

Iran launches fresh attack on media 'distortion'

From Liz Thuygood
in Tehran

Kurdish gunmen have killed two Islamic guardsmen and wounded four others in an attack on the small town of Mahabad, in the western province of Kurdistan.

News of the attack, which was seen as the most serious guerrilla incident since the small Kurdish centre fell to troops loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini last week, coincided with the expulsion of a West German television team yesterday. The German team, made up of a correspondent and two camera men, were given 48 hours to leave Iran yesterday morning for "unfair and false

reporting" of the Kurdish crisis. Their expulsion brings to 18 the number of journalists ordered to leave the country since June.

The ARD camera team said that it had received official accreditation from the Ministry on Tuesday and was being expelled because of a colleague's recent coverage of the events in Kurdistan. Typical of the confusion in Iran today, the Government news agency put out a statement saying that the team's expulsion was because of its coverage of Ayatollah Taleghani's funeral, an event which the Germans had neither attended nor reported.

Government reports from Kurdistan, meanwhile, said

that two Islamic guardsmen were killed on Tuesday during an attack on the local prosecutor's office and radio station in Mahabad. The Kurds were reportedly driven back in the attack, the first raid on the town since it was recaptured on September 3 after nearly six months of *de facto* Kurdish control.

In a seemingly sharp departure from official policy set by the holy city of Qom, Iran's Prime Minister has called for greater toleration of the West and suggested the creation of a new Islam taking "whatever is best from both Eastern and Western worlds."

His speech, broadcast yesterday, was in noticeable contrast

to recent attacks by Ayatollah Khomeini, the 79-year-old Iranian leader who earlier this week accused his critics of "Westoxification" and urged the Moslem faithful to turn their backs on imported ideas and "Westernised writings."

"We cannot close our doors to every foreign idea," said the Prime Minister, emphasising that "the very concept of Iran as a nation-state was born out of contact with the West." Mr Bazargan's appeal came in a speech on Tuesday at funeral services for Ayatollah Taleghani, Iran's second-ranking religious leader who died the day before of heart failure.

Significantly, the speech, seen as further evidence of the

Prime Minister's growing unhappiness with the direction the revolution was taking, was not broadcast until yesterday.

Reuter adds from Tehran: A crowd of unidentified attackers tried to destroy the most holy shrine of the minority Baha'i faith in Iran, officials said yesterday. But no damage was inflicted, they said.

A spokesman for the Islamic revolutionary prosecutor's office in the southern city of Shiraz said that militia forces earlier this week drove back the attackers when they tried to storm the House of Bab, a place of pilgrimage set up by Baha'ullah, the founder of the faith.

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