



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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Human right violations and protest in Iran

Iran oil city uprising leaves "hundreds" dead or wounded



Iran Focus, Apr. 20 – Iran's southern Khuzestan province was the scene of further chaos today as another round of fierce fighting erupted between people and government forces, following severe clashes several days ago which left dozens dead and hundreds wounded or arrested. The latest clashes broke out this morning between Iran's State Security Forces (SSF) and local residents in several districts of the city of Ahwaz, including Kut Abdullah, Kian and Khashayar. Ahwaz, close to the Iraqi border, is a major hub of Iranian ethnic minority groups, and its largely

Arab population has faced brutal repression under clerical rule. On Friday anti-government protests erupted in Ahwaz once Iran's State Security Forces were dispatched to quell some 3,000 angry residents who were complaining of government plans to redefine the ethnic make-up of the province. Demonstrators ransacked a number of government buildings, police stations, and set fire to the Agriculture Bank. At least 300 hundred people are believed to be injured after the SSF shot at demonstrators. The latest round of fighting took place on the sixth consecutive day despite the presence of various security forces, Revolutionary Guards, and officials of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), who have been arresting anyone seeking to start a demonstration as part of their efforts to contain the already very tense atmosphere in the city. Ahwaz was placed under a de facto martial law after a number of SSF agents were killed by angry demonstrators, and residents have reported an extremely volatile situation in the majority of the districts. MOIS agents have also started to re-arrest former political prisoners in Ahwaz and other cities in the province. Many arbitrary arrests have been carried out, and all five prisons in the city are full to the extent that a large number of detainees are under interrogation in safe-houses belonging to the security agencies.

Balal Mosque in Sepidar neighbourhood and similar places in Ahwaz are being used as temporary detention centres by MOIS agents and the Revolutionary Guards. Schools and shops in Ahwaz remain closed and young people are countering security forces' aggression by attacking government buildings, as well as centres and vehicles belonging to the security forces. When Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani, known in the area as the "Butcher of Ahwaz" for his role in the bloody suppression of anti-government disturbances in the city in 1979, tried to enter an Ahwaz neighbourhood called Dayereh with his large contingent of bodyguards on Tuesday afternoon, youths attacked them with a barrage of stones, forcing Shamkhani and his entourage to flee. Unrest has spilt to other cities of the province and intense clashes between local residents and government forces have also broken out in the cities of Mahshahr, Abadan, Khorramshahr and Shoushtar. An Iranian judiciary official was quoted as saying today that more than 140 people out of 344 arrested in southwest Iran remain in jail following the ethnic unrest.

CSRI calls for Immediate Release of over 400 people arrested in southern Iran unrests

Washington, April 20 - In the last three days of ongoing protests against the Iranian regime in Southern Iran, more than 400 of the protesters have been arrested and are being interrogated in Karoon prison, Ahvaz. About 20 people have been killed and many injured by the revolutionary guards.

According to Radiofarda, the protestors in Ahvaz chased Iran's defense minister, Ali Shamkhani and in Zargan, seven revolutionary guard members have been taken hostage.

Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran calls for immediate release of all those arrested in the protests and urges international human rights organizations to monitor the conditions of the prisoners, as many of them can face severe torture and death penalty.

Nuclear proliferation

Iran stalls in probe of nuke smuggling – diplomats

Reuters, Apr. 18, Vienna - Tehran is not cooperating fully with a probe by the U.N. nuclear watchdog into Iranian officials' meetings with smugglers who had links to Pakistani atom bomb-maker Abdul Qadeer Khan, diplomats said on Monday. The diplomats said the meetings in 1987 and 1994 were key to help determine whether Iran's programme was originally intended to produce electricity, as Tehran insists, or to make bombs, as Washington maintains. Iran's failure to cooperate fully with the United Nations on the issue worried the European Union's "big three" powers, the diplomats said. Britain, France and Germany resume nuclear talks with Iran in Geneva on Tuesday. Speaking on condition of anonymity, several Western diplomats familiar with the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) investigation said Iran appeared to be withholding information about the two meetings, both of which took place in Dubai. "They are not cooperating on this issue," said one diplomat. He said there was a lack of documentation and there were inconsistencies in the Iranian accounts of the meetings with people known to be part of Khan's network that supplied Iran and Libya with sensitive atomic technology.

Europe pushing Iran to give up uranium enrichment, US watching warily

AFP, Apr. 18, Vienna - EU-Iran talks reopen to make sure Tehran provides air-tight guarantees that it will not make atomic weapons amid agreement by European diplomats that Iran must cease uranium enrichment as the United States is watching the process warily.

