

The Iranian Pen Club

# Panorama



## SFF interviews defector

### Mahmoud Rostami escaped Mojahedin Khalq

Sahar Family Foundation, Baghdad, November 09 2011

Translated by Nejat Society

<http://www.nejatngo.org/en/post.aspx?id=4000>

<http://www.iran-interlink.org/fa/?mod=view&id=11043>



Mahmoud Rostami escaped the cult **Mahmoud Rostami** of Rajavi on sep.17, 2011 after twenty-two years of membership in the MKO.

He met his parents on November 4th after years of separation. The Rostamis hugged and kissed their son warmly with tearful eyes. Other families picketing in front of



C a m p A s h r a f witnessed the emotional scene, congratulating the Rostamis for visiting their beloved son after twenty - t w o years.

**SFF: how do you feel visiting your parents after 23 years?**

Mahmoud: (While kissing her mother's hand), I'm very happy, I can't describe my feeling. I'm sorry I hurt them and caused them too much trouble during those years. I

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## Open Letter to Catherine Ashton on behalf of the families of Rajavi's hostages in Camp Ashraf



Anne Singleton, Middle East Strategy Consultants, October 25 2011

<http://mesconsult.com>

Dear Mrs Ashton,

It is interesting and entirely predictable that at the same time you replied to Iran that the six major powers - the United States, Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia - are willing to meet within weeks if Iran is prepared to "engage seriously in meaningful discussions" over concerns about its nuclear programme, we have seen a flurry of activity by the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) to skew perceptions of the issue with misinformation and self-aggrandising propaganda.

Paid MEK activists held yet another demonstration in front of the White House on Saturday with the irrelevant demand that the US government remove the MEK from its terrorism list. In Brussels Maryam Rajavi, wife of the MEK's leader, was given a platform to promote terrorism in the European Parliament. Conflating the totally irrelevant issue of Camp Ashraf in Iraq with the problems posed by Iran's nuclear programme and the MEK's terrorist listing in the US, she was given a platform to verbally attack and insult Iraqis and their elected government from a

**Continued on Page 3**

**SFF interviews defector**

**Mahmoud Rostami escaped Mojahedin Khalq**

**Continued from Page 2**

hope that they forgive me.

to view more photos click here

**SFF: How did you join the MKO?**

Mahmoud: I was a prisoner of Iran-Iraq war. After years of imprisonment in Iraqi camps, I joined the group out of necessity.

**SFF: how come you decided to escape Camp Ashraf?**

Mahmoud: I have written a number of papers on the situation inside Ashraf and I have given them to Sahar Family Foundation. Briefly, I'd say that members in Camp Ashraf are brainwashed. Before Ramadan [the month of fasting in Islam] I heard my mother's voice via loudspeakers of families picketing in front of Ashraf gates. I got so happy, I felt like being awakened. I went to my commander and asked him to let me access a telephone to call my family in order that I would tell them not to come to Ashraf any more (this was my pretext to speak with my family). They said that they didn't have any telephone for such a use. I said "Ok, I will go near the fence to speak to them and tell them to get back." when the officials found my insistence, they allowed me to have a controlled phone call. When I talked to my family, I found out that I

and call my son through loudspeakers several times. I cried a lot and each time I had to get back home after my visa was expired, then I would get back to Iraq again after a while.

I tried to keep in touch with families here regularly. We feel that we should help each other in order to release our children from here [Camp Ashraf]. Thank God.

I got back to Iran a day before Ramadan. Telephone rang at home. One of my children answered and cried," Mommy, Mohamamd is on the line". He was calling from Ashraf. He said," mom, you were here. I headed your voice but don't



come anymore." I said" Dear, Escape!

**... Briefly, I'd say that members in Camp Ashraf are brainwashed. Before Ramadan [the month of fasting in Islam] I heard my mother's voice via loudspeakers of families picketing in front of Ashraf gates. I got so happy, I felt like being awakened. I went to my commander and asked him to let me access a telephone to call my family in order that I would tell them not to come to Ashraf any more (this was my pretext to speak with my family).**

was not forgotten and they still love me so I decided to escape. I worked on my escape plan for a few months, and finally I succeeded. Now, I will try my best to help release my friends from Ashraf.

