee the protection of the residents who remain in Camp Ashraf as well as those who are currently in Camp Liberty.

“While we are still seeking details of what occurred, we also call upon the Iraqi government to quickly launch a full investigation to establish the facts and disclose the circumstances surrounding this attack,” OHCHR spokesperson Cecile Pouilly told journalists in Geneva.

In a statement from his spokesperson over the weekend, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the attack and extended his deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

Iraq Promises Probe Into Iranian Exile Killings

Associated Press, By ADAM SCHRECK, September 2, 2013

Iraq's prime minister ordered an investigation Monday into the slaying of half of the roughly 100 remaining residents at an Iranian dissident camp north of Baghdad, where a U.N. team got its first look at the aftermath of the large-scale bloodshed.

The promised probe will do little to appease backers of the more than 3,000 exiles left inside Iraq who believe they remain targets in a country whose government wants them gone.

Supporters of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq members living at Camp Ashraf insist that the Saddam Hussein-era facility came under attack Sunday from Iraqi forces. Iraqi officials have denied involvement, with some suggesting there was an internal dispute at the camp. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's office said a special committee is being set up to investigate what happened at the camp, located about 95 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of the Iraqi capital.

In a statement, it said the Iraqi government is committed to ensuring the safety of people living within its borders. But the terse remarks also made clear Baghdad's impatience with resolving the MEK issue, stressing "the necessity of transferring the MEK members who are staying in Iraq illegally."

The MEK opposes Iran's clerical regime and until last year was labeled a terrorist group by the United States. It carried out a series of bombings and assassinations inside Iran in the 1980s and fought alongside Iraqi forces in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. Saddam granted several thousand of its members sanctuary inside Iraq.

Iraq's current government is dominated by Shiites hostile to the former regime who have been bolstering ties with neighboring Shiite powerhouse Iran. They consider the MEK's presence in Iraq illegal and have been trying to expel its followers for years.

Shahin Gobadi, a spokesman for the MEK's parent organization, the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran, blames the Iraqi government for the killings and says it has no place investigating what happened.

"We have absolutely no confidence in this investigation. None whatsoever," Gobadi said. He called for an international fact-finding committee to investigate and said the perpetrators must be punished.

A U.N. team visited the camp on Monday, but that visit was intended to be "on humanitarian grounds, to assess where we can assist," said U.N. spokeswoman Eliana Nabaa.

The U.N. mission to Iraq at least for now does not have a mandate to conduct a formal investigation, she said. It is not clear what, if any, findings it plans to release.

Camp Ashraf is largely cut off from the outside world. The little face-to-face contact its residents have with outsiders is mainly through the Iraqi military, visiting diplomats and aid agencies.

Iraqi police were able to enter the camp Monday and have begun to investigate the incident, said Jamil al-Shimari, the police chief of Diyala province, where the camp is located.

He confirmed that 52 people had been killed inside the camp, the first time an Iraqi official has provided a death toll that matched that provided by representatives for the exiles. Some of the bodies had bullet wounds and others were burnt, he said.

Al-Shimari said the bodies had been moved to a hangar-like hall before Iraqi authorities arrived, and he expressed concern that would complicate any forensic investigation.

"The MEK people are still saying that they came under attack, but we could not find any evidence that the camp was attacked," al-Shimari said.

A large amount of explosives was found in one of the buildings, al-Shimari said.

The U.S. military disarmed residents of Camp Ashraf following the 2003 invasion. Gobadi, the dissidents' spokesman, dismissed suggestions of an internal struggle at the camp as "preposterous" and said any explosives at the camp were brought in by the attackers themselves.

The U.N., the United States and Britain have condemned the violence but avoided assigning blame. All three have urged Baghdad to ensure the security of the remaining Ashraf residents and investigate what happened.

Amnesty International also pressed Baghdad to carry out a full and impartial investigation, saying that the Iraqis have failed to conduct effective probes into previous deadly attacks on Iranian exile camps.

"This has meant that no one has been held accountable for these incidents, and that residents live in constant fear for their safety," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, the rights group's deputy director for the Mideast.

Camp Ashraf was home to more than 3,000 MEK followers until last year, when most residents were transferred to a former U.S. military base near Baghdad.

