Iran's leaders in move to crush opposition press and parties

From Reuter
in Tehran

Iran's rulers yesterday shut down 22 opposition newspapers, and ordered political organisations which oppose Islamic rule to hand over their guns.

Spurred by reports of a Kurdish rebellion in the West, crowds of demonstrators attended the Tehran funeral of Revolutionary Guards killed in weekend fighting in the region and called for the execution of Kurdish leaders.

Among the papers silenced on the orders of the Tehran revolutionary prosecutor, Ayatollah Ahmad Azari Qomi, were the official organs of the Tudeh (Communist) Party, the Marxist People's Fedayeen guerrilla group, and the Centrist National Democratic Front.

A Turkish-language paper, alleged to have insulted Ayatollah Khomeini in a cartoon, was also shut down.

A delegation of the Mujahideen Khalq National Movement yesterday left for Qom, for talks with Ayatollah Khomeini on saving their Tehran headquarters from takeover by the Government. The Mujahideen, were served notice to surrender their weapons and building to the prosecutor.

In a separate order, Ayatollah Qomi ordered all political parties and groups, "especially those whose policies go against the wishes of the Iranian nation," to surrender arms taken from military arsenals during the February revolution.

The reference to the "Iranian nation," was a familiar phrase to describe the overwhelming majority of the electorate who voted for an Islamic Republic in last March's referendum, and the order was apparently directed principally at opposition party militias.

In a message to the Kurdish people broadcast on State radio yesterday Ayatollah Khomeini called on the civilian population to cooperate with Government forces to hunt down members of the Kurdish Democratic Party.

State radio broadcast the shouts of an emotional crowd at the funeral, who called for the execution of Mr Quassemlou and of the Kurdish spiritual leader, Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini.

On Sunday, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered military mobilisation to crush an alleged Kurdish rebellion, which he said was centred on the city of Sanandaj.

Witnesses in Sanandaj yesterday, said the city was peaceful. They said six tanks and some 100 Revolutionary Guards were stationed at the airport, and troops commanded hilltop positions, but there was no indication fighting had taken place.

Sources close to the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party said its leadership was meeting to discuss the future of its daily paper Mardom and might decide to go underground.

Sources said the party's offices in Isfahan, Bushire, Sari, and Tabriz had been ransacked over the weekend.

Pars news agency yesterday said that crowds in Isfahan had attacked the International Press office in the city, and had destroyed all English-language books and foreign newspapers.

Sources said that Revolutionary Guards yesterday broke into the offices of the National Democratic Front, and into the home of its leader, Hedayatollah Matine Daftari. The offices were sealed at the weekend after an arrest warrant was issued for the NDF leader.

Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini, and Mr Qassemlou, are in the Kurdish western border region. The State Radio yesterday said the Region was peaceful, and under Army control. No independent reports on the situation could be obtained.

Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri was chosen president of the assembly of experts which will write a new Iranian Constitution, the State news agency Pars reported yesterday.

Referring to the KDP as the party of Satan. Ayatollah Khomeini said: "It is your divine duty to show the hiding places of the KDP to the authorities." He called for the arrest of the KDP leadership, which is headed by Abdulrahaman Quassemlou.

UPI adds from Lausanne: A group of exiled Kurds appealed to the UN Secretary-General yesterday to intervene with the Iranian Government and the major powers to prevent the mass slaughter of Kurds. The Kurdistan Liberty and Progress Party, formed in April this year by exiles, said the general mobilisation is "practically an invitation to genocide."