

ParsBrief

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Ava Association (Germany)

Ava Association Visits the European Parliament

On 9th September 2004, a delegation of the Ava Association (Germany) represented by Mr Mohammed Hossein Sobhani, Mr Milad Ariyayi and Mr Khosro Jan Nesaran, was received by and had meetings in the European Parliament with:

Ms Angela Subhan, Head of Human Rights (Iran) in the European Parliament

Ms Veronique Dekeyser, MEP (Belgium) and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Ms Simone Susskind, consultant to the Judiciary Minister of Belgium

The delegation raised their deep concern over the behaviour of the Belgian Government in bowing to the pressure of the Likudists in Israel and the NeoCons in the US to divide global terrorism into Good Terrorists and Bad Terrorists and therefore allow the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation (MKO) to operate freely, to recruit and misuse the democratic institutions of that country.

In this three hour meeting, the delegation gave a briefing about the systematic human rights abuses inside the MKO and its use of imprisonment, physical and mental torture and above all, the handing over of disaffected members and critics to the former regime of Saddam Hussein which resulted in the victims being subjected to severe mistreatment in the prisons of the Intelligence Services and in Abu Ghraib prison of the toppled dictator. Ms Dekeyser and Subhan as well as Ms Susskind were deeply touched by the briefing and the evidence presented by the delegation.

The delegation continued by presenting reports and documents concerning their continued activities in helping the families of the remaining detained disaffected members of the MKO in Ashraf camp in Iraq, and received welcome news from the European Parliament of its readiness in helping to resolve the problem in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The delegation emphasised that the MKO cannot be considered as a political organisation as long as it continues its violent and terrorist activities. The group has no social support whether among Iranian society in general or among the opposition forces against the current ruling regime.

In this meeting, the plots by MKO agents to physically eliminate about 25 of their ex members and executives in European countries were discussed. Plots which required the French police to arrest Maryam Rajavi and more than 160 of their members and leaders on 17 June 2003 in Paris.

At the end, both sides emphasised expanding their dialogue and briefings in the future.

Ava Association

12/09/2004

Committee tells Belgian foreign minister US exploiting Mojahedin as "slaves"

12 September 2004 13:11

BBC Monitoring Middle East

English

Tehran, 12 September: The "International Committee for the Support of Victims of the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MKO)" has sent a letter to the Belgian foreign minister condemning the decision to allow the MKO to hold a demonstration in Brussels on Monday [13 September].

"On 13 September when European Foreign Ministers meet in Brussels and the International Atomic Energy Agency meets in Vienna to review Iran's nuclear industry, the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq organization (MKO) has organized, using the pseudonym "Safarazan," a demonstration in Brussels," said the committee in the letter published on its website <http://www.iran-interlink.org/> and the independent Iranian website Gooya.com.

"The purpose of this demonstration is to demand that the MKO be removed from the EU's list of terrorist entities. So, the MKO is listed as a terrorist entity, but through the simple deception of using a different name it has gained permission to hold a public demonstration in Brussels."

The letter of the Committee is addressed to Louis Michel, who was replaced recently by Karel De Gucht as Belgium's foreign minister.

"The MKO has been busy buying up Afghan and other refugees in Europe to come to its demonstration by paying their expenses and food and accommodation for a few days."

The letter has been signed by a number of former leading MKO members like Ali Akbar Rastgu, ex-member and ex-head of foreign affairs section of MKO in Germany, Mohammad Hoseyn Sobhani ex member of central committee of MKO, eight years in MKO prisons and 2 years in Abu Ghurayb prison, now living in Germany, Masu'd Khodabandeh ex executive committee member of MKO, ex member of National Council of Resistance.

The full list of the individual signatories and their contacts are attached with the letter which was issued from Leeds, UK. "The stance of your government is deplorable. Surely in any democracy freedom of expression does not stretch to giving a public platform to organized crime and terrorism," says the letter in English.

"Yet in Belgium this is exactly what will happen on 13 September." It notes that in the US administration the neocons have their own agenda and are exploiting MKO members in Iraq as slaves in their war.

"The use of the MKO by the intelligence agencies of countries hostile towards Iran, particularly on the issue of nuclear energy, is evident. "

"Following the exploitation of an MKO representative in the Fox News network as a propaganda mouthpiece, comes the news that those arrested in Iran on charges of espionage are MKO operatives."

"This is at a time when the MKO and its political wing the NCRI are designated as terrorist in the USA." "We do not think that closing your eyes to the activities of a terrorist organization in your country will act as a lever against Iran's government. In fact, it only fortifies the position of the hard-liners and undermines the efforts of the reformists inside and moderates outside the county," says the letter.

"We are also pursuing the prosecution of Masu'd Rajavi in an appropriate court so that whenever he surfaces from hiding in Ashraf camp he is brought to justice for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Other MKO leaders including Maryam Azodanlu (Rajavi) are already under investigation for terrorism in Paris."