**SFF: Mrs. Rostami, [Mahmoud's Mother] how many times have you come to Camp Ashraf, so far?**

Mrs. Rostami: first of all, I should say that I owe my son's release to all families who have been picketing in front of Ashraf prison for about two years. Especially I'm thankful to Mrs. Abdollahi [the mother of an Ashraf resident] who always motivated us to be patient .

I came to Iraq three times and I would go to Ashraf gates

We are awaiting you. We miss you."

Two months ago, Mohamamd called again and told that he had escaped Ashraf prison and he was in hotel. I couldn't sleep that night. I called him everyday. When I found out that didn't intend to come to Iran. I came to Iraq to see him. I wouldn't have been relieved if I hadn't seen him.

**SFF: congratulations again! We hope that other Ashraf prisoners will be released as soon as possible and all families will be happy.**

Translated by Nejat Society

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## Open Letter to Catherine Ashton on behalf of the families of Rajavi's hostages in Camp Ashraf

Continued from Page 1

parliamentary building.

The MEK is certainly highly proficient in advertising itself as a tool for anti-Iran elements to use and it is unfortunate that Europe's corridors of power are being so casually exploited to promote Washington's favourite terrorists. The intended signal is that Europe will brandish a stick to open negotiations with Iran over the nuclear issue. Does the European Commission represent European interests in this respect or do you represent the agenda of only the extreme right wings of USA and Israeli politics?

for dealing with Camp Ashraf.

As you are aware, around 3400 Iranian individuals remain trapped in a dangerous, destructive mind control cult, the Mojahedin-e Khalq, by its leader Massoud



Catherine Ashton

Rajavi inside Camp Ashraf in Diayla province of Iraq.

**... Families wish first and foremost to remind you that they are part of the solution, not the problem. You have demonstrated your particular interest in this issue by appointing Mr Jean De Ruyt, a former Belgian ambassador to the EU, as your advisor on Camp Ashraf. He will no doubt be investigating and examining whatever approaches are available to resolve the situation. By situation I refer to the standoff between the constitutional and legal demand of the elected government of the sovereign nation of Iraq, and the illegal and irrational demands of a cult leader as the hostage taker who represents nobody but his own interests and who is prepared to kill others to this end ...**

But as much as we believe this is against your interests, these are political issues and we do not wish to take any position in this respect. Our first and foremost concern is that you do not allow the issue of Camp Ashraf and its sick and aging population to be used as a political football for everyone to kick around for their own game.

It has been reported that Mrs Rajavi conveyed her thanks to you for taking the side of the MEK against the government of Iraq. If this is true it is highly unfortunate that your office has been manipulated to look as though you are taking a position of backing the head of a terrorist cult instead of the victims.

Mrs Rajavi like her fugitive husband Massoud Rajavi does not represent the individuals trapped inside Camp Ashraf. The Rajavis do not represent anybody's interests but their own.

The Government of Iraq has frequently advised representatives of the European Union not to use the MEK to push their agendas in Iraq, to the point of issuing written and verbal complaints against interference in the internal affairs of their country, including their elections, and have warned against using elements of terrorism to push their agendas. However, these political issues must be addressed in another arena by other parties. We are specifically interested that you have now taken responsibility

Since the MEK was confined to and protected in the camp by the US military in 2003, Rajavi has resisted all efforts to allow any external agencies to free these individuals in a peaceful and humane manner. Rajavi is holding the residents as hostages to guarantee his safe future, to avoid prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity brought against him by the government of Iraq and the international community.

You are also aware that since February 2009, many of the families of these hostages have taken turns to stay just outside the camp in an effort to find and meet their loved ones and to prevent the MEK from further harming them. Now, as a new contingent of families from Gilan province in Iran have arrived at the camp, we are writing to you on behalf of the families of the captives of the MEK and its Western backers in Washington, London and Brussels. (Such ordinary Iranians find themselves voiceless in Western political and media circles due to the virulently anti-Iranian attitude which prevails in these circles.) They wish first and foremost to remind you that they are part of the solution, not the problem.