The Baghdad camp, known as Camp Liberty, is meant to be a temporary way station while the U.N. works to resettle the exiles abroad. It has been repeatedly targeted by militants in rocket attacks that have killed 10 people and injured many more, according to the MEK.

The president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, Maryam Rajavi, called Monday for U.N. peacekeepers to be deployed to protect residents at the two exile camps. That is unlikely to happen for now. Any such deployment would require a Security Council resolution.

The MEK last month accused the Iraqi authorities of deliberately cutting off water and electricity to Camp Ashraf, a charge denied last week by Georges Bakoos, who oversees the MEK issue for the Iraqi government. He has previously said that authorities planned to pursue the eviction of Camp Ashraf residents through Iraqi courts.

The resettlement process has been slow because the U.N. has had difficulty securing commitments from member states to accept the exiles and because some of them are reluctant to be separated from their comrades.

A total of 198 former residents of the two camps have been resettled abroad so far. Most of them have gone to Albania, which has offered to take in up to 210.

Associated Press writer Qassim Abdul-Zahra contributed reporting

Iranian exiles leave disputed Camp Ashraf in Iraq

Associated Press, By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ADAM SCHRECK, September 11, 2013

KHALIS, Iraq — The remaining 42 residents of an Iranian dissident camp that was the scene of a disputed outbreak of violence last week left the compound Wednesday to join their comrades at another camp near Baghdad airport, according to Iraqi officials and representatives for the exiles.

The transfer marks the end of a years-long effort by Iraqi authorities to evict members of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq dissident group from Camp Ashraf, an isolated Saddam Hussein-era compound that the group was extremely reluctant to leave.

The MEK is staunchly opposed to Iran's clerical regime, and thousands of its members were granted sanctuary inside Iraq by Saddam. It carried out a series of bombings and assassinations inside Iran in the 1980s and fought alongside Iraqi forces in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

Its fortunes inside Iraq turned sharply with Saddam's ouster following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Iraq's current Shiite-led government, which has been bolstering ties with neighboring Shiite powerhouse Iran, considers the group's presence inside Iraq illegal and wants its followers out of the country.

Most of the residents of Camp Ashraf, where members of the group had lived for decades, reluctantly moved to a former U.S. military base near Baghdad airport last year. A core of about 100 MEK followers had stayed behind to protect and sell off the group's remaining property.

A shooting on Sept. 1 left 52 of those residents dead. Another seven people are missing, according to the MEK. The group blames Iraqi security forces loyal to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki for the killings. Iraqi officials deny involvement and say an internal dispute is to blame.

United Nations officials visited the camp shortly after the shooting and condemned the bloodshed, but they have not reported any findings as to who was responsible.

Maj. Gen. Jamil al-Shimmari, the police chief of Diyala province, where the camp is located, and the mayor of the nearby town of Khalis, Oday al-Khadran, told The Associated Press that a convoy carrying the residents and their belongings left the camp Wednesday evening.

"This took a lot of patience. We dealt with them according to the law," al-Shimmari said. None of the Iraqi officials reported any incidents of violence during the transfer.

The residents were searched by Iraqi forces before departing and were allowed to visit the graves of loved ones who are buried at a cemetery inside the compound, al-Shimmari said. The residents initially refused to leave, but were eventually persuaded after representatives from the U.N. intervened, he added.

Authorities have prevented journalists from getting near the camp since the shooting this month.

A spokeswoman for the U.N. in Iraq, Eliana Nabaa, earlier in the day described the transfer process as "ongoing." She could not be reached for further comment after Iraqi officials confirmed the transfer had begun.

Representatives for the for MEK's parent organization, the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran, later confirmed the departure.

Mohammed Mohaddessin, chairman of the NCRI's foreign affairs committee, said in an interview that the council's president-elect, Maryam Rajavi, urged the remaining residents to leave over the past few days.

MKO Threatens to Assassinate Iranian, Iraqi Officials

Fars News Agency, September 16, 2013

In an unprecedented move, the spokesperson of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO, also known as MEK, NCRI and PMOI) threatened to resume assassination attacks on the lives of Iranian and Iraqi officials.

The comments came after the MKO suffered a blow on September 1, when a group of Iraqi people and relatives of those who were killed at the hands of the MKO in 1991 attacked the notorious Camp Ashraf, and killed some 50 members of the group, including its top commanders.

