



# 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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### Iranian Opposition in Iraq

#### **The New York Times**

##### **PEOPLE'S MUJAHEDDEEN**

##### **U.S. Sees No Basis to Prosecute Iranian Opposition 'Terror' Group Being Held in Iraq**

*Washington, July 27-By DOUGLAS JEHL.* A 16-month review by the United States has found no basis to charge members of an Iranian opposition group in Iraq with violations of American law, though the group is listed as a terrorist organization by the United States government, according to senior American officials.

The case of the group, the People's Mujahedeen of Iran, or Mujahedeen Khalq, whose camp was bombed by the United States military in April 2003, has been watched closely as an important test of the Bush administration's policy toward terrorism and toward Iran.

About 3,800 members of the group are being held in de facto American custody in Camp Ashraf, about 60 miles northeast of Baghdad. The group remains on the United States terrorist list, though it is not known to have directed any terrorist acts toward the United States for 25 years.

But it does stage attacks against Iran, which has demanded that the Iraqi government either prosecute them or deport them to Iran. But senior American officials said extensive interviews by officials of the State Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation had not come up with any basis to bring charges against any members of the group. In a July 21 memorandum, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey D. Miller, the deputy commanding general in Iraq, said its members had now been designated "protected persons" by the United States military, providing them new rights.

The American approach appears to reflect the limits of the government's counterterrorism policy. In the case of the People's Mujahedeen, the United States does not appear to have evidence to charge individual members of the group with acts of terrorism, but it also appears unwilling to surrender its members to their enemy, Iran.

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs treatment of civilians in wartime, "protected persons" are those who fall under the control of an occupying power or a country involved in the conflict. Among the most significant rights they are granted are protection against collective punishment and against expulsion.

The formal American determination came after members of the group signed an agreement rejecting violence and terrorism, General Miller said in his July 21 letter, addressed to the "people of Ashraf." That agreement "sends a strong signal and is a powerful first step on the road to your final individual disposition," the general's letter said, according to a copy that was made available to The New York Times.

The State Department said Monday that the determination of the status of the group in Iraq did not affect its designation as a terrorist organization. The 3,800 members at Camp Ashraf are still being vetted to determine whether any took part in terrorist activities, said Adam Ereli, the department's deputy spokesman.

But in the memorandum, General Miller struck a warm tone, saying he was "writing to congratulate each individual living in Camp Ashraf" on their status. Senior American officials said it was still possible that some members of the group might be charged with crimes in European countries, but that they did not expect any of them to be charged in American courts.

"A member of a terrorist organization is not necessarily a terrorist," a senior American official said. "To take action against somebody, you have to demonstrate that they have done something."

Muhammad Mohaddessin, a senior official of the People's Mujahedeen, said in a telephone interview from Paris on Monday that the absence of American charges against members of the group, after months in which they have been held, should raise questions about the organization's terrorist designation.

"I think the fact of the matter is that there is no reason for keeping the Mujahedeen on the terrorism list at all," Mr. Mohaddessin said, "because if these thousands of people who are in Iraq are not terrorists - when they all have been screened, and no terrorism link has been found - then really there is no basis whatsoever for accusing the Mujahedeen of being a terrorist organization."

The American military has kept the members confined to their camp since April 2003, when the organization signed an agreement with United States commanders. Their designation as "protected persons" reflects a final determination that they were not involved in acts of belligerence against the American military during the war, American officials said.

The designation would make it all but impossible for members of the group to be extradited to Iran, senior American officials said. In December, the interim Iraqi government ordered that members of the group be expelled, but the move was opposed by the United States, and the directive was never carried out.

Some opponents of Iran, including dozens of members of Congress, have argued that the People's Mujahedeen serves as an effective source of pressure on the Iranian government and should be rewarded, not punished, by the United States. Nevertheless, Mr. Ereli, the State Department spokesman, said the group "continues to be a designated foreign terrorist organization," a status that was imposed by the Clinton administration.

He said that "we will continue to treat individuals who can be determined to have been involved in terrorist incidents consistent with the laws that apply." But privately, senior American officials noted that it has been more than 25 years since members of the People's Mujahedeen were last believed to have been involved in attacks against the United States, and that most of its recent violent acts were directed at Iran.