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legal demand of the elected government of the sovereign nation of Iraq, and the illegal and irrational demands of a cult leader as the hostage taker who represents nobody but his own interests and who is prepared to kill others to this end.

The government of Iraq demands that the MEK leave Iraq before the end of the year, certainly before American troops are withdrawn. For this reason, there is an urgent need to find an effective solution. On two occasions, August 2009 and April 2011, when Iraqi security forces have attempted to enter the camp to impose the rule of law on the camp, Massoud Rajavi ordered his special forces, his fedayeen, to force the brainwashed residents to confront these efforts with a suicidal resistance which led to the deaths and injuries of many rank and file members as well as injuries to Iraqi security forces. Iraq is working hard to avoid a similar confrontation in future and is expecting cooperation from the international community in this respect. Soon after the second of these incidents I visited the camp and interviewed the responsible authorities and gathered enough evidence which is available for any party who would like to know. Since 2008 three reports have described the situation of the camp and two books have been written on the subject.

Mr Jean De Ruyt, who will liaise with EU states and organizations

**Mr Jean De Ruyt, who will liaise with EU states and organizations including the United Nations, says that a peaceful and realistic solution and the security and safety of residents are his priority. For this reason the families are very optimistic now that you have taken over responsibility from the Americans. With the appointment of this advisor the families now believe your office has a mandate to help Iraq, the UN and ICRC to resolve the situation as soon as possible.**

including the United Nations, says that a peaceful and realistic solution and the security and safety of residents are his priority. For this reason the families are very optimistic now that you have taken over responsibility from the Americans. With the appointment of this advisor the families now believe your office has a mandate to help Iraq, the UN and ICRC to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

The families are asking that you coordinate with the Iraqi authorities to help them to protect their relatives when the leaders are finally forced to open the gate of the camp and allow external agencies in. This is the first step before the UNHCR can take the residents out of the garrison and interview them individually without MEK minders present. It is at this time of maximum confrontation that they fear Massoud Rajavi will order the deaths of the residents.

Once the gates of the camp are finally opened safely, the residents will of course be able to access the facts and information which have been denied them for decades about their true situation and

the possibilities for their future. Whatever their choices, their families are on hand to offer them protection and support. Of course, not all the families can be in Iraq at the same time, but all are willing to travel there to help their loved ones when their individual circumstances demand.

The MEK is designated as a terrorist organisation by Iraq based on its activities in their country against their citizens – the MEK has killed 25,000 Iraqi civilians over two decades. In contrast, the EU does not regard the MEK as a terrorist entity. This should make it

possible for residents of Camp Ashraf – in addition to those who already have citizen or residency rights – to be brought to Europe as refugees under the auspices of the UNHCR. (Due to the peculiarities of American law, delisting the MEK in the USA would play no part whatsoever in helping the people in Camp Ashraf.)

Considering that the US military has deliberately helped the MEK to keep the gates closed and the residents trapped inside, the opportunity now exists for you to act as a go-between for the US and MEK and thus ensure that the camp is opened up at the earliest opportunity so that work can start to relocate the hostages. Certainly the government of Iraq is happy to help facilitate this outcome on the

understanding that if this process is not begun by the end of the year, the international community has obliged them to take unilateral decisions regarding the camp and its residents.

Above all else, the families outside have travelled from far and wide to rescue their loved ones and are more than happy to ensure a swift and peaceful outcome. There can be no possible objection or obstacles to helping them.