Posted on the website of the group late last week, MKO's spokesperson threatened that Iranian officials will face a fate similar to that of Iran's slain officials Lajevardi, Sayyad Shirazi, Ayatollah Dastgheib, Madani, Ashrafi Isfahani, and Hasheminejad, all of whom have been assassinated by the MKO, Hablian Association reported.

Seyed Asadollah Lajevardi and Sayyad Shirazi were assassinated by MKO members in late 1990s and Ayatollahs Dastgheib, Madani, Ashrafi Esfahani, and Hasheminejad were all victims of MKO's suicide operations during the 1980s.

The MKO group, founded in the 1960s, blended elements of Islamism and Stalinism and participated in the overthrow of the US-backed Shah of Iran in 1979. Ahead of the revolution, the MKO conducted attacks and assassinations against both Iranian and Western targets.

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 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.

Since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the group, which now adheres to a pro-free-market philosophy, has been strongly backed by neo-conservatives in the United States, who eventually took the MKO off the US terror list.

The US formally removed the MKO from its list of terror organizations in early September 2012, one week after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sent the US Congress a classified communication about the move. The decision made by Clinton enabled the group to have its assets under US jurisdiction unfrozen and do business with American entities, the State Department said in a statement at the time.

In September 2012, the last groups of the MKO terrorists left Camp Ashraf, their main training center in Iraq's Diyala province. They have been transferred to Camp Liberty which lies Northeast of the Baghdad International Airport. Only 80 MKO members were still in Camp Ashraf when clashes broke out two weeks ago.

Document proves role of MKO in AMIA case accusations against Iran

PressTV , August 23, 2013

January 27, 2013 will probably be remembered decades from now as a new starting point in relations between Argentina and Iran.

That date the governments of both countries decided to turn the page of a history besmirched by accusations that have not served to find the truth about the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in the Argentine capital city.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between Buenos Aires and Tehran earlier this year has been praised by many here, from ruling party MPs and experts to social, political and religious leaders who have long-battled foreign interests' interference in the investigation.

But the MoU has also found strong resistance that has hindered efforts to know the one thing that matters: Who is truly responsible for the killing of 85 Argentineans?

AMIA special prosecutor Alberto Nisman blamed Tehran and issued arrest warrants for top Iranian officials in 2006. But what did he base his certainty on?

According to the recently released arrest warrant document, Nisman solely listened to the testimonies of members of Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization, which is an anti-Iran terrorist group.

The MKO-with a history of bombings in Iran and which has been paradoxically removed from the US State Department's list of terrorist groups- seems to have convinced Nisman regarding AMIA center killing.

Did they convince him? Or are there other players in this case?

The MoU sets the creation of a Truth Commission and will allow Argentine judicial officials to question the alleged suspects targeted by prosecutor Nisman. The MoU has been approved by both the Congress of Argentina and the government of Iran.

Despite the information revealed by the intelligence document, a 500-page report released by Argentine prosecutor Alberto Nisman claims that Iran is increasing its influence in Latin America. This has provided pro-Israel lobbies with a new pretext to continue their condemnation of the AMIA Memorandum.

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Ban deplures attack on Iranian exile camp north of Baghdad

UN News Centre, August 2, 2013

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today condemned an attack on an Iranian exile camp near the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, and urged the Government to launch an investigation into what happened.

“The Secretary-General deplures the tragic events in Camp Ashraf today that have reportedly left 47 killed,” his spokesperson said in a statement. “He expresses his sorrow and extends his deepest condolences to the families of the victims.”

Iraqi authorities have confirmed that medical support is being delivered to the Camp, according to the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Camp Ashraf is comprised of Iranian exiles, many of them members of a group known as the People’s Mojahedeen of Iran.

More than 3,000 residents have been relocated to a transit facility know as Camp Liberty while the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) carries out a process to determine their refugee status, and resettle them outside of the country, in line with an agreement signed in December 2011 between the UN and the Iraqi Government.

This resettlement is a priority for UNAMI, in whose work Mr. Ban reiterated that he has “full support for and his absolute confidence”.

The UN mission said it intends to rapidly conduct it own assessment of the violence.

In today’s statement, Mr. Ban urged the Government to restore security in the Camp and stressed that it is its responsibility to “ensure the safety and security” of the residents.

He also called for the Government of Iraq to promptly investigate the incident and disclose the findings