



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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Nuclear proliferation

Uranium work could yet resume, Iran warns EU

AFP, May 27 TEHRAN - Iran is still examining the European Union's latest offer to solve a



dispute over its nuclear programme and could yet resume uranium conversion if it rejects the new proposal, Tehran's top atomic official said on Friday. "We will restart (work at the) the Isfahan (uranium) conversion plant, and the fuel cycle is our (non-negotiable) red line," Hassan Rowhani said, replying to a question on what will happen if Iran refuses to accept the EU plan. The Isfahan plant is used for uranium conversion, a precursor stage in nuclear enrichment, a process that the EU wants Iran to renounce as it can be used

to develop nuclear weapons. "Since the European proposal was a new one and it is up to the regime's officials to make a decision, we brought it to Tehran. If not accepted we will begin enrichment in Isfahan," he added, quoted by the IRNA news agency. Rowhani also warned the Europeans that if "they want to drag out the negotiations, we will begin the enrichment in Isfahan." His comments come after Iranian officials and the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany on Wednesday managed in a last-ditch meeting in Geneva to avert a collapse of talks. The European ministers, representing the 25-nation EU, agreed with Iranian negotiators that they would make new proposals to Tehran in late July or August on cooperation in civilian nuclear power and trade ties. Iran in turn pledged to maintain a suspension of its uranium enrichment programme agreed in Paris last November, amid fears that Tehran's plans would allow it to develop a nuclear bomb. "Up to now, each time we have asked the Europeans to make clear proposals they have ducked the issue and taken time," Rowhani said. "This is the first time they have committed to making overall proposals." The EU ministers had sought a September deadline, but in the end accepted a request by Iranian negotiators in Geneva to bring it forward. Iran insists its bid to master the full nuclear fuel cycle, including uranium enrichment, is aimed at generating electricity and is a right for any country that has signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Nuclear talks with Iran are doomed to failure

Daily Telegraph, May 25 - Make-or-break talks between Europe and Iran are doomed to failure and US military action will only delay, not halt, Teheran's suspected nuclear weapons programme, a leading think-tank predicted yesterday. In a gloomy assessment, the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies said America had no simple military way of stopping Iran going nuclear... IISS expressed alarm at the "erosion" of counter-proliferation measures, saying it could lead ultimately to terrorist groups such as al-Qa'eda obtaining atomic bombs...

US fires warning shot over Iran nuclear talks

Financial Times, May 25 - The US warned European ministers yesterday to stand firm in negotiations with Iran and reject any proposal that could allow the partial resumption of Tehran's controversial nuclear programme. The warning, given as the foreign ministers of

France, Germany and the UK prepared to meet Iranian negotiators in Geneva today, underlines the risk that the talks might break up or lead to increased transatlantic tension.

"The support of the US [for the negotiations] is based on the cessation and dismantlement of all sensitive nuclear . . . activities," Nicholas Burns, US undersecretary of state, told the FT after a meeting with senior diplomats from the EU3 countries.

Rice: Tehran must recognize Mid-East change



US State Department, May 23, Washington Convention Center - This past year has brought forth a dramatic shift in the political landscape of the Middle East. But this moment of transformation is very fragile and it still has committed enemies, particularly the Government of Iran, which is the world's leading sponsor of terrorism. The United States has focused the world's attention on Iran's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. And along with our allies, we are working to gain full disclosure of Iran's efforts to obtain nuclear weapons. The world must not tolerate any Iranian attempt to develop a nuclear weapon. Nor can it tolerate Iran's efforts to subvert democratic governments through terrorism.

Iran must meet basic standards - White House



AFP, May 23, Washington - Iran must meet basic "commitments" -- including an international ban on nuclear weapons development and transparency in its upcoming presidential election, before it can be admitted to the World Trade Organization, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Monday. McClellan said the White House in March gave its support to a European offer to help Iran gain admittance to the WTO, in exchange for assurances it would abandon its nuclear efforts...But he added: "Obviously there are certain commitments you have to make when you seek to join the World Trade Organization, and that is something we pointed out at the time as well."