European Union negotiators Britain, France and Germany are studying an Iranian proposal that would allow some enrichment, and there have been hints of a crack in their unity over this issue a day before talks start in Geneva. But the European trio is "rock-solid on cessation" by Iran of uranium enrichment, which makes fuel for nuclear reactors but can also be the explosive core of nuclear bombs, one European diplomat told AFP. The United States charges that Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons and a US official said: "We trust the EU3 (Britain, France and Germany) but we are also watching closely to ensure they continue to hold firm on insisting that the only objective guarantee acceptable to the international community is the full cessation and dismantling" of Iran's nuclear fuel cycle pursuits. Iran urged the Americans not to meddle in their negotiations with the EU.

Iran does not need nuclear fuel cycle, says France

Reuters, Apr. 18, Paris - Iran does not need to develop a complete nuclear fuel cycle in order to achieve its civilian nuclear power ambitions, a senior French disarmament official said on Monday...Philippe Carre, head of the Foreign Ministry's disarmament section, said the EU3 wanted objective guarantees from Iran that its atomic program would not be used for military purposes. "We do not see in the Iranian civilian nuclear program any justification for mastering the full fuel cycle," Carre told a briefing on next month's review conference for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in New York..."We don't think that, in order to run the current Iranian civilian power station program, there is a need for a separate complete fuel cycle," Carre said. EU diplomats last week said French President Jacques Chirac has been pushing the European Union to drop its refusal to contemplate allowing Iran to enrich uranium.

Iran Policy, Third Option Doctrine

Remove Iran's opposition group from terror list, Italian lawmakers urge



Iran Focus, Apr. 20, Rome – Italian lawmakers from both Houses of the Italian Parliament and legal experts today called for the removal of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) from the European Union's list of terrorist organizations and support for the "Third Option", during a seminar in parliament. Italian Senator Paolo Guzzanti, from Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's ruling party Forza Italia and a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said, "Today it is crystal clear that the policy of appeasement in the face of this terrorist and suppressive regime has failed and it is now time for Europe to support the Third Option introduced by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi in the European Parliament; No to appeasement, and no to a foreign military intervention but rather support for a democratic change at the hands of the Iranian people and their Resistance". "The Iranian Resistance which is working to bring about an end to the religious dictatorship and establish a democratic and secular government in Iran, has the strong support of the representatives of the people of Italy", he added, while noting that the majority of the Italian parliament had signed a statement urging the removal of the terror-tag from the PMOI. Senator Guzzanti also announced the formation of the "Parliamentary Group for a Free Iran". Other panelists who defended the Iranian opposition and called for the immediate removal of the PMOI from the EU's terrorist list included Senator Mario Cavallaro, the Mayor of the city of Gaglioli; Italian Deputy Luigi Giacco from the Democratic Left Party; Deputy Giovanni Russo-Spena, from the United Communists Party; Deputy Paolo Cento from the Greens Party; Deputy Lino Duilio, member of the Central Committee of the Margarita Party; Deputy Alfonso Gianni from the United Communists Party; and Deputies Gianni Vernetti and Giovanni Bianchi, from the Margarita Party. Mohammad Mohaddessin, who chairs the foreign affairs committee of the NCRI, said that for those who were anxious to preserve peace and tranquility in the region and beyond, time was running out for an effective policy option on Iran. The mullahs, he said, were determined to acquire nuclear bombs and would not relent for as long as they felt disunity and weakness in the ranks of Western governments. Among the numerous legal experts present at the seminar, who added their support to the de-listing of the PMOI as terrorists, were Prof. Luigi Citarella, head of the government's Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights and a Permanent Member of the United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child; Mario Lana, head of Italy's Lawyers Union for Human Rights; and Emo Ecoli, head of the Europe-Arabian Parliamentary Group in Italy.

US Congressmen Meet Leaders of Group Labeled "Terrorist" by State Department

Global Politician, Apr. 19 -- Several members of Congress addressed a gathering today of hundreds of Iranian exiles who the government considers terrorists. Reps. Bob Filner, D-Calif., Tom Tancredo, R-Col., Ted Poe, R-Texas, Dennis Moore, R-Kan., and staffers for Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchinson, R-Texas, and James Talent, R-Mo., spoke to MEK supporters at a convention hall just four blocks from the White House....Tancredo called Maryam Rajavi, the MEK's leader, "quite an extraordinary lady." Even President Bush has called the MEK a "dissident group." ... The only way to a free Iran is "the third option," Rep. Moore said. Rajavi often refers to "the third option" when she talks about MEK-led uprising from within. Rajavi herself spoke to the group by live video feed, urging removal of the MEK from the list of terrorist groups. "The worst aspect of appeasement, which plays a crucial role in keeping the regime in power, is the terror tag on the Iranian Resistance," Rajavi said. "The message of this terrorist designation ... to our people is that the West is on the side of the dictators and is opposed to change...." Rajavi also praised a petition she said was signed by 2.7 million Iraqis in support of the People's Mujahideen of Iraq, which is another name for the MEK.

