



IRAN TODAY & TOMORROW

WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

The Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran (CSRI), a 501(c)(3), non-profit and independent group, is committed to advance change in Iran through an internationally monitored referendum as the only peaceful means to bring democracy and establish a secular and representative government in Iran.

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International front against fundamentalism

Iranians hold anti-Tehran regime rally in Berlin Scots Tory to speak against Iran at Berlin demonstration

The Scotsman Feb 10 JOHN INNES



A SCOTS Conservative MEP is to address a gathering of 40,000 exiled Iranians in Germany at a demonstration against the fundamentalist regime in Tehran. Struan Stevenson will tell the crowd at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin today that "the days of the brutal fascist regime are numbered".

The demonstration has been organised by the National Council for Resistance in Iran. The organisation's leader, Maryam Rajavi, was recently controversially invited to the European Parliament in Strasbourg by Mr Stevenson.

The mullahs who rule Iran consider Mrs Rajavi a terrorist and protested over her invitation to address MEPs. But Mr Stevenson, who is the co-chairman of the Friends of Free Iran intergroup in the European Parliament, said it is Tehran's rulers who are the real terrorists.

He will say: "The mullahs have executed 120,000 supporters of the resistance movement since they came to power. They routinely execute pregnant women, hang children in public, stone women to death, amputate arms and legs of offenders and condone torture.

"Now, in open defiance of the West, the clerical regime in Tehran is pursuing its relentless quest to construct a nuclear weapon." Mr Stevenson will tell the crowd that only the Iranian resistance can overthrow the regime and bring democracy to the people of Iran.

Two days ago, the Tehran government offered an olive branch to the United States, claiming it wanted to resolve decades of differences.

Iran exiles defy bans to hold rally, call for end to clerical rule



Iran Focus, Feb. 10 Berlin – Thousands of Iranian exiles braved cold and rain, and defied bans by two European governments, to hold a rally in the heart of the German capital on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the revolution that ended monarchy in Iran. The exiles, supporters of the dissident coalition

National Council of Resistance of Iran, had received authorization from municipal and police authorities in Berlin to hold a demonstration at the landmark Brandenburg Gate on February 10 to support democratic change in Iran on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Organizers said the rally -- transferred to Berlin at short notice after French authorities refused to allow it to take place in Paris -- was intended to send a message in support of democratic change in Iran. In all, 40,000 Iranians from 20 countries across Europe were expected to attend the rally. In the early hours of Thursday, however, the Berlin authorities banned the demonstration and thousands of policemen were deployed throughout the city to enforce the ban. Police blocked entire streets as policemen went to hotels, airports, and train stations to warn the thousands of Iranians coming into the city not to join the rally. Many buses and private cars were prevented from entering the city, passengers of chartered planes were kept waiting for hours on the tarmac, and Iranians who stayed in Berlin overnight

were woken up by noisy policemen at dawn, telling them the rally had been cancelled and asking them to return home immediately. Police finally gave way and removed restrictions on protesters after rally organisers got an emergency injunction from the Berlin courts, which ruled that German police action against Iranians attending a peaceful protest with prior permission was unlawful. Prior to the court ruling, Iranians began holding smaller gatherings in different parts of the city. A dozen parliamentarians, jurists and human rights advocates from Germany, France, Britain, and Belgium held an impromptu press conference in Nikolsburger Platz, where several thousand Iranians had gathered. They denounced what they described as "a Paris-Tehran collusion to gag Iranian dissidents in Europe" and supported the "third option" proposed by opposition leader Maryam Rajavi in her speech at the European Parliament in December. Rajavi rejected foreign "appeasement" of the Iranian regime and opposed war and invasion as a solution. Instead, she called for an "Iranian solution": an end to the religious dictatorship by the Iranian people themselves. The rally had been sponsored by more than 100 political and human rights organisations as well as 250 parliamentarians from across Europe.

Iranians hold anti-Tehran regime rally in Berlin



AFP Feb 10 Berlin - Opponents of hardliners in Iran rallied in Germany in a demonstration timed around the 26th anniversary of the Islamic revolution, police said. The police had outlawed the rally amid fears that it would be used to recruit Islamic radicals but a Berlin city court overturned the ban and allowed it to go ahead under strict conditions. At the capital's historic Brandenburg Gate, a noisy crowd shouted anti-regime slogans and some demonstrators held photographs of people who disappeared during and after the revolution, which ousted the US-back shah. Police were out in force but watched discreetly from the sidelines. Organisers had said the rally was to

protest against the regime and its controversial nuclear programme. But a spokesman for the interior ministry said the authorities believed it was aimed at recruiting more members for the People's Mujahedin, a group that is classified as a terrorist organisation by the European Union. The organizers had claimed that some 40,000 Iranians from across Europe were converging on Berlin. Before the ban was lifted, an AFP photographer said that around 400 to 500 people had gathered peacefully on a square in western Berlin well away from the Brandenburg Gate and were being carefully watched by police. More than a dozen buses stood nearby. Some in the crowd held banners criticizing the Islamic regime in Tehran