"We will strongly recommend that the officials of every county whose foreign ministers are attending the meeting on Monday 13 September put the question to your government and to your good self as to why you have neglected your responsibilities as the host in favour of cheap propaganda against Iran, using Afghan and other refugees, and paid for with money stolen from the Iraqi people by the agents of the former regime of Saddam Husayn," concludes the letter.

Hidden Finance of Mojahedin

Written by the journalists, Eric Pelletier, Jean – Marie Pontant

The movement of Iranian rebels has had complex circuits of financing. The inspectors closed their accounts.

The police of France searched for the origin of millions of dollars found in Auver-Sur-Oise in June, 2003. At the late of June 2003, 17 members of MKO were interrogated because of their commitment in some crimes related to a terrorist intention. All these arrested persons after a few days were liberated.

The judge Jean Louis Brugiere and the inspectors of the financial investigations, begin to clarify the strange circuits of financing in the organization. According to the inspections in 2003, about 8.5 millions of dollars was achieved; however, some of the amounts of money were

transferred to the bank in Germany, Switzerland and England. The experts who translated from Persian 1 million documents found in Auver Sur_ d'oise, related to purchasing 300 computers, clarified the countable property of MKO. They also focus their attention, especially on the organized charities in France and abroad, by the organization. The sums were transferred to different banks by a charity organization, called Iran AID, this organization apparently commits in humanistic activities. Some of the donators, living in France, were known by the inspector because of their checks found in the saves of the organization.

The police completed its investigations with the detailed document of the methodology functioned for the charities. In fact they suspect the existence of pressure or annoyance. According to the charities achieved from foreign countries, only in 2002; they collected 20 millions of dollars. For the procedure of laundering these sums of money they had a complex circuit in the United States, Germany and United Kingdom and Turkey. The inspectors also pay attention to the letters received by MKO to find out the sources of the finance, they realized that MEK had a contract with a community for selling the satellite instrument, the sum found here was mounted to 2 million dollars a year.

With the falling of Saddam Hussein, Mujahedin-e-Khalq missed their principal donator of funds. DST disposed a document by this title: ((A cassette shows Maryam Rajavi, the wife of the leader of the organization, shaking hands with Saddam Hussein, the dictator of Iraq)). The studies on the accounts of MEK would raise more surprises.

Jack Straw: the answer is 'no'

Reuters

September 14, 2004

Thousands of opponents of the Iranian government demonstrated in Brussels on Monday, demanding the European Union harden its policy on Tehran and remove a key exiled opposition group from its list of terror groups.

Waving banners declaring "The Mullahs are the terrorists", Iranian exiles called for referring Tehran's nuclear programme to the U.N. Security Council, as Washington is seeking.

Rally organisers said over 25,000 joined the protest outside an EU ministers' meeting. Police put the figure at 4,500.

The EU put the People's Mujahideen Organisation (MKO), the main armed Iranian opposition group, on its list of terrorist organisations in early 2002. It found that prior to the U.S.-led Iraq war, the group had used the country to attack Iran and had several camps equipped with tanks, guns and helicopter gunships.

MKO supporters point to a recent decision by the U.S. military to give its members protected status in Iraq after establishing they had not been combatants there.

EU officials were, however, unwilling to reassess the MKO. "I have seen no evidence in favour of removing them (from the terrorist list), they were and remain a terrorist organization" British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told reporters. "The answer to that is 'no'."

Will U.S. accuse members of MKO

Oct. 13 - The new report by chief U.S. weapons inspector Charles Duelfer contains evidence that Saddam Hussein allegedly used the United Nations-managed Oil-for-Food program to provide millions of dollars in subsidies to a group the U.S. State Department has branded a foreign terrorist organization.

advertisement

But so far, the Bush administration has made little of Duelfer's surprise discovery which, on its face, would seem to strengthen White House claims that Saddam's regime had longstanding ties to terrorism.

In fact, U.S. officials concede, the Duelfer finding does little to advance the administration's case and could even be politically awkward. The State Department designated terrorist group in question, is the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK)—an Iranian opposition group that was long backed by Saddam's regime as a counterweight to the Tehran government. Not only does the MEK have no connection either to September 11 or Al Qaeda, in the past, it has had strong support from members of Congress—including leading Republicans in both chambers and a current Bush cabinet member, Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Duelfer's evidence linking the MEK to the burgeoning Oil-for-Food scandal comes from 13 secret lists that were maintained by Iraqi oil officials of favored recipients for vouchers for the sale of oil overseas. Duelfer's report says the Iraqi government maintained a rigorous high-level process for nominating foreign companies or individuals who were to be awarded the Oil-for-Food vouchers and that Saddam himself personally signed off on every name that was put (or struck off) the list.

The Oil Allocation Recipient List published in Duelfer's report says that, among Saddam's many beneficiaries, was the MEK (spelled in the report as Mojahedie Khalq, based apparently on how it appeared in the Iraqi documents). The list indicates the MEK received a series of oil allocations totaling more than 38 million barrels over a four-year period prior to the U.S. invasion. That was large enough to theoretically enable the group to collect more than \$16 million in profits; it could receive those proceeds by doing little more than reselling Iraqi oil to

middlemen (who could then resell it to real oil companies in Western countries like the United States).