In Iran, a government spokesman, Abdollah Ramazanzadeh, said any American move to grant the People's Mujahedeen protected status would undermine the United States' claims to be fighting terrorist groups. "I hope those who claim they are combating terrorism prove the truth and confront the ones who have committed extensive crimes against the Iranian nation," he said.

A senior American official said the United States opposed Iran's request that members of the group be handed over for trial because "we have real questions about the fairness and transparency of justice" there.

Until the American invasion of Iraq last year, the People's Mujahedeen maintained armed camps near the Iranian border that included tanks, artillery and other modern weapons. The group had operated inside Iraq since the late 1980's with the support of the Iraqi government.

The American bombing raids on the camps represented the most aggressive approach by the United States in the handling of the group. It was followed by a gentler approach, including prolonged cease-fire negotiations and a cordial relationship between the group and the American military police units that have guarded the camp, preventing members from leaving except under American military escort.



## **Iran rebels say US-led coalition has granted them protected status in Iraq**

**AFP, July 26** - Iran's main armed opposition group said that the US-led coalition had granted its militants in Iraq protected status, despite its listing as a terrorist organization by both Washington and its key allies. The National Council of Resistance of Iran said it had received notification from coalition commanders that People's Mujahedeen fighters who have been confined to camp in Iraq since last year's US-led invasion had been accorded recognition as protected non-combatants under the fourth Geneva Convention. "It is a very significant step because the Iranian regime has been demanding for the past year the People's Mujahedeen be handed back, which would obviously put their lives in danger," said Farid Sulimani, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Mujahedeen-dominated National Council. Iran has been pushing for repatriation of the several thousand Mujahedeen fighters under US military guard at Camp Ashraf northeast of Baghdad, and last December Iraq's coalition-installed interim leadership voted unanimously to expel them. But human rights watchdogs have called on the coalition not to hand over the fighters to an uncertain fate at the hands of their archfoes in Tehran. The People's Mujahedeen set up base in Iraq in 1986 and carried out regular cross-border raids into Iran, with which Iraq fought a bloody war between 1980 and 1988.

Several thousand Mujahedeen militiamen were disarmed by US forces following the fall of president Saddam Hussein regime in April 2003 and barred from undertaking military operations. Their fate has been a prickly question for Washington as it prosecutes its worldwide war on terror, since the group is listed as a terrorist organization by both the US State Department and the European Union. The National Council statement said that the coalition had undertaken to provide continued protection for the Mujahedeen fighters at Camp Ashraf. While recognition as protected individuals removes controls on the fighters' movement, potentially allowing them to emigrate to third countries, Sulimani said all were likely to stay as they wanted to remain close to Iran.

### **Jomhuri Islami Daily (state-run newspaper) July 25, 2004**

The United States declared the [People's] Mojahedin innocent and announced that its presence in Iraq is allowed. According to a report by the Associated Press yesterday, July 23, "In a proclamation, Command of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq announced the determination of the Mojahedin's legal status. In the statement, the United States confirms that members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran based in Iraq are 'protected persons' under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Accordingly, controls and restrictions imposed on the Mojahedin will be removed and, at the same time, U.S. forces will continue to be responsible for the protection of its camp." "The U.S. government, which had previously blacklisted the terrorist Mojahedin organization, has recognized its members as protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention, because it wants to use the organization against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its opponents in Iraq."

## **SENATOR SANTORUM SPONSORS LEGISLATION SUPPORTING TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN IRAN**

**July 20, Washington, DC** - U.S. Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA), Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, introduced legislation promoting the transformation of the Islamic Republic of Iran to a democratic form of government. Joining Senator Santorum as an original cosponsor of the Iran Freedom and Support Act of 2004 is Senator John Cornyn (R-TX).

"This legislation expresses the sense of the Congress that it should be the policy of the United States to support regime change in Iran and that the U.S. government should promote the transition to a new democratic Iranian government," said Santorum.

The Iran Freedom and Support Act of 2004 authorizes the President to provide \$10 million in assistance to qualified foreign and domestic pro-democracy groups opposed to the non-democratic government of Iran. As an example of the type of assistance authorized, grants to pro-democracy radio and television broadcasting organizations as a way of directly reaching the people of Iran are specifically encouraged.