Nuclear proliferation

Bush: World must speak with one voice on Iran nukes



Reuters Feb 9 WASHINGTON - President George W. Bush said on Wednesday Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a "very destabilizing" force and that it was important for the world to speak with one voice against Tehran's program. "The Iranians just need to know that the free world is working together to send a very clear message: Don't develop a nuclear weapon," Bush said. "And the reason we're sending that message is because Iran with

a nuclear weapon would be a very destabilizing force in the world," he said during a meeting with Poland's president. Bush said he looked forward to discussing concerns about Iran with European allies. "It's important we speak with one voice," he said. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has raised U.S. concerns about Iran during her trip to Europe. "I'm very pleased with the response that European leaders have given to Dr. Rice on this issue," Bush said. U.S. officials, including Rice and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, have said the United States was pursuing a diplomatic solution for its concerns about Iran, and not a military one. Rumsfeld has said Iran was still years away from having a nuclear weapon. Rice said on Wednesday a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear program was "in our grasp" if Europe sent the same tough message as the United States, threatening U.N. sanctions.

Rice attacks EU countries over Iran nuclear drive



AFP Feb 9 By Peter Mackler BRUSSELS - US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Wednesday took a swipe at European countries negotiating to halt

Iran's nuclear drive, saying they had failed to make sufficiently clear the threat of UN sanctions. Rice made her remarks concerning the negotiations led by Britain, France and Germany in an interview with Fox News to be broadcast a day after she made a major appeal for transatlantic unity following the divisions over the Iraq war. "The Iranians need to hear that if they are unwilling to live with verification measures... then the Security Council referral looms," she said. "I don't know that anyone has said that as clearly as they should to the Iranians." The negotiations over Iran's suspected nuclear ambitions have been a major issue throughout Rice's eight-nation tour of Europe, her first trip as chief US diplomat since taking over from Colin Powell last month.

The United States accuses Iran of trying to obtain nuclear weapons under cover of developing a civilian atomic energy programme, and has not excluded a military option against Tehran.

However, Washington has so far supported the three EU countries' diplomatic efforts, which have focussed on getting Iran to promise not to make the bomb in return for trade privileges with the 25-nation bloc. "The international community has got to be certain to speak with one very tough voice to the Iranians that it is not going to be acceptable for Iran to build a nuclear weapon under cover of civilian nuclear power," Rice told Fox. She said the United States had believed all along that Iran should be referred to the UN Security Council for violating international non-proliferation norms. "But they need to hear that the discussions that they're in with the Europeans are not going to be a kind of way-station where they are allowed to continue their activities, that there's going to be an end to this and that they're going to end up in the Security Council," Rice said. Her remarks come a day after Rice flew into Paris, a hotbed of opposition to the US-led war in Iraq, proclaiming that a "new chapter" had been opened in transatlantic relations strained for two years by divisions over the war. But at the same time, French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said the Europeans needed more support from the United States if they were to persuade Tehran to renounce its suspected attempts to develop a nuclear bomb. For international pressure to work, Barnier said, "we need Russia, we need China, and we also need the support of the United States in this delicate phase". At their latest round of talks with Iran in Geneva Tuesday, according to diplomats, Britain, France and Germany warned the country about activities that verge on breaches of its deal to freeze nuclear fuel cycle work. Rice flew in Wednesday to Brussels for a working lunch with her NATO counterparts and talks with European Union officials before heading off for Luxembourg, the last stop on her tour of Europe and the Middle East.

Rice: Iran Cannot Set Its Own Nuclear Terms

Reuters Feb 8 PARIS - Iran cannot be permitted to set its own conditions for carrying out a pledge not to develop nuclear weapons, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Tuesday. "We should not let the Iranians continue to create new conditions that have to be fulfilled somehow before they are prepared to live up to their international obligations," she said after talks with French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier. Britain, France and Germany are seeking to persuade Iran, a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to renounce nuclear weapons as Tehran develops a civilian atomic program Washington suspects is designed to give it nuclear arms.

Meddling In Iraq

Iranian mole in Baghdad souq exposed Mon. 7 Feb 2005



Iran Focus Feb 7 Baghdad Iran's notorious Ministry of Intelligence and Security has been using a spy ring in Baghdad's main souq (bazaar) to carry out a range of covert activities, informed sources in the Iraqi capital told Iran Focus. The ring was led by a senior agent code-named Hamdi, an Iraqi of Iranian extraction who owned a shop in Baghdad's Shurja souq, said the sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. A network of indigenous operatives recruited by Hamdi collected information on the Iraqi economy and Iranian dissidents based in Iraq, which was passed on to MOIS officers based in the Iranian embassy in Baghdad. One of these officers, Hossein Jomeh, oversees the embassy's surveillance and intelligence collection on members of the Iranian opposition group, the People's Mojahedin, based in a camp northeast of Baghdad. Hamdi used his cover of being a merchant to travel frequently to the Islamic republic. MOIS officers also used Hamdi's network as a conduit for handing out money to their Iraqi agents and smuggling sensitive materials to Iraq.

