



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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Revolutionary Guards oversee nuclear experts

U.S. pressing for nuclear pact compliance aimed at Tehran

Reuters, Washington, April 26, 2004 - The international community must be prepared to act against states that violate a key U.N. nuclear weapons treaty if it is to stop nuclear arms proliferation, U.S. officials said on Monday.

A high-level U.S. delegation intends to deliver a tough message on compliance obligations, aimed at Iran and other problem countries it accuses of pursuing nuclear weapons, at a U.N. conference this week to discuss the non-proliferation treaty...

Iran and North Korea, which pledged not to develop nuclear weapons when they signed the pact, have used the treaty as a cover to pursue nuclear capabilities, according to U.S. and other officials... U.S. officials insist Tehran is still deceiving the world and is determined to produce nuclear weapons.

EU Rejects Iran's Efforts to Restart Trade Talks

Radiofarda, May 04, 2004 - Foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi was in Brussels yesterday as part of a European tour aimed at reviving EU trade talks that were suspended last year. Union officials say, however, that there is widespread "disappointment" in Brussels and member-state capitals over Iran's recent elections and continued doubts about the country's nuclear program, writes RFE/RL's Ahto Lojakas

House Condemns Iran's Nuclear Program

Associated Press, May 06, 2004 - Washington-The House on Thursday accused Iran of ``continuing deceptions and falsehoods" involving development of nuclear weapons and said that Europe, Japan and Russia should cut commercial and energy ties until Iran permanently end such activities.

The resolution states that despite Iran's promises to the International Atomic Energy Agency to end uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities, ``it is abundantly clear that Iran remains committed to a nuclear weapons program."

Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., said Iran ``has engaged in a systematic campaign of deception and manipulation to hide its true intentions and keep its large scale nuclear efforts a secret." The resolution said that Iran's Natanz fuel enrichment facility could, when completed, produce enough highly enriched uranium for as many as 25 to 40 nuclear weapons a year. It says that until Iran verifies it has ended its weapons program, the European Union should break off trade talks, Japan should not proceed with the development of Iran's Azadegan oil field and Russia should not conclude a nuclear fuel supply agreement for an Iranian reactor.

Iran must come clean on atomic plans – ElBaradei

Reuters, Paris, May 06, 2004 - The head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog warned Iran on Thursday the world would not wait forever for the Islamic republic to divulge the full extent and nature of its nuclear program. "People have to be a little bit patient, but Iran also has to understand that the world is not going to wait forever for them to come

clean," International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohamed ElBaradei told a foreign relations committee of French parliament.

Western diplomats who follow the IAEA have said the number of questions about Tehran's nuclear program was increasing.

"There is suspicion that things are not completely right," a European Union diplomat in Brussels told Reuters. But the United States says it is a front for building an atomic bomb and has called for the IAEA Board of Governors to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council for violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Such a move could result in sanctions.

The IAEA has been investigating Iran's atomic program ever since a group of Iranian exiles broke the news in August 2002 that Tehran was hiding a massive uranium enrichment plant and a heavy-water plant. Iran later declared these to the IAEA.

A MONTH AWAY FROM THE BOMB

Iran Must Come Clean on Atomic Plans - UN Nuke Chief

Radiofarda, May 06, 2004-The IAEA has been investigating Iran's atomic program ever since a group of Iranian exiles broke the news in August 2002 that Tehran was hiding a massive uranium enrichment plant and a heavy-water plant. Iran later declared these to the IAEA.

ElBaradei has been calling for a change in NPT rules to prevent countries like Iran from developing the know-how to produce weapons-useable plutonium or highly enriched uranium.

"A country which has plutonium or highly enriched uranium is probably one month away in terms of capability of developing a nuclear weapon, should they decide to do that," ElBaradei said. A French foreign ministry spokesman said ElBaradei would meet Foreign Minister Michel Barnier to discuss proliferation.