Terrorism and meddling in Iraq

Proof of Iranian official's hand in terror



Radio Farda, May 23 - A representative of the Austrian parliament from the Greens party announced on Sunday that he has recently acquired documents proving that Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's presidential candidate, played a role in the ordering of Abdul-Rahman Ghasemlou and two other Kurdish leaders' killing. Peter Piltz, the Greens party's security spokesman said in a press interview that his source of information was an Iranian journalist whom he met in Versailles three days ago. Mr. Piltz said, "The source is prepared to express his issues to the Austrian officials, and I shall do everything I can to open this case". Mr. Piltz said, "Three of the 6 candidates whose competences have been verified for the Iranian presidential elections on June 17th are strongly suspected of having parts in international assassinations". According to Mr. Piltz, these persons are, in addition to Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who it is foreseen is going to replace Mohammad Khatami the current president, Mohsen Rezaii, former commander of the revolutionary guards, and Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad, Tehran's current mayor.

Iranian Election

State Department monitoring Iran elections



UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL- 27 May By Philip Turner

Washington, DC - The U.S. State Department told Saudi Arabian officials that the United States has a view of what freedom entails and that Middle Eastern countries like Iran will need to answer to the basic hopes and rights of its people. Counselor Philip Zelikow from the State Department speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington was discussing

the future of U.S.-Saudi relations. Zelikow alluded to the elections due to be held in under a month in Iran, saying the United States will be watching carefully to see what happens in that relatively closed society. "What I think America can do is say, we have a view on what freedom means. We don't have a precise opinion on how each country should walk that path, but it is not an empty phrase," he said. All but six of the 1,000-plus people registered to run in Iran's presidential election were rejected by the Guardian Council Sunday, the constitutional watchdog that vets the election candidates in that country. The council is controlled by hard-liners loyal to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The council hopes to avoid political reforms offered by the outgoing president, Mohammad Khatami. "Let's see what they wish to do. Let's watch that process with care -- keeping in mind whatever standards we think appropriate for evaluating that result -- but understanding that different societies are choosing their own paths," said Zelikow. "What the president is arguing is that there are universal ideals -- and they are definable -- we urge all countries to find the way to express the ideals which we believe their own citizens hold dear -- and we believe that assertion is no more true than in Iran." Even if the democratic process results in leaders being elected that do not agree with U.S. policy, Zelikow said, "That's the thing about freedom -- it involves calculated risks. What we have to do is look at the net assessment over the long haul and I think it makes us better long-term partners." Before discussing the Iran question, Zelikow focused on U.S.-Saudi relations. He said the Bush administration has been pleased with some of the changes in that country since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and that it must further democratic efforts in the kingdom. He said that prior to recent dialogue between the two countries they did not understand each other at all. "What they did know," he said, "they did not like." Since Sept. 11 Zelikow said the Saudis have gone through a crisis of conscience of sorts. He said Saudi Arabia is a country that prides itself on being blessed by providence and peace. After learning that 15 of the 19 Sept. 11 hijackers were Saudi, however, the country had to take a long look at itself and its principles. "Today, the United States and Saudi Arabia have indeed become allies in fighting transnational terror, but there are hard tasks ahead," said Zelikow. "As our two countries look to the future -- it is there we can find the basis for a U.S.-Saudi relationship -- a relationship that leaders of both countries will be proud to explain and defend. As the kingdom forms constructive plans, the United States can be there to help. For instance, Zelikow said young Saudis need to be educated to meet the growing technological demands of the 21st century. He urged the need for immediate economic liberalization that can turn the private sector into a better source for job creation and improved WTO cooperation. Improved dialect between the state and its people and expanded opportunities for voters -- especially women -- in the kingdom are also essential in promoting positive change, said Zelikow. "The president noted in his state of the union address that countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt can and should play a leadership role in the Middle East in promoting change and building healthy societies -- societies that reject violent extremism," said Zelikow. The future of U.S.-Saudi relations depends on a keen understanding of each country's respective societies, said Zelikow. "It is too easy to demonize and scapegoat Saudi Arabia because of the differences between our societies. The relations must turn on the way we see the future, based on mutual tolerance and mutual respect," he said.