She characterized the MEK as democratic, inclusive, heavily supported by Iranians and only on the terrorist list because of a policy of appeasement by the Clinton Administration, citing one anonymous quote in a 1997 Washington Post article. "U.S., U.S., listen to this, Iran mujahideen not terrorists," the crowd chanted several times... Another speaker at the event, Neil

Livingstone, is often interviewed by the press as a terrorism expert. Livingstone urged the government to step up its efforts to destabilize the Iranian government, saying "we must recognize the Iranian government in exile." This refers to Rajavi, who was declared by her movement to be President-in-exile. "We are all members of the Iranian Resistance," he closed. Two of the speakers at the event were American soldiers who dealt with the group at Camp Ashraf in Iraq, where the U.S. government has detained and disarmed them.

Lt. Col. Thomas Cantwell was the commander of the 324th MP Battalion at Camp Ashraf from June through December 2003. "Our assessment was that the mujahideen represented a minimal threat to U.S. forces," he said. He also questioned the designation of the MEK as a terrorist group. "If we have a terrorist group in Ashraf, where are the terrorists?" he asked...

Captain Vivian Gembara was a Jag officer who participated in disarmament negotiations with MEK. Although, by her own admission, she was one of the most junior lawyers there, she said that she and Special Forces soldiers around her recognize the security possibilities that the MEK represented.

Thousands attend Iran convention in US Capital



Iran Focus, Apr. 14, Washington, D.C. - Iranians from across the United States gathered in the Constitution Hall here today to take part in what they called Iranian-American National Convention for Democratic Change in Iran.

Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA), joint-chair of the Iran Human Rights and Democracy Caucus of the U.S. House of Representative; Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-CO), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Congress and Co-chair of the Caucus; Congressman

Dennis Moore (D-KS); and Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) were among the speakers who offered their support to the Iranian people's efforts to topple the clerical regime and replace it with a secular, democratic government. The crowd gave rapturous applause to words of support from Republican Senators Kay Hutchinson from Texas and James Talent from Missouri.

A number of former government officials, human rights activists, and parliamentarians from other countries also spoke at this convention. They included Dr. Neil Livingstone, a Washington-based terrorism expert and author; Prof. Donna Hughes, Chair of Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island, and Paul Enzinna, a lawyer from former Secretary of State James Baker's law firm, Baker Botts. Two former officers of the U.S. Army, Col. Thomas Cantwell and Army lawyer Captain Vivian Gembara, both of whom served year-long tours of duty in Iraq, addressed the convention, as did Rep. Paul Forseth from the Canadian Parliament. Speaker after speaker called on the U.S. government to remove the People's Mojahedin of Iran (PMOI), the main Iranian opposition group, from the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Several speakers said the terror tag was a key impediment to change in Iran at a time when the country is ripe for such change.

Iranian opposition leader Maryam Rajavi addressed the convention via live video link from her home north of Paris. She urged all Iranians from different religions and political tendencies to "come together in greater unity for the sake of bringing about democratic change in Iran."

Delegates representing Iranian communities in 40 states across the U.S., including California, Colorado, Texas, New York, New Jersey, Kansas, Missouri, Georgia, Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio, declared their support for Rajavi's rejection of "appeasement or war" as policy options for dealing with Iran, saying that "the only way to bring about democratic change in Iran is to support the efforts of the Iranian people and their resistance."

Iranians rally to support resistance group

The Washington Post, Apr. 15 - Waving flags amid red, white and green balloons, Iranian exiles staged a campaign-style convention yesterday at DAR Constitution Hall. Their primary call was for the United States to drop an Iranian resistance group from its list of terrorist organizations. Members of Congress, legal scholars and the president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, Maryam Rajavi, outlined support for a peaceful revolution to create a democratic, secular republic in Iran. Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.) told the crowd that a peaceful revolution spurred by the people of Iran is one of the ways to create lasting peace in the Middle East. "Unless we deal with Iran, there will never be a solution in Iraq," he said.