"The aggressive actions by the Government of Iran to support terrorist organizations, develop ballistic missiles, urge violence against Americans in Iraq, and hide information about its nuclear activities are a major concern to those who value peaceful relations between people living in the Middle East and to United States' national security objectives in the region," said Santorum.

In order to be eligible for funding, a pro-democracy group must renounce the use of terrorism; pledge to adhere to nonproliferation regimes; pledge to destroy all prohibited stores of weapons of mass destruction; and support the adoption of a democratic form of government in Iran.

In addition, groups authorized to receive funding should be dedicated to democratic ideals; show a commitment to human rights; demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity; and support freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of association.

Finally, as a reassurance to those with concerns of U.S. military involvement in Iran, this legislation does not authorize or otherwise approve of the use of the Armed Forces of the United States. "In recent years, we have seen the people of Iran seek greater freedoms and liberties," said Santorum. "While efforts to engage the current government of Iran have produced few benefits, this legislation recognizes the people of Iran, who have voted for increased freedoms and have demonstrated on behalf of democratic principles."

## Nuclear proliferation



### **Powell says Iran nuclear program likely to be referred to UN**

Reuters, Jul 29, KUWAIT CITY - U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Thursday it was more and more likely the matter of Iran's nuclear programmes would have to be referred to the U.N. Security Council, which could impose sanctions.

The United States accuses Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons, a charge denied by Tehran which says its nuclear programmes are for peaceful purposes....

But Iran says it still has the right to produce uranium hexafluoride and build centrifuges.

The IAEA says the suspension was meant to apply to both. Powell repeated the U.S. view that Iran has not met its IAEA obligations or kept its commitments to the EU three. "This is a troubling development that has to be noted by the international community," he said of Iran's nuclear efforts generally. "You just can't ignore it any longer." "It is getting more and more likely that this matter is going to have to be referred to the Security Council," Powell added, noting that the IAEA board is expected to review the matter at meetings in September and November. He also said the Iranians have said "they are removing the seals on some of the material that was sealed by the IAEA and I hope this is a matter of concern for the IAEA and (that) they'll be speaking out about it."

It was not immediately clear what material he was referring to.



### **U.S. tells Europeans to "hold firm" on Iran**

Reuters, July 29, By Carol Giacomo, Diplomatic Correspondent

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration is urging Britain, France and Germany to "hold firm" against any new deals ahead of a meeting on Iran's nuclear program, U.S. officials say. They also told Reuters that as Washington considers ways to increase pressure on Tehran, they do not see imposing sanctions as an immediate goal. The latter comment suggests an attempt by Washington to dampen international resistance to bringing the controversial nuclear issue before the U.N. Security Council. Britain, France and Germany are due to meet in Paris on Thursday with Iranian officials in an effort to persuade Tehran to end activities that Washington and the Europeans believe are aimed at producing nuclear weapons. U.S. officials with access to intelligence estimates say Iran can achieve that goal in three to five years. Iran insists its program is peaceful. A push by the Europeans last October won promises that Iran would suspend uranium enrichment and allow snap inspections of nuclear facilities by international monitors.....

"The Iranians want to drive a wedge between the Europeans and the United States and to drag this process out as long as they can in order to do what they want to do in terms of developing a nuclear capability," a senior U.S. official said. "What we've been telling the EU three is to hold firm and not cut any deals with the Iranians," he said. U.S. officials said the Europeans, bruised by Iran's broken promises, should realise Tehran is using negotiations as a delaying tactic while it accelerates its nuclear program. The administration has been agitating to bring Iran before the U.N. Security Council, which can impose sanctions on violators of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.....

## Meddling in Iraq



### **Powell Says U.S. Uneasy About Iranian Role in Iraq**

Reuters, Jul 30- BAGHDAD - The United States is uneasy about attempts by Iran to gain influence in Shi'ite dominated southern Iraq, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Friday, and he urged the neighbors to forge stable relations.

"Iran has the potential of playing a helpful role (in Iraq), but we are uneasy about some of the actions that Iran has been taking in the south, the influence that they are trying to gain in the south," Powell told a news conference in Baghdad.

"We hope that the Iranian authorities will realize that it is in their interest to have a stable Iraq as a neighbor."