**Anne Singleton**

(Author of Saddam's Private Army, 2003 and co-author of The Life of Camp Ashraf, 2011)

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## Iran Says U.S. Plot Suspect Is a member of Mojahedin Khalq (MKO, MEK, Rajavi cult)

Radio Free Europe, November 05, 2011

[http://www.rferl.org/content/iran\\_says\\_us\\_plot\\_suspect\\_is\\_anti-tehran\\_militant/24382352.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_says_us_plot_suspect_is_anti-tehran_militant/24382352.html)

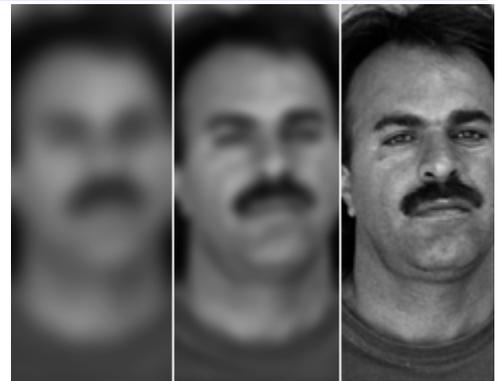
Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has said that Tehran has sent a letter to the United Nations complaining about U.S. accusations Iran was behind a plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to Washington.

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said the letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon charges the plot is part of a multi-pronged U.S. strategy to smear Tehran.

Iran's official Press TV reported that the letter says the man whom U.S. prosecutors have identified as an Iranian military official in the alleged plot is actually a member of the exiled Iranian rebel group Mujahideen Khalq Organisation.



one of the suspects in the alleged plot in Iran, Tehran took action through Interpol and commissioned the Islamic Republic's police to investigate the issue, the letter



**As a victim of international and state terrorism, Iran condemns all acts of terror and is committed to the provisions of the 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including diplomats, Tehran's letter to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon read.**

Iran UN mission rejects US terror claim

Headquarters of the United Nations in New York, the United States

The Islamic Republic of Iran's mission to the United Nations has refuted the recent US allegation about Tehran's involvement in a plot to assassinate the Saudi envoy to Washington.

Early in October, the US Justice Department accused Iran of orchestrating a plot to assassinate Abdel al-Jubeir with the help of a suspected member of a Mexican drug cartel.

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Upon being informed of the possibility of the presence of

added.

The investigations indicated that the individual claimed by the US [to have been involved in the alleged plot] is a member of the terrorist Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), the letter pointed out.

The MKO is listed as a terrorist organization by much of the international community and has committed numerous terrorist acts against both Iranians and Iraqis.

Tehran's letter to the UN chief added that the US has acted hastily in accusing Iran of involvement in the terror plot, and that the suspect has not even stood trial in a competent and impartial court of law.

Iran's UN mission cautioned the UN against the consequences of such negative propaganda based on groundless accusations and fabricated information, saying that Iran considers the US government's measures a threat to international peace and security.

# The New York Times

Expect the World®

## Iraq Arrests More in Wake of Tip About Coup

### Who benefits from keeping Mojahedin Khalq and Camp Ashraf the last stronghold of Saddamists in Iraq

ANDREW E. KRAMER, New York Times, November 01 2011

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/world/middleeast/iraq-arrests-more-in-wake-of-libyan-tip-about-coup.html>

BAGHDAD — The government of Iraq continued to respond vigorously on Monday to a tip from the new interim leaders in Libya that former members of Saddam Hussein's military and Baath Party were plotting a coup — so much so that critics are now saying that the information has become a pretext for arresting its political opponents.

As the overwhelming majority of high-ranking Baathists were Sunnis, the mass arrests by the Shiite-controlled government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki is fanning sectarian tensions, just six weeks before the United

can no longer guarantee their safety.

“Frankly, I am very scared and expect to be arrested at any moment,” Haji Abu Ahmed, a former Baathist in the southern city of Basra, said in an interview.

“The current practices are the same as the practices of Saddam,” he said. “There seems to be no difference between the two systems. Saddam was chasing Dawa, and now Dawa is chasing Baathists.” Dawa is Mr. Maliki's political party.

When the government revealed last week that it had received the information in October, gleaned from the ruined headquarters of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's intelligence headquarters in Tripoli, the authorities detained more than 200 people.

