

# Kurd rebels kill 52 troops in hill ambush

From Liz Thurgood  
in Tehran

The death toll in Monday's ambush by Kurdish rebels on a convoy of Islamic guardsmen yesterday rose from 22 to 52. The ambush was said to be the worst incident of violence in the western province since last month's crackdown by the armed forces.

Iran's Interior Minister, Hashem Sabbaghian, announced yesterday that of the 72 guardsmen ambushed near the frontier town of Sardasht, five had returned safely to their base and six had been rescued with serious wounds. The remaining nine have been listed as missing.

According to reports reaching Tehran, several hundred Kurds using heavy automatic weapons attacked the convoy on a road close to the mountainous border with Iraq. The ambush was followed by simultaneous attacks on four gendarmerie posts in the area.

The announcement of the revised death toll was accompanied by emotional commentary in the press and on the State Radio. The Deputy Prime Minister for Revolutionary Affairs described the incident as "a massacre of the roses of the revolution by a group of Godless ones on a dark night."

Two of Iran's most influential Moslem parties have joined the growing chorus of dissatisfied Iranians harbouring serious doubts over the political and economic direction of their country's revolution.

In one of the strongest indictments of Iranian society, the Mojahadin-e-Khlati guerrilla organisation has questioned the harsh face of an Islamic Iran increasingly dependent on "rifles, clubs, the banning of political parties and the breaking of (writers') pens."

Such public concern, expressed in an open letter printed in yesterday's newspapers, marked the breaking of a long silence by the Mojahadin, who were believed to have been particularly embarrassed by the actions of the new Islamic leadership in the western province of Kurdistan.

pardons or allows the Shah's former aides and friends to flee?" asked the guerrillas. Not even the prophet Mohammad had enforced such harsh sentences as were being passed by Iran's Islamic courts.

The letter was signed by a Qom branch of the Mojahadin, but it was widely believed to reflect the views not only of an increasing number of Iranian intellectuals but also the acute disappointment felt by the guerrilla leadership, who played a major role in the Shah's overthrow.

A senior member recently made it very clear (to the Guardian) that the Mojahadin could not support many of the activities now carried out in the name of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's *de facto* Head of State.

The letter, addressed to Ayatollah Khomeini's son, who first criticised the limitations imposed on the press and political parties in an interview two weeks ago, also queried the need for special courts for the clergy, the imprisonment and torture of revolutionaries, and called for guarantees that the controversial Velayat-e-Faghih, which according to the draft constitution gives unprecedented political power to the country's spiritual leader, would not be used for "despotic ends."

The Moslem People's Republican Party, which has the support of Iran's second most influential religious leader, the gentle but conservative Ayatollah Shariatmadari, raised

“What kind of Islam is this that sends heroin addicts to the firing squads but either serious doubts over the regime's handling of the Kurdish problem and warned that “chaos and insecurity” were spreading beyond Kurdistan. In its weekly paper, Khalq-e-Mussalman, the party said: “A problem that could have been solved in Kurdistan is now assuming greater dimensions and threatening to turn into a deep-rooted civil war.”

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Reuter adds from Beirut: Iran's Deputy Prime Minister, Sadeq Tabataba'i, said yesterday that the Shah had paid \$200 millions to finance the Kurdish rebellion. He told a press conference that the money was paid three weeks ago through the Shah's son-in-law, Ardashir Zahedi, the former Iranian Ambassador to the United States.