Powell said it was in the interests of both countries to cooperate and avoid confrontation.

"Too much blood has been shed between these two people over the years," he said.

Powell was speaking during a surprise visit to Iraq on Friday as part of a swing through the Middle East.

Iraq's Defense Minister Hazim al-Shalaan told the Washington Post in an interview this week that Iran was Iraq's "first enemy," and has accused Tehran of "blatant interference" in Iraq's internal affairs....

# The Washington Post

## Official Warns of Iranian Infiltration Iraqi Government Worries That Old Enemies Are Exploiting Open Borders

Washington Post, July 25 -- Hazim Shalan, Iraq's defense minister, charged in an interview that Iran has taken over Iraqi border positions, sent spies and saboteurs into the country and infiltrated the new government -- including his own ministry. Iran remains "the first enemy of Iraq," he declared.

Shalan's comments were the clearest sign the new government is concerned that the country's open borders are being exploited by old enemies, turning Iraq into a battleground for Middle Eastern opponents of the United States.

"I've seen clear interference in Iraqi issues by Iran," Shalan said Saturday. "Iran interferes in order to kill democracy".

Shalan accused Iran of supporting "terrorism and bringing enemies into Iraq." Spreading out a hand-drawn map on his desk in the Defense Ministry, an ornate former government building secluded in the former Green Zone, Shalan pointed out what he said were numerous Iraqi border positions that Iran has taken over.

Shalan said that former fighters from Afghanistan have been caught in Iraq and that they have admitted receiving help from Iranian security forces. A Sudanese man with Iranian intelligence contacts was caught in April with a "very powerful poison," Shalan said, and planned to contaminate drinking water in Diwaniyah, 100 miles south of Baghdad. Two other people who were "working with Iranian intelligence" were seized in northeastern Iraq three weeks ago, he said.

Shalan bluntly warned Iran: "We can send the death to Tehran's streets, like they do to us. But we can't do it if we are a democracy. But if my people say do it now, I will do it.".....



## Iraq's defense minister accused the Islamic Republic government's intelligence services of having infiltrated Iraq's government organs, and threatening to export terrorism to Iran's neighbors.

Radio Farda, July 20, 2004 - "The Iranian infiltration is wide and unprecedented since the



founding of the Iraqi state," Shaalan said Tuesday in a telephone interview with the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, monitored in Beirut. "The Iranians infiltrated the various departments of the state in general and have set up intelligence and security centers in several Iraqi cities," he said. He threatened Iran with reciprocal action. He said Iraq could respond to the terrorist attacks that claimed scores of Iraqi lives by exporting terrorism to the countries supporting and financing terrorism in Iraq. Shaalan said Iraqi authorities have arrested 35 terror suspects in Baghdad recently, including remnants of the

ousted Baath regime and Muslim extremists. Shaalan said Iraq has an estimated 40,000 national guardsmen who are not part of the regular army and who will be in charge of restoring security to the war-torn country with the assistance of US-led multinational forces. US officials, including former coalition authority administrator Paul Bremer, have repeatedly accused Iran of destabilizing Iraq, but the Islamic Republic officials have denied the accusations.