By Saturday, the number of arrests of suspected members of what Mr. Maliki has characterized as an underground group made up of the vestiges of the disbanded Baath Party had more than tripled to 615, according to government figures.

**... “We do not have space in our government for those plotting against our government.” He denied that the arrests were singling out political opponents, saying they were a “nonsectarian operation.” As proof, he pointed to Baathist conspirators who had been detained in the predominantly Shiite areas of southern and central Iraq and included Shiites. He said legal processes were respected and arrest warrants obtained. “We should differentiate between the Baathists who work in departments and institutions of the state, who harmonized with the political process and who fought terror, and the Saddamist Baathists, who cooperate with Al Qaeda ...**

States military is scheduled to withdraw its last soldiers.

Former Baathists, who made up much of the professional class as well as the military and political leaders under Saddam Hussein have said they are deeply concerned by the turn of events, particularly now that the American military

Dozens of arrests have been reported since, with some suspects pulled from their houses before dawn, relatives said.

A senior official in the Iraqi government said last week that Libya's interim leader, Mahmoud Jibril, revealed the plot to Mr. Maliki during a surprise visit to Baghdad in October.

In addition to the mass arrests in the supposed plot, the government is purging former Baathists in higher education. Last month, the government fired 145 employees of

space in our government for those plotting against our government.”

**...Sunnis already nervous about the American withdrawal reacted to the arrests and firings with protests and threats that they will seek to spin off predominantly Sunni provinces as autonomous regions. In a largely symbolic vote, one local council in Tikrit, the hometown of Mr. Hussein and a Baath Party stronghold, decided to begin the process of gaining greater independence by forming an autonomous region similar to Kurdistan.**

Salahudin University in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, for being former Baathists.

The leaders of Iraq’s Sunni minority are now, as they have been in the past, extraordinarily sensitive to efforts to arrest or extricate members of the former Baath Party from public life. That process, called de-Baathification, was introduced by the United States immediately after the 2003 invasion and contributed, in the minds of its many critics, to the formation of the insurgency.

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The council in Anbar, the Sunni-dominated western desert region that was an epicenter of the insurgency, issued an ultimatum that if the detainees were not freed, it would also vote to seek greater autonomy. Street protests erupted after Friday Prayer in Tikrit and Ramadi, another Sunni city.

In a television address over the weekend, Mr. Maliki defended the government’s actions, saying, “We do not have

Baathists, who cooperate with Al Qaeda and work to overthrow the political process,” Mr. Maliki said.

The arrests are also apparently helping Mr. Maliki to shore up support among factionalized Shiite parties who find common cause only in persecuting their former oppressors.

As one example, Mr. Maliki’s uneasy partner in the governing coalition, Moktada al-Sadr, the anti-American Shiite cleric, endorsed the firings of alleged Baathists professors at Salahudin University. “The brother minister of higher education should go on with this uprooting,” Mr. Sadr said in a statement. “This is good for us and good for them.”

## Mojahedin Khalq (MKO, MEK, Rajavi cult)

### fears that withdrawal of US troops from Iraq will leave them orphaned

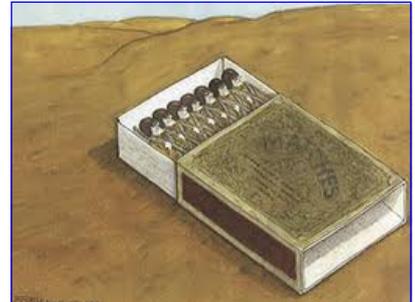
Mazda Parsi, Nejat Bloggers, November 10 2011

<http://www.nejatngo.org/en/post.aspx?id=4002>

Two weeks ago, speaking with certainty and resolution, President Obama announced that “after nearly nine years, America’s war in Iraq will be over.” [1] Obama spoke after a private video conference with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and he offered assurances that the two leaders agreed on the decision, reported the Associated Press on October 21, 2011. [2] Now that the official countdown has begun, American troops are organizing their departure.