Iran, Libya and North Korea all shopped on a recently- uncovered black market run by the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, Abdul Qadeer Khan, that skirted sanctions to supply sensitive atomic technology to interested buyers. "We are running against the clock because we know that there's a lot of interest in nuclear and radioactive sources by extremist groups," ElBaradei said.

Diplomats and nuclear experts told Reuters that some members of the administration of President Bush believe they have strong evidence Syria has operating enrichment centrifuges, which it would have gotten from Khan's network.

Meddling and terrorism

12 Kurdish soldiers killed

Voice of Kurdistan Radio, April 25, 2004 – On April 12, while a number of Sunni Kurdish soldiers were praying together in the Sumar training camp, one of the regime's Guards Corps members opened fire on them. Unfortunately, 12 of them were killed. Three of those killed have been identified so far as being residents of Sanandaj. One of them by the name of Mahmoud Shirazi, son of Abdollah, lived in a village near Sanandaj.

5 suspected terrorists arrested near Iran border

Daily Times, Quetta, Pakistan, April 26, 2004 - Paramilitary forces arrested five men after a gun battle near the border with Iran, an official said on Sunday. Border troops on patrol in the southwestern Makran region came under fire late on Saturday after three vehicles failed to stop near Shun village, some 900 kilometers southwest of Quetta, the paramilitary unit's commander said on condition of anonymity. After a heavy exchange of fire, two of the vehicles escaped into Iran, but the other vehicle was intercepted and the five people inside were arrested. Troops also confiscated five AK-47 assault rifles, ammunition and a satellite phone, he said.

21 terrorists who entered Iraq from Iran arrested

Al-Hayat daily, April 27, 2004 – A number of terrorist agents who had entered Iraq from Iran's borders were arrested in Soleimania and Erbil. The 21 individuals carried large amounts of weapons and explosives. Those arrested have confessed that their primary mission in Iraq was killing U.S.-led CPA forces. They are also assigned to use any means for carrying out explosions in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

Official Tehran daily warns of ominous future for U.S.

Jomhuri Islami daily, April 27, 2004 – The threat inflicted by speedboats on Basra's oil docks has drawn a new line that shows the U.S. has been completely unsuccessful in this region. This is just the beginning of such threats and its side effects, such as murdering U.S. militants and inflicting financial and material damages, will afflict the U.S. and Britain much more than what has been imposed on them so far. Indeed, the occupiers will not only fail to gain anything in this area, but will suffer great harm. The rapid growth of the anti-occupation movement in Iraq and emergence of selfless armed groups among Shiites, Sunnis and various ethnicities of Iraq have completely foiled the U.S. plans for establishment of its military base and remaining in Iraq. It is already clear that this aspiration of the American statesmen will never be put into practice.

Human rights abuse

9 movie stars sentenced to prison and flogging

Peik-e Iran website, April 27, 2004 – On the order of Judge Hozan presiding the 1089th Branch of the penal court, nine movie stars, television actors and directors were sentenced to punitive prison terms, 74 lashes and payment of 500,000 tomans. They were also deprived from all artistic activities for three years.

Press Freedom Advocate Issues Report on Abuses

Radiofarda, May 3, 2004 – On the occasion of the international press day, the society for defense of press freedom in Iran issued a report on freedom of press abuses in the past year, based entirely on domestic news sources. The report counts 355 cases of press law violations, one fatality Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi, who died in custody of head injuries she suffered during interrogation. 35 newspapers closings by court orders, 74 journalists waiting for courts to hand out judgments after their trials, 10 cases of assault and battery of journalists, six journalists banned from publishing, 16 journalists in jail, 178 cases of filtering of the Internet news sites, 32 journalists arrested after being summoned for interrogation, and 14.33 billion rials (\$1.80 million) total bail set for releasing journalists from jail. No other trade has been subjected to such abuse, the society's spokesman, Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, editor of four banned newspapers, said in a press conference held in Tehran to unveil the report. Isfahan MP Ali Mazroui, head of the trade association of journalists, said only the newspapers which turned their pages into propaganda sheets for the government managed to survive. MP Mohsen Torkashvand, member of the Majles national security and foreign relations committee, said the legal limits of press freedoms should become clear, since we have witnessed the closing of more than 110 newspapers, due to misunderstandings about the limitations.

