

Governor admits massacre of Kurds

From Liz Thurgood in Tehran

A senior Iranian Government official has admitted that 46 Kurdish men, women, and children died in a massacre last week in the province of West Azerbaijan.

The massacre took place on Tuesday in the small Kurdish village of Garna, near Urmia, where many hundreds of Iranians were believed to have been fighting between Kurds and Turkish-speaking Iranians.

In an interview with the local press yesterday, the governor-general of West Azerbaijan described the massacre as horrible, and said that those people who had lost relations would be financially reimbursed. Mr Jamshid Haghgou said that an investigation had been

ordered, but that preliminary inquiries showed that the massacre had been committed by Iranians who lived in the province.

The governor-general's version of the massacre differed sharply from the account given by the Kurdish Democratic Party, which has blamed the massacre on members of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Guardsmen. Senior KDP members recently showed journalists a list naming the 46 who had died.

The Kurds believed that the massacre was in retaliation for the ambush of a Government Army lorry last Monday at the Doab Pass, in which 15 Islamic Guards died.

Among the victims of the Garna killing, the KDP said,

were four women, and seven children aged between five and 12. Six men were also beheaded.

The massacre reportedly occurred when the villagers came out to welcome the Islamic Guardsmen. They were led by Mullah Mahmoud, who was carrying a copy of the Koran. The Mullah, among those beheaded, was the local Imam Jomeh, or leader of Friday prayers. The killings were not apparently the work of Ayatollah Khaikhal, whose summary justice in Kurdistan has drawn harsh words from the UN Human Rights Subcommission in Geneva.

In a statement released last week, the commission called on the Iranian Government to cease immediately "the re-

ported summary executions (put at around 80) of numerous Kurds in Iran."

Meanwhile, Ayatollah Khomeini has underlined Iran's growing economic problems in an address to millions of Iranians who had assembled throughout the country to mourn those who died a year earlier in what was known as "the massacre of Black Friday," the Ayatollah said that Iranians had shed their blood for "a cheaper melon or house."

His remarks were believed to be directed at the country's dwindling corps of economists who have criticised the Provisional Government's lack of economic planning and industrial vision. Rising prices, par-

ticularly of food, have caused some unhappiness.

"The struggle was waged for Islam," Khomeini insisted, "It is inconceivable that any one would have sacrificed his son for cheaper bread."

Meanwhile, yesterday the Government seized the assets of Iran's two largest publishing houses. In a move that observers believed would effectively ensure a subservient press.

An official statement said that the assets of Ettela'at and Kayhan had been taken over because their owners, who had both left the country after the February uprising, had built their publishing empires with ill-gotten wealth, and used their newspapers to support

the Shah. No value has been put on the assets, which were to be handed over to the Ayatollah Bonyad-e-Mostazaffarin (Foundation for the Poor).

The seizure of Ettela'at and Kayhan left Bamdad as the only Tehran newspaper with anything approaching an independent voice. Bamdad, which has received several Government cautions in recent weeks, was set up four years ago by staff who once worked for Rastakhiz, the paper owned by the Shah's one-party system.

Last month 27 papers were closed in a move that led to violent rioting between supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini and the secular Centre-Left. Fifteen foreign correspondents have also been expelled since June.