TERROR WATCH Current Column | Archives

- Terror Watch: Cheney's Debate Misrepresentations on Iraq

In his debate with John Edwards, Dick Cheney had a brand-new version of the events that led to war

- Terror Watch: Preaching Insurgency in Iraq

A prominent Muslim cleric has become a radical foe of the U.S. presence in Iraq. He's not alone

According to the list, people using the MEK's oil vouchers actually collected (or "lifted," in oil-industry jargon) around 27 million barrels of Iraqi oil during the four years before the U.S. invasion. By cashing in on the vouchers, the MEK could have generated profits of at least \$11.2 million, Duelfer's figures suggest. One U.S. official said the vouchers were most likely Saddam's way of rewarding the MEK for the support it provided his regime. The list also says that the MEK apparently used two British companies or business entities to handle the oil deals. Initial efforts to trace the companies named in the report have so far proved unsuccessful.

In a telephone interview from Paris, Shahin Gobadi, chief press spokesman for the National Council of Resistance of Iran, the MEK's political arm, vehemently denied the charge that the group benefited under the Oil-for-Food program. "This is an absolute lie," he told NEWSWEEK, adding that he believed the list with the group's name was a "fabrication" by Iranian intelligence. "This is part of a smear campaign by the Iranians intelligence agents."

The new documents relating to the MEK underscore the awkward problems the group has long presented for U.S. officials. For the past seven years, the State Department has labeled the MEK a terrorist organization, depicting it as a cultlike organization that "mixes Marxism and Islam." The department's most recent annual "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report says the group has been implicated in repeated bombings, mortar attacks and political assassinations inside Iran. "This group has a long, bloody history of committing terrorist acts and retains the capability to do so," a U.S. counterterrorism official said today when asked about the MEK.

Saddam is known to have supported the group for years as a potential subversive force against the theocratic regime in Tehran. Just last year, the U.S. Treasury Department shut down the operations of an affiliated group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, on the grounds that it was serving as the political front—with an office at the National Press Building in Washington, D.C.—for the MEK.

But at the same time, the MEK has been championed for years by leading members of Congress who, like its spokesman, have described it as a legitimate resistance movement

opposing a tyrannical government run by religious fanatics. As recently as four years ago, more than 200 members of Congress signed statements endorsing the National Council's cause (including prominent Florida Republican Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Missouri GOP Sen. Kit Bond.)

When Mahnaz Samadi, one of the group's spokeswomen, was detained by U.S. immigration authorities in early 2000 on grounds that she did not disclose her past "terrorist" ties, including her role as a "military commander" for the MEK, John Ashcroft, then a senator, wrote a letter of "concern" to Attorney General Janet Reno. As first reported by NEWSWEEK in September 2002, Ashcroft described Samadi as a "highly regarded human-rights activist" and a "powerful voice for democracy." (A spokeswoman for Ashcroft at the time said he was "supporting democracy and freedom in Iran" and that he did not "knowingly" intend to endorse a member of any terrorist organization.)

The question of how to view the MEK has intensified in the wake of the war in Iraq. After the invasion, U.S. troops rounded up thousands of MEK militants, viewing them at first as terrorists who had been aligned with Saddam. But the Bush administration was divided over what to do with them. Some Pentagon hard-liners and neoconservative political activists pushed last year to provide the group with secret U.S. backing as part of a broader covert campaign to destabilize the regime in Tehran.

But Bush ultimately rejected that move on the grounds that it would send mixed messages in the war on terror, one administration official said. In the meantime, administration moderates, including officials at the State Department, argued, by contrast, that not only should MEK militants in Iraq be rounded up and disarmed, but that the US should consider some sort of deal with Tehran whereby MEK fighters in Iraq would be turned over to Iranian authorities. In exchange, State Department officials contended, Iranian authorities might be persuaded to deport or extradite Al Qaeda leaders like Osama bin Laden's son Saad and Al Qaeda planner Saif Al-Adel, who are believed to be under house arrest in Iran. With U.S.-Iranian tensions running high at the moment, however, the possibility of such a bargain now seems unlikely.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has been methodically reviewing the status of about 3,800 MEK militants at Camp Ashraf, about 60 miles northeast of Baghdad. Last summer, The New York Times reported that U.S. authorities in Iraq had found no basis to charge any of them with violations of American law, prompting MEK supporters say that that finding alone was ample evidence that the group should be stricken from the State Department terror list. "There is a contradiction here," Gobadi, the National Council spokesman in Paris, said today. "If none of its members have any connection to terrorism, how can it be described as a terrorist organization?"

But a U.S. official told NEWSWEEK that more recent reporting from Camp Ashraf indicates that about 40 MEK members have been identified as possible candidates for prosecution. Most likely, the official said, the prosecutions would take place in Iraq, where MEK members might be charged with crimes against humanity or war crimes associated with assistance they provided Saddam's regime—including acting as a paramilitary force to suppress uprisings by the Shia. Another handful, perhaps four to six, might be brought to the United States for prosecution for terrorist-related acts or other crimes, the official said.

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