Sponsor of terrorism

Blair brands Iran a sponsor of terrorism



AFP Feb 8 By Robert MacPherson LONDON - British Prime Minister Tony Blair called Iran a state sponsor of terrorism on Tuesday, and urged the Islamic republic to meet EU demands to renounce its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons. "It certainly does sponsor terrorism. There's no doubt about that at all," Blair told a parliamentary committee, agreeing with US President George W. Bush's view of Iran as a leading backer of terrorists.

Asked if a military strike on Iran might be necessary if it has nuclear weapons, Blair replied: "I'm not saying that. I think it depends what the evidence base is." "I hope very much that if we can make progress in the Middle East, that Iran realises that it's got an obligation to help that, not hinder it," he said, referring to Iran's support for Palestinian militant groups. Blair said it was a "good sign" that the United States and Europe were "working together" to convince Iran to abandon its feared pursuit of nuclear weapons. It was equally a "good sign" that France and Germany -- which opposed the US and British invasion of Iraq -- were, together with Britain, striving to reach a diplomatic solution with Tehran. "Iran has now been given a set of obligation that it's got to fulfill," the prime minister added. "I hope they fulfill it." Blair, in shirtsleeves, appeared before the British parliament's liaison committee for more than two hours as Iranian and EU diplomats met in Geneva to discuss Iran's nuclear programme. Iran agreed in November with Britain, France and Germany to suspend all uranium enrichment-related activities in order to allay fears of a weapons drive and in return for talks on trade, security and technological incentives. The Iran-EU talks began in Brussels in December, then moved to Geneva in January before resuming this week, still in Geneva. "This week's negotiations with the Europeans are the most important part of the nuclear negotiations," Iran's vice president and atomic energy head Gholamreza Aghazadeh told state television. But there is a risk of deadlock, with EU negotiators demanding Iran totally dismantle its nuclear fuel programme, including enrichment, to provide the necessary "objective guarantees" that it does not seek atomic weapons. Bush branded Iran "the world's primary state sponsor of terror, pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve", in his February 2 State of the Union address. Four days later his Vice President Dick Cheney said Washington supported Europe's "good-faith effort", but added that it had not eliminated "any alternative". Cheney did not elaborate, though he indicated that if Iran failed to back down, the UN Security Council would be asked to impose international sanctions.

Last week in London, at the start of a European and Middle East tour, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said a military attack on Iran was not on the agenda.

Deteriorating conditions of human rights

Iran: Political Prisoners Held with Violent Criminals



Human Rights Watch Feb 9 New York –The confinement of political prisoners in Iran together with violent criminals endangers their lives, Human Rights Watch said today. Human Rights Watch called for the immediate release of all prisoners held for the peaceful expression of political opinions. Six prisoners in Rajaii Shahr prison near Karaj, a suburb of Tehran, launched a hunger strike on January 25 to protest their confinement with dangerous and belligerent criminals who have assaulted and intimidated them. The six prisoners are Bina Darab-Zand, Arzhang Davoodi, Hojat Zamani, Mehrdad Lohrasbi, Farzad Hamidi, and Jaafar Iqdami. Prior to their hunger strike, Farzad Hamidi was assaulted inside the prison by a well-known drug dealer who threatened his life. Bina Darab-Zand and Farzad Hamidi were arrested last June in front of the United Nations building in Tehran during a protest against human rights violations in Iran. Darab-Zand was sentenced to three and half years' imprisonment for his participation in the protest. Mehrdad Lohrasbi was arrested during the student protests at Tehran University in 1999 and is serving a 15-year prison term. "Iranian authorities regularly claim they hold no prisoners for political reasons. This has absolutely no credibility," said Joe Stork, Washington

director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East division. "These prisoners are being held for no reason other than their expression of peaceful political views." Human Rights Watch is extremely concerned for the safety and health of prisoners who are on hunger strike. After the first week of hunger strike, the health of one of the prisoners, Mehrdad Lohrasbi, deteriorated so considerably that other prisoners asked him to end his participation in the hunger strike. "We hold the Iranian government responsible for these prisoners' lives and well-being," Stork said. "Confining them with violent criminals could certainly endanger their lives."

Human Rights Watch said Iran has recently intensified its harsh treatment of political activists. The judiciary is handing down lengthy prison sentences following unfair trials of critics. In one recent case, Heshmatallah Tabarzadi, a student leader, was sentenced by Tehran's revolutionary court on December 26 to sixteen years in prison for "propaganda against the regime" and acting against national security. Human Rights Watch said that his trial was held behind closed doors and in the absence of his lawyer. The judge's final ruling cites "interviews with foreign radio," "writing letters to the Leader," and "disseminating statements against the regime" as the basis for the harsh sentence. "None of these activities are crimes in any recognized sense," said Stork. "Iranians should be able to speak their minds without putting their lives at risk." Human Rights Watch urged the Iranian government to end its harassment and prosecution of peaceful activists, writers, and journalists. "The Iranian government is well aware of the intense public scrutiny of its human rights record. A minimum requirement for improving the human rights conditions in Iran is the unconditional release of all prisoners held solely for their political beliefs," said Stork.