This is good news for troops who want to come home, but bad news for the members of the MKO housed in Camp Ashraf who have tenuously benefited from the troops’ presence; Ultimately America’s departure from Iraq will conclude the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) presence in Iraq. One sticky problem on the final departure is the disagreement between Baghdad and Washington over “the issue of immunity for American soldiers from Iraqi law” reports \*The Wall Street Journal\*. For those American trainers and advisors that

#### The Cult



of the MKO—also by the end of this year—[5] mainly because the group is a terrorist organization whose members are pro-Saddam, anti-Iran, and they participated in killing thousands of Iraqi people. It’s clear, despite the fact that members of the MKO are Iranians who have been living in Iraq for decades, that the terrorist group has no place in the final Iraq-Iran equation. About a month ago, Moqtada Sadr strongly condemned the crimes committed by the MKO against Iranian and Iraqi nations, and further stressed his country’s determination to expel the terrorist group from Iraq. [6]

This scares the MKO so much that their headquarters in

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the US is willing to maintain in Iraq beyond the end of the year “it’s impossible to grant immunity to a single American soldier,” Maliki told reporters. [3]

\*The Wall Street Journal\* also reported Iraqi Shiite Cleric Moqtada al-Sadr’s reaction to the announcement. According to Cleric Sadr’s website—the official website of his political movement—Americans are “all occupiers and must be resisted after the end of the [withdrawal] period.”[4] Many Iraqi officials share this opinion particularly in regard to the MKO. According to \*Aswat Al-Iraq\*, Premier Nouri Al-Maliki had a discussion with Martin Kobler, the new UN representative to Iraq. They spoke about the necessity of evacuating Iranians in the Ashraf camp by the end of this year. Furthermore, the Iraqi government issued a final resolution to end the presence

Paris has launched a propaganda campaign to help purify their image in hope of gaining Western support. The MKO asked Lord Corbett, a longtime paid supporter of the group, to write articles and beef up misinformation about the alleged “inhuman siege [of Camp Ashraf] by Iran’s Qods Forces and Iraqi government.”[7] There’s no doubt, the fate of the MKO is connected to the withdrawal of US forces. Supporters of the terrorist group are worried that when the US leaves, the MKO will be defenseless in a hostile country, suggests Bahman Kalbasi of the BBC.[8] But Kalbasi also points out that many blame the leadership of the MKO for the predicament facing the residents of camp Ashraf. [9]

Leaders of the MKO seem not to care about the destiny of their members. Author of two books about the MKO and former member of the group, Anne Singleton, in her letter

## Mojahedin Khalq (MKO, MEK, Rajavi cult)

to the European foreign affairs chief, Catherine Ashton, points out that the issue of Camp Ashraf is totally irrelevant to what the group leaders launch propaganda about—such as Iran’s nuclear program, MKO delisting by the US government, and American troops withdrawal from Iraq. [10]

As a prerequisite to withdrawal, Singleton argues that “the government of Iraq demands that the MEK leave Iraq before the end of the year, certainly before American troops are withdrawn. For this reason, there is an urgent need to find an effective solution.” She finds the situation dangerous for Ashraf residents. Essentially they are trapped in the camp because they are victims of a cult system which is always



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ready to sacrifice them for its cause. She adds, "on two occasions, August 2009 and April 2011, when Iraqi security forces attempted to enter the Camp to impose the rule of law on the Camp, Massoud Rajavi ordered his special forces, his \*fedayeen\*, to force the brainwashed residents to confront these efforts with a suicidal resistance which led to the deaths and injuries of many rank and file members as well as injuries to Iraqi security forces.”[11]

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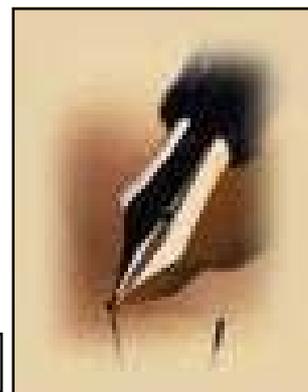
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By Mazda Parsi



The Iranian Pen Club

## Mojahedin-e Khalq (Rajavi cult) and its

### Western backers try to cover up involvement in failed coup attempt in Baghdad

Iran Interlink, October 30 2011

<http://www.iran-interlink.org>



After last week's failed coup d'etat by Saddamist Baathists the Mojahedin-e Khalq now tried to erase evidence of its involvement by removing from its own websites and media

all the material against al-Maliki's government and the incitement to violence against the government which it had copied from Baathist websites and media.