Iranian opposition challenges Bush to keep his word, drop terror label

AFP, Apr. 14 Washington - The National Convention for a Democratic Secular Republic in Iran gathered Iranian-Americans to push for official US support for their efforts. Iranian opposition leader Maryam Rajavi, addressing the convention in a video link from France, called on the United States and the European Union to end its appeasement of the Tehran regime and recognize her National Council of Resistance of Iran as an Iranian government-in-exile. "Just as the time has come to abandon the appeasement of tyrants, so the time has come to remove the ominous legacy of that policy, namely the terror label against the Iranian resistance," Rajavi said, according to a printed translation of her remarks in Farsi...The group has considerable support among US lawmakers, think-tank experts and lobbyists, who claim the terrorism designation was meant to appease Tehran and want Bush to order it lifted. Several lawmakers emphasized their support for the group with appearances at the convention, including Representative Tom Tancredo, a Colorado Republican, who called Rajavi "an extraordinary individual," and said the Iranian people "can't have any better spokespeople than all of you here." Bush has denounced the regime in Tehran, saying it supports terrorism and is trying to develop a nuclear bomb, and has urged Iranians to work against the ruling clergy. In February, during his State of the Union address to Congress, Bush said: "To the Iranian people, I say tonight: As you stand for your own liberty, America stands with you." Tancredo and other lawmakers however want the United States to go further. They have introduced legislation to provide financial and political assistance to Iranian opposition groups that oppose terrorism and support democracy.

Exporting terrorism and Meddling in Iraq

Iraqi students protest Iranian intervention in Madayen

Al-Jazeera Sat. TV, Apr. 20 – In another development in Madayen, dozens of theology students staged a demonstration in front of the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad and called for the expulsion of persons whom they called agents of Iranian Intelligence. They also demanded that the Iranian regime gives up its interferences in Iraq. The demonstrators carried placards and chanted slogans blaming Iran for what they called the "sedition in Madayen" which is aimed at inciting civil war among Iraqis.

Interview with Dr. Hani Ashure, journalist and writer from Baghdad.

Anchor: There have been demonstrations in various parts of Iraq against Iran. Does this mean that Iran's role is surfacing in a negative manner such that it leads to street demonstrations?

Dr. Hani Ashure: I think this is a consequence of what happened in Madayen, also the outcome of the officials' remarks about Iran's possible involvement in what has happened in Madayen... These problems could lead to situations that are out of control.

Naqib points finger to Iranian Intelligence, bands of terrorists

Ashraq Al-Awsat, Apr. 20 – Fayaz Falah Naqib, the Iraqi Interior Minister, said, "terrorist bands and Iranian Intelligence" were behind the ballyhoo raised about the kidnapping of 150 Shiites by armed Sunni men. Naqib warned Iraq's security forces against joining of Badr paramilitary militants affiliated with SCIRI led by Abdul Aziz Hakim. He said they are the real threat to the security of Iraq. As far as the charge of Iranian Intelligence being involved in the problems in Madayen, Naqib said: The news of hostages which sparked the explosion in Madayen leaked from several people whose source of information was the same. One of these individuals works at the Iranian Intelligence (Ministry)." As for the future of Iran's intervention in Iraqi affairs in the shadow of a Shiite-majority government, Naqib said: "As Iraqis, we do not think of religion. But there are efforts from several sides to take advantage of the issue of religion and create more opportunities for the Iranians to meddle in Iraqi affairs." Naqib also pointed out to the Iranians' extensive presence in Iraq, especially in the city of Basra.

Islamic Party of Iraq blames Madayen affairs on foreign intervention

Ashraq Al-Awsat, Apr. 20 -- The Islamic Party of Iraq issued a statement yesterday, saying that the crisis in Madayen is an artificial crisis. It attributed the crisis to foreign intervention by those who want to alienate this city from its Iraqi identity. The IPI warned, "The crisis in Madayen is a tool for disintegrating the unity in Madayen. This effort was completed by a statement which justified an attack which led to the victimization of the innocent." The IPI added, "The danger of foreign intervention has surrounded the city. We rightly reject all forms

of religious extremism and endeavor for complete unity of the people. We are concerned about divisive efforts which have surrounded the Kasra Arch to alienate it from its Iraqi identity."

Iran-backed sabotage network arrested in Diyala

Al-Mada daily, Apr. 20, Iraq – A source in Diyala Police Command who did not want to be identified said: The Diyala Police has arrested a network of terrorists who were funded by Iran. They carried out sabotage operations against government organs and designed and carried out operations against Army officers, Iraqi police and government officials. The source said primary investigations revealed that in addition to arming this network, the Iranian regime funded this network. The network operated out of a team house in Baladrouz near the Iranian border and its operational area was limited to Diyala Province.