Shirin Ebadi: In Iran Torture Is Legal

Radiofarda, May 05, 2004 Torture is legal in Iran, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi said in a question and answer session with human rights activists in Vancouver. In the meeting, also attended by US-based lawyer and women's rights advocate Mehrangiz Kar and former UN Human Rights Commission's former Special Representative on Iran Maurice Copithorne, Ms. Ebadi said she told Copithorne in one of his trips to Iran that instead of

wasting time interviewing the authorities and activists, he can read the Islamic Republic constitution, which clearly legalizes torture. She said institutionalizing respect for human rights requires collective effort, and cannot be accomplished by any one person, according to Toronto-based Sharvand magazine.

Feature

For Iranian mullahs' mission in Iraq, history is repeated

Intellectual Conservative, April 26, 2004 by Hedayat Mostowfi

According to the intelligence gathered by the Iranian opposition, Tehran is trying to reach its goals in a calculated fashion. The first step was to establish a network of charity organizations for recruiting and organizing Shiite fanatics and insurgents. The second step was to mobilize the militia all over the country to conduct attacks against the coalition forces and civilians. The entire operation was coordinated in the new headquarters of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard near the Iran-Iraq border in Ilam province...

These developments are strikingly similar to what happened in Iran immediately after the 1979 Revolution. It is ironic that what happened in Iran 25 years ago is reoccurring in Iraq...

They are now making Iraq another testing ground. We should not underestimate the mullahs in Iran, where the heart of fundamentalism and terrorism is beating. Unless the Tehran regime is dealt with first, the world and Iraq in particular would continue to suffer from instability and chaos.

The Iranian regime is responsible for more than 80 percent of all terrorist attacks around the world and has been condemned by United Nations for human rights abuses, without ever being held to account.

It would be a dangerous mistake to say we will not negotiate with terrorists but try to use the godfather of international terrorism as mediators. It would be as if one would ask the wolf to guard the sheep. The road to democracy in Iraq passes through Iran and not the other way round. The mullahs in Iran are not the "cure." They are the very "disease" that has to be terminated in order to bring peace and prosperity to Iraqi people and to the region. The U.S. could help its own cause by supporting the democratic opposition to Tehran and the call for a referendum in Iran.

Hedayat Mostowfi is the Executive Director for nationwide Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran.

Dissident Graveyard, Khatami's "vision."

National Review Online May 04, 2004 By Nir Boms & Erick Stakelbeck

"I never said that we have no political prisoners. We have them, and that is incontestable. They have been jailed for what they believe in."

With this admission, made during an April 27 event marking Iran's "National Youth Day," Iranian President Mohammed Khatami merely acknowledged what the rest of the world has known for the past 25 years: The Islamic Republic is a graveyard for political dissidents. Of course, that was supposed to change with Khatami's ascension to the presidency in 1997, as Iran's young people embraced him as a visionary who could break the iron grip wielded by fundamentalist mullahs over every aspect of Iranian society. Sadly, though, the opposite has occurred, as beheadings, floggings, and stonings have continued and the imprisonment and torture of Iran's democratic activists has grown even more frequent during Khatami's seven-year reign.

The latest indicator of just how ineffectual Khatami's tenure has been to the cause of democratic change came on April 28, as Iran's hard-line judiciary, in a transparent move designed to pacify critics of the country's abysmal human-rights record, ordered a ban on the use of torture "to extract confession." This practice — the mullahs' preferred weapon of choice in dealing with dissenters — had already been outlawed in the 1979 Iranian constitution. The supposed ban, however, apparently did not apply for Zahra Kazemi.