The Mojahedin-e Khalq terrorist cult has long enjoyed strong



**Al-Maliki**

who are among those arrested. Today their names have been carefully expunged from the site. Also among the prominent names which have been removed are Heydar Molla, and Saleh Mutlaq.

Saleh Mutlaq was linked with financial support for the MEK prior to the last election. He was based in Brussels

**... With the arrest of 615 Saddamist Baathists in the middle and south of Iraq charged with activities that threatened the safety and security of the state, it may be that the dots are finally being joined up. Up until yesterday the MEK's websites and media were forcefully promoting the views of several Iraqi politicians who are among those arrested. Today their names have been carefully expunged from the site. Also among the prominent names which have been removed are Heydar Molla, and Saleh Mutlaq. Interestingly, articles promoting the position of Struan Stevenson and Alejo Vidal Quadras still feature on the MEK site ...**

support and backing from some members of the European Parliament, specifically Struan Stevenson and Alejo Vidal Quadras, who are both members of the Iraq Delegation. They warn against Iraqi interference in the situation of the MEK headquarters Camp Ashraf which is known as the last Saddamist Baathist stronghold in Iraq.

Over time, the government of Al-Maliki has complained both directly and through its diplomatic representatives, of Western and specifically European interference in the internal affairs of Iraq. Some of this was linked to evidence of MEK involvement.

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working closely with the MEK lobby against the de-Baathification process.

Interestingly, articles promoting the position of Struan Stevenson and Alejo Vidal Quadras still feature on the MEK site. As well as his well-known support for the MEK, Stevenson, in his capacity as Chair of the Iraq

Delegation, has made several visits to Jordan in addition to those he made to Iraq. Jordan, of course, is where many prominent Saddamist Baathists relocated after 2003, including Saddam's daughter. Between 2003 and 2009 the MEK's base, Camp Ashraf in the Diyala province of Iraq was used as a secret gathering and training base for Saddamist Baathists as well as indigenous and foreign insurgents, under the protection of the American military.

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Tanter precedes a reference to me with the odd statement that "Intelligence communities are targets of Iran's disinformation." Odd because I have been out of the intelligence business for more than six years, and anyone who views my thinking as having any connection with judgments that an intelligence agency would reach today will be disappointed and wasting their propaganda resources. Tanter later mentions me again as someone who ought to be concerned about the "political motivation" for having the MEK on the State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, or FTOs. It is true that the listing process is not immune to policy considerations, but that has been much more a matter of avoiding the listing of a group that really ought to be on the list (the Provisional Irish Republican Army of fifteen years ago is the example that comes to mind), than of including on the list a group that should not. Not listing someone means simply not initiating the listing process. Listing a group requires a lengthy process of review by the Departments of State, Justice, and Treasury and the intelligence community, according to the criteria specified by law.

Tanter seems to believe that a group has to have committed terrorist acts within the previous two years to be kept on the list. Not true. (Having been directly involved in the laborious process of compiling the required administrative records for the initial listings after enactment of the law in 1996 that created the FTO list, I know a thing or two about this subject.) Two years used to be the interval between recertifications of listed groups, and it is now the period after which a group can petition for delisting. But no terrorist acts have to have been committed during that period; retaining the capability and presumed intent to commit them is sufficient to stay on the list. If performing terrorist acts recently was a requirement to stay on the list, many of the 49 groups currently on the list would have to come off. Lebanese

Hizballah, for example, probably would be one of them. I expect that many of the pro-MEK campaigners would be among the first to scream if that happened.

