

Tehran offers peace to Kurds

From Liz Thurgood
in Tehran

The Iranian Government has announced that an agreement has been reached with the rebels in the troubled Western province of Kurdistan. But no independent confirmation was available last night from Kurdish headquarters.

Such an agreement would bring to an end some of the most bitter fighting since Ayatollah Khomeini swept to power last February. About 500 people are believed to have died in the last two weeks.

According to the State radio, an agreement was reached during talks yesterday between senior Government officials and a Kurdish negotiating team that would allow the Iranian Army to enter the Kurdish stronghold of Mahabad.

Apart from two small incidents yesterday, no serious hostilities have been reported for three days while both sides awaited the outcome of the negotiations. Mahabad itself was surrounded last night by armed columns of the Iranian military, with units from the 64th Division reported to be only three miles outside the town.

In return for allowing the Army to enter Mahabad, the Government is reported to

FIFTY-FIVE Afghan soldiers are reported in Tehran to have fled across the border into Iran, bringing their arms and ammunition with them. The men and their arms were handed over to the gendarmerie in Zahedan, in Baluchistan province in South-west Iran.—*Reuter*.

have agreed to grant "ordinary members" of the outlawed Kurdish Democratic Party immunity from prosecution, convert the town's garrison into a university faculty, and "after the total establishment of security," to allow the Kurds to organise their own Revolutionary Corps. The Army, the radio said, would leave Mahabad at "the first opportune moment."

Despite the Government announcement, it was still far from clear whether the Kurds were being offered an agreement or an ultimatum. The Interior Minister, Mr Hashem Sabaghtian, later said that the Kurds had been told "the Army had to enter Mahabad." The negotiators were not against it, he said.

News of the agreement, described by the Government as "a remarkable achievement," followed a new statement from Ayatollah Khomeini that appeared to have completely ruled out all hope of compromise. Following instructions issued on Tuesday night "to crush the criminals and their leaders," the Ayatollah made an 11-point statement offering the rebels a general amnesty but calling for the arrest of their outlawed KDP leaders.

The Ayatollah also promised that several of the recently-banned newspapers would be allowed to publish again but gave no indication as to which ones. Two weeks ago, 26 publications critical of the Mosque were abruptly closed.

Meanwhile 14 prisoners involved in a jail break on Monday in the North-western city of Tabriz have been executed. Among those facing the Islamic firing squad were two women. Little was known of the jail break and later rioting which led to the death of an Islamic Guardsman. According to the local press, the rioting prisoners were joined by local Tabrizis and part of the prison was set alight.

A couple found guilty of adultery have been sentenced to death in the southern port town of Bushehr. However, further north, in Shiraz, a couple convicted of a similar crime were whipped and then ordered to marry.

Reuter adds: The Turkish Interior Minister, Mr Hasari Fehmi Gunes, has denied press reports that Turkish Kurds were crossing into Iran to help those fighting the Iranian Army.

He also denied that Kurdish separatist groups in Turkey were smuggling arms into Iran. "We are doing our duty in maintaining the integrity of our neighbour Iran," he said.

5/27/2011

Article - Untitled Article

Twelve Kurds have gone on hunger strike outside the Iranian Embassy in London to protest against the death sentences passed last Sunday on members of the Kurdish Socialist Workers Party.

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