In June 2003, Kazemi, an Iranian-born Canadian photographer, was arrested in front of Tehran's notorious Evin Prison while taking pictures of the families of political prisoners. Branded a spy by the Iranian government, Kazemi was detained at Evin and reportedly brutalized. According to Iranian sources, several days after Kazemi's arrest, she began bleeding from her mouth and nose and was sent to a nearby hospital.

Prison guards who accompanied Kazemi to the hospital allegedly prevented medical staff from treating her properly or carrying out brain scans ordered by doctors. Kazemi, just 54 years old, subsequently died of a massive brain hemorrhage. Iranian authorities maintain that Kazemi died of a stroke while under interrogation, and have supposedly launched a full-scale investigation into her death.

However, given that Kazemi was interrogated by both the Tehran prosecutor's office and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence, it's highly unlikely that the investigation will progress beyond a few empty public proclamations by the Iranian government. An incident similar to the one that apparently claimed Kazemi's life occurred last summer, when Iran's morality police broke up a party being held in the Tehran apartment of 35-year-old Moshen Mofidi. Two of Mofidi's sisters attended the party in the presence of several unmarried men, a situation forbidden by Islamic law.

Mofidi was jailed and sentenced to 80 lashes for the crimes of corrupting his sisters, owning an illegal satellite dish, and possessing medicines that contained alcohol. Mofidi's sisters were also taken into custody and claim to have been beaten so severely during their imprisonment that several of their teeth were broken. Mofidi, who had been suffering from severe lung and sinus infections at the time of his flogging, died a few days after being released from prison. Iranian officials refused to send his body to Canada, where several of his family members live.

While Mofidi's case drew the attention of human-rights organizations worldwide, the most publicized incidence of Iranian barbarity was carried out with the help of another torture-friendly Middle Eastern dictatorship: Syria. In April 2003, Jamil Bassam and Abraham Khodabandeh, two Iranian political refugees and democracy activists who had lived in Britain for over 30 years, were visiting family in Syria when they were arrested at their Damascus hotel.

After two months of solitary confinement in a Syrian prison, the two men were flown — in violation of international law — to Tehran on a Syrian jet and into the waiting arms of Iranian authorities. Bassam and Khodabandeh are currently being held in Ward 102 of Evin Prison, where they are reportedly being tortured severely while awaiting trial on unspecified charges.

Reached by phone in England, Khodabandeh's wife, Elaha, said recently that she had not spoken to her husband since July 2003. "I want the mullahs to allow a (politically) neutral person, someone from the Red Cross or British Parliament, to visit my husband in prison," she says.

While that remains unlikely, two weeks ago, protests were held by Iranian activists in Washington, D.C., London, Stockholm, Oslo, Rome, Frankfurt, Berlin, and the Hague to condemn the two men's handover by Syrian authorities and the lack of a response from the British government on the matter thus far.

Further demonstrations were held on April 25, when, in a rare show of civil disobedience, 300 people gathered in front of the United Nations offices in Tehran to demand the immediate release of all Iranian political prisoners. The protest, like any event critical of the mullahs, was conducted under the watchful eye of Iranian security forces.

Despite such repression, Iran's pro-democracy activists have proven to be a perseverant and gutsy bunch, as evidenced by frequent reports of anti-government protests — most often led by university students — that have raged in the streets of major Iranian cities over the past several years.

But without more support from the West, achieving any real change will likely prove difficult for Iran's reformers. The U.S. regularly condemns Iran's human-rights record but has done little to encourage the country's democracy movements. As for the European Union, it recently chose not to table a United Nations resolution censuring flagrant Iranian human-rights violations.

It's no wonder the most likely place to find an Iranian reformer these days is in a Tehran prison.

Nir Boms is a fellow at the Council for Democracy and Tolerance and the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. Erick Stakelbeck is senior writer for the Investigative Project, a Washington, D.C.-based counterterrorism research institute.