There is indeed a large amount of political influence that is being exerted in an effort to affect a decision about the FTO list, and it is almost all coming in the form of the large and well-funded campaign to delist the MEK. In fact, the campaign is extraordinary, and nothing remotely resembling it has ever been waged on behalf of any other group on the FTO list. Whatever is being said in the opposite direction is only a modest reaction to the pro-MEK campaign itself. Here is what I said on the subject two months ago, after that rally outside the State Department:

The secretary of state should pay no heed to what Melvin Santiago and the other hungry homeless outside her office window are saying, or to what the high-paid hired guns are saying, about the MEK. Nor does she need to pay any attention to what people like me are saying about the group. She should keep the windows closed and just pay attention to the terms of the law and to what officials in the departments and agencies involved say about whether the terms of the law still apply in this case.

If Raymond Tanter really wanted to inform us about political influence being exerted on what ought to be administrative and legal decisions, he could shed more light on the campaign of which he is a part. In particular, he could help us understand where all that funding is coming from. It evidently is coming from quarters who would like to stoke ever more tension and animosity between the Iran and the United States. I have a guess who that might be, but so far it is only a guess

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## The MEK's Propaganda Machine (aka; Mojahedin Khalq, MKO, Rajavi cult)

Paul R. Pillar, *The National Interest*, October 29 2011

<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/the-meks-propaganda-machine-6104?page=1>

The National Interest will be running on Monday a response to Raymond Tanter's missive on behalf of the Iranian cult/terrorist group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq. Given that Tanter goes out of his way to raise my name a couple of times, it would be appropriate for me as well to point out a couple of the more glaring misdirections in his piece.

Tanter's premise, as reflected in his title, is that anything bad you ever heard about the MEK is a product of propaganda from the Iranian regime. Evidently this means that anyone, either inside or outside of Iran, who has ever been critical of the group must have been brainwashed by the propaganda. If that were true, those responsible for U.S. public diplomacy have a lot of valuable lessons to learn from the Iranians; their propagandists must be doing something right.

The Iranian regime flings propaganda as freely as any other regime. And it certainly has had a lot of unfavorable things to say about the MEK. Some of those things may be exaggerated or even outright lies. But one could erase completely everything the Iranian regime has ever said on this subject, and there would remain the large, long, sordid record of what the MEK has done, what it has stood for, and the abhorrent cult it still is. The record extends from the days it was killing Americans while opposing the shah, through when it was in league with the clerical regime and supporting further anti-American terrorism such as the hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, through the long period during which it was working for the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. The record is not based just on what is said by the State Department or an intelligence agency or any governmental component with a policy to support, much less on anything the Iranian regime might say. If you want a recent independently reported portrait of the group, see, for example, this article by Elizabeth Rubin.

Tanter tries to smear critics and criticism of the MEK, including some of the contents of an open letter to which I was a signatory, by saying it "resembles regime propaganda against the MEK." The MEK has conducted terrorism and other violent acts against U.S. interests and against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Is it any surprise that some of the critical things said about the group from the standpoint of U.S. interests resemble some of what the Iranian regime puts out? (And if it's not brainwashing, then just what is Tanter sug-

gesting is the reason for the resemblance?)

One of the respects in which Tanter's piece diverges most widely from reality is his attempt to argue that the MEK has any support to speak of within Iran. He notes that the group was the source of some revelations about Iran's nuclear program. True—and we ought to remember our reliance on the accident of this weird sourcing when we think about how much confidence we ought or ought not to have in our knowledge of this program—but what does that have to do with popular support? It only takes one person to serve as a source. The most telling indication of the MEK's unpopularity in Iran, as pointed out in the aforementioned open letter, is that the Iranian regime uses that unpopularity as a way to discredit the democratic opposition in Iran, by trying to associate it with the MEK. For the same reason, the leaders of the Green Movement have emphatically said that they want nothing to do with the MEK. Tanter also mentions attendance at pro-MEK rallies in the United States as a measure of support, without mentioning that the MEK campaign has resorted to such measures—used in a rally outside the State Department this summer—as padding attendance by busing in homeless people who don't know squat about the MEK or Iran but come for the free food.

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