# Deteriorating conditions of human rights

## **Iran's latest invention**

[The Globe and Mail](#), *July 29*. Iran's judiciary continues to add insult to fatal injury in the Zahra Kazemi case. It was bad enough when an Iranian court acquitted the one person charged in relation to the murder of the Canadian photojournalist while she was in custody. The farcical trial of an intelligence agent was abandoned for lack of evidence after just three sessions and with no testimony from senior officials implicated in the crime by Iranian investigators. Now the hard-line judiciary, which includes not only judges but prosecutors and prison and security officials, has concocted yet another ludicrous explanation for Ms. Kazemi's death from a fractured skull and brain hemorrhage on July 10, 2003. "With the acquittal of the sole defendant," the judiciary's statement intoned, "only one option is left: The death of the late Kazemi was an accident due to [a] fall in blood pressure resulting from a hunger strike and her fall on the ground while standing." Never mind that more moderate and rational Iranian government officials, including Vice-President Mohammed Ali Abtahi, have already dismissed the claim of death by illness or accident as utterly bogus. An investigation ordered by President Mohammed Khatami concluded that Ms. Kazemi died from a beating. After the trial was abruptly halted, the government offered to help the judiciary identify the killer, knowing full well that evidence points to judiciary officials, including Saeed Mortazavi, Tehran's powerful chief prosecutor, and other security operatives who report directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Lawyers representing Ms. Kazemi's mother have accused Mohammad Bakhshi, a prison official and part of the judiciary, of being the actual culprit. The judiciary told the government to butt out of legal matters and issued a thinly veiled threat. "Comments tainted with political intentions have no outcome other than causing ambiguity, inciting and deceiving public opinion and providing propaganda fuel for the spiteful media." Further indicating that he cares not a whit about what Canada or the rest of the world thinks of this farce, Mr. Mortazavi promptly shut down two Iranian newspapers that reported on the trial, one of his preferred methods of squelching criticism of the judiciary and other hard-line defenders of religious orthodoxy. Surely the Canadian government needs no further proof that there will be no justice for Ms. Kazemi or her family in an Iranian court. Canada should downgrade its permanent relations with the Islamic republic and bring the case to international bodies, including the United Nations. Iran must be made to feel the heat for repeatedly trampling on human rights and then perpetrating lies about its behaviour.

## **A farce of a murder trial in Iran**

[Rocky Mountain News – Editorial Jul 27](#). Iran's ruling hard-line clerics fume because the Western world doesn't accord them the respect and legitimacy they believe they deserve. The just-concluded trial of an intelligence agent for the murder of an Iranian-born Canadian photojournalist might just give them a hint why this is so. Zahra Kazemi, 54, was arrested last July while photographing a demonstration outside a Tehran prison. She died while in custody. The security forces said it was stroke. But a committee answering to Iran's reformist president found that she had died of a fractured skull and a brain hemorrhage - in short, she had been beaten to death. The cleric-dominated judiciary was forced to go through the motions of a trial, in all likelihood intentionally trying the wrong man, Mohammad Reza Aghdam Ahmadi, whom they found not guilty. Canada has recalled its ambassador, and Kazemi's cause has been taken up by Iran's Nobel Peace Prize-winning human-rights lawyer, Shirin Ebadi, who says she will press the case in international courts. Maybe then the clerics will learn that the way to respect is not to sanction the murder of foreign nationals.

**The New York Times**

## Iran Acquittal in Death Case Is Challenged

*New York Times, July 25* - The lawyer representing the family of a slain Iranian-Canadian photojournalist vowed Sunday to continue the struggle to bring her killer to justice, one day after a court cleared an Iranian intelligence agent of responsibility in her death. The journalist, Zahra Kazemi, 54, died of a brain hemorrhage in July 2003 while in detention for having taken photographs outside a prison in Tehran. The intelligence agent, Muhammad Reza Aghdam Ahmadi, was acquitted on Saturday of the "semi-intentional murder" on the grounds of a "lack of proof."..... In Canada, Ms. Kazemi's son, Stephen Hachemi, called the court's ruling a cover-up, saying, "They're not ready to implicate Iranian officials," Agence France-Presse reported. He added as a warning to Iran, "I have only three letters - I.C.J . - the International Court of Justice." In the absence of a guilty verdict, the Iranian court ordered the government to pay \$9,200 in "blood money" to the family of Ms. Kazemi as compensation for her death. It is half the amount that Iranian law stipulates for the death of a man. The lawyer for Mr. Ahmadi had argued that the intelligence agent was not the person who inflicted the blow that killed Ms. Kazemi. Instead, he accused a judiciary official, Muhammad Bakhshi, of the fatal blow. But the trial was abruptly ended before the witnesses that Ms. Ebadi's team had requested could be called. The reformist government of President Mohammad Khatami similarly defended the intelligence agent. "The Iranian government from the beginning believed that the man on trial was innocent and the court came to the same conclusion," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Mr. Khatami ordered the investigation into Ms. Kazemi's death last year, rejecting the judiciary's claim that she had died of a stroke. The case has strained relations between Iran and Canada, which recalled its ambassador two weeks ago in protest after Canadian observers were barred from the trial. In Ottawa on Sunday, Canada's foreign minister, Pierre Pettigrew, issued a statement saying that he was dissatisfied by the way Ms. Kazemi's case had been handled, Reuters reported.