U.S. State Department: Iranian elections distorted by decisions of unelected leaders



AFP, May 24 - The United States on Tuesday shrugged off Iran's move to allow two reformists to run in the upcoming presidential election, saying the poll remained fundamentally undemocratic. The State Department said the decision by the hard-line Guardians Council, under pressure by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, raised the field in next month's vote from six to eight but did little else. "It really doesn't change our essential view that this is a process that has been shaped and distorted by the decisions of some unelected leaders," said department spokesman Richard Boucher. He said "the Iranian people, unfortunately, will not get the kind of choice that they deserve to choose their own government."

Iranian people 'deserve to choose their own leaders' – Boucher

Bloomberg, May 24 - Iranians deserve to determine for themselves what kind of government they will have and to choose their own leaders, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said... "As always, the United States believes the Iranian people deserve to

shape the governance of their country and to choose their own leaders," Boucher told reporters in Washington yesterday, according to a transcript on the State Department's Web site. "The hopes and dreams of the Iranian people have gone, sadly, unfulfilled but their aspirations for a better and freer Iran remain."... "Certainly, we're deeply troubled by a decision like this, where a clerical regime's unelected Guardians Council invalidates the candidacy of over a thousand presidential nominees in the upcoming elections, including the candidacies of the most prominent moderate candidates and all 93 women who had registered for the election," Boucher said.

EU 'disappointed' over exclusion of candidates from presidential elections



AFP, May 23, Brussels - The European Union voiced deep disappointment Monday over the decision by Iran's election watchdog to eliminate many pro-reform candidates for June presidential polls. Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, also presses Tehran to abide by its nuclear commitments ahead of crunch talks with European negotiators this week. The Guardians Council, an unelected watchdog body that vets all candidates for public office, announced on Sunday that just six men out of 1,014 would-be candidates can stand to succeed incumbent reformist President Mohammad Khatami.

"We were very disappointed by the decision of the Guardians Council not to authorize many candidates for the elections, particularly those who were reformists," he said after regular monthly talks with his EU counterparts.

Human rights abuse

Iran Revolutionary Guard killing of young man sparks clashes

Iran Focus Tehran, May 26 – A warrant officer of Iran's Revolutionary Guards shot to death a young man in cold blood at an underground railway station in the city of Karaj, west of the Iranian capital, sparking off widespread clashes between angry protesters and security forces in several neighbourhoods of the city. The officer, Asgar Najafi, fatally shot the man at a crowded Pol-e Fardis Metro station on Wednesday at approximately 7 pm, according to eye witnesses. Police led Najafi away, as a crowd who gathered at the scene began shouting



angry slogans against the clerical regime and the security forces. The crowd, infuriated by the cold-blooded murder of a young man and the impunity of the murderer, attacked vehicles belonging to the security forces outside the station. The paramilitary police reacted by beating up some of the protesters with truncheons. Clashes between young protesters and security forces continued for several hours in different parts of the city.

NCRI screens public hangings footage in news conference



AFP, May 24 - The main Iranian opposition group, in exile and based in France, on Tuesday condemned the European Union for its so-called "betrayal" for negotiating with Tehran on its controversial nuclear program. "Negotiating with the mullahs' regime constitutes a betrayal," Mohammed Mohaddessin, an official in the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), told a news conference, accusing Tehran of massive human rights violations. The NCRI screened what it said was never-before-seen graphic footage of public hangings that took place in western Iran, in which one of the victims, before his execution, accuses the Islamic republic of "plotting to kill" him. The NCRI said the video, made by an amateur, was "spirited out of the country by the resistance".

Protests and condemnations against HRW report

Britain's veteran rights advocate challenges Human Rights Watch on Iran report

Iran Focus *May 26 London* – A prominent British human rights advocate strongly criticised



