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# Iran yields ground on Kurdish autonomy

Mahabad, Iran (Reuter)—A government peace mission arrived in this rebel capital yesterday and announced that the Iranian authorities were prepared to concede some form of self-rule to the Kurdish provinces.

The three-man team—Hashem Sabaghian, the interior minister, Dariush Forouhar, the internal affairs minister, and Ezzatollah Sahabi, the planning and budget director—flew by helicopter into the army-held Mahabad barracks.

They left by car without escort for the local governor's office, where they got a friendly reception from about 3,000 Kurds chanting "Long live the Kurdish Democratic Party" and waving portraits of the Kurdish spiritual leader, Sheik Ezzeddin Hosseini.

There had been speculation that the ministerial visit might be canceled after an ambush last night on the road between the Kurdish towns of Sardasht and Baneh in which, the state radio said, an army colonel and 12 soldiers were killed.

Rebel sources in Baneh said the ambush sparked fierce fighting in the town between guerrillas who took control two days ago and army and revolutionary guard forces. Rebels said they had killed 55 government troops.

The sources said the clashes were still going on.

Mr. Sabaghian said after talking with local Kurds: "We were very hopeful, and now we are more hopeful than ever."

Mr. Forouhar held out hope to other ethnic minorities when he said: "The Islamic Republic of Iran has the capacity to give individual and social freedoms to Shia and Sunni [Muslims] and ethnic minorities."