Human Rights Watch over the New York-based organization's controversial report on an Iranian opposition group, saying that the "disreputable and biased" investigation that led to the report has "seriously tarnished the reputation of Human Rights Watch, and undermined public confidence in the integrity of your human rights work as a whole". Lord Avebury, founder and former chairman of Britain's Parliamentary Human Rights Group and an indefatigable defender of human rights around the world, noted in his letter to Human Rights Watch that the group had published "allegations without giving the [Iranian opposition group People's Mojahedin of Iran, or PMOI] an opportunity of reply". Human Rights Watch's 28-page report alleged that the PMOI abused the rights of "disaffected" members at their base in Camp Ashraf, Iraq. The report's apocryphal methodology, sources and timing have led to a chorus of consternation and dismay in several countries, while Iran's state-run media have given it extensive coverage. Lord Avebury engaged in a series of protracted correspondence with Human Rights Watch in 1994 and 1997 over what turned out to be unsubstantiated allegations of human rights abuses by the Iranian opposition. "I am astonished that after the severe criticism the previous exercise attracted, you saw fit to ignore such an elementary principle of natural justice a second time, and with the same target", Lord Avebury wrote in his letter to Human Rights Watch. The British Peer, now serving as vice-chairman of Parliamentary Human Rights Group, said there was an ongoing "propaganda campaign waged intensively against the PMOI and its members by the Iranian secret police under their Ministry of Intelligence and Security [VEVAK]. The persons interviewed by HRW had previously been identified as agents by the PMOI". "The report claims that the allegations made by the interviewees were corroborated by 'other evidence' but gives no indication of its source or nature. No forensic evidence was sought or obtained to back up the allegations of torture, which are treated as facts", Lord Avebury wrote. A member of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary foreign affairs team, Lord Avebury works on a range of human rights issues, as well as on immigration and asylum. He is currently a member of the Justice and Home Affairs Subcommittee of the EU Select Committee. Lord Avebury said in the letter to Human Rights Watch, made available by his office in Westminster, that there published evidence showing that Mohammad Hossein Sobhani, one of HRW's key witnesses, was a team leader working for Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security "with the task of training other members engaged in the campaign against the PMOI". He noted that another HRW witness, Karim Haggi Moni (a.k.a. Karim Haqi), "made similar allegations to Dr Maurice Copithorne, the former UN Rapporteur, but Dr. Copithorne was unable to find any confirmation and published nothing on the subject". Lord Avebury referred to an interview in which Joe Stork, HRW's Middle East chief, had denied any knowledge of previous invitations by the Iranian group to visits its camps in Iraq. "When you were asked about the PMOI's invitations to visit their camps in Iraq, you replied 'This is the first I have heard of it'. Considering that it was a major issue in my correspondence with your predecessors in 1994 and 1997, that defies belief. I can't believe that HRW is so inefficient as to have lost all knowledge of such a controversial matter, after being reminded of the numerous invitations in several of my letters. I think you knew perfectly well that HRW had been invited to visit the camps, but chose to deny it for political reasons". "Whatever you may think of the PMOI politically", the British Peer concluded, "you have broken elementary rules of fairness by publishing charges against them which have no foundation in credible evidence, and without giving them an opportunity of reply".

NCRI calls on HRW to withdraw report



AP, May 24, Paris - The political arm of an exiled Iranian opposition group gathered defenders of its human rights' record Tuesday to deny a report that the Mujahedeen Khalq had tortured dissident members. "We call on Human Rights Watch to withdraw this unsubstantiated report," the National Council of Resistance said in a statement, referring to a document published by the New York-based human rights organization Thursday."

Twelve hours of telephone interviews with 12 individuals are simply insufficient to produce an authoritative report," the opposition group and its supporters said in a joint statement.

British MPs call on government to support PMOI , reject HRW report as unsubstantiated

Iran Focus, May 24 – More than a dozen British parliamentarians today called on the government to support the Iranian opposition, while denouncing a recent report by U.S.-based Human Rights Watch on the most active Iranian opposition group, the People's Mojahedin of Iran (PMOI), during a conference in the House of Commons. The MPs and Peers at the meeting issued a joint statement rejecting a recent report by Human Rights Watch on alleged human rights abuses by the PMOI as "unsubstantiated". They raised serious questions about the report's methodology and political undertones and called on Human Rights Watch to retract it. Speakers also supported the proposed "third option" by Maryam Rajavi, President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, as the best chance for the emergence of a democratic and secular government in Iran. Lord Corbett called on HRW on behalf of the panel to withdraw its report on the PMOI. "It would better live up to its name by concentrating on the real human rights abusers by the mullahs who rule Iran", he said, adding, "Human Rights Watch ignores the fact that a majority of members in the House of Commons and more than 120 peers, in a January 2004 statement called for the removal of the PMOI from the list of terrorist groups".