

# Kurdish leader fears reprisal

From Reuter in Tehran

The spiritual leader of Iran's 3.5 million Kurds said yesterday that he feared a confrontation between the Army and the Kurds as the Iranian military moves to regain control of Kurdish areas on the country's western border.

Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini insisted that the Kurds should be granted self-rule.

The dispatch of the Army and Islamic Revolutionary Guards to Kurdistan is a great mistake and is directed against all the peoples of Iran, the Sheikh said by phone from his headquarters in the north-western town of Mahabad.

The government has been sending reinforcements, including armoured units, into Kurdish trouble spots since July. An attempt to take back areas abandoned when the Shah's armed forces disintegrated in the revolution.

The sheikh sent a message to the people of the Kurdish town of Kamyaran who prevented a column of 15 tanks reaching the provincial capital of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, by staging a strike protest on the roads.

Sheikh Ezzedin is a Sunni Moslem, like most Kurds. The majority of Iranians belong to the Shi'ite Islam, like Ayatollah Khomeini. Sheikh Ezzedin believes that the future Constitution of the Islamic Republic should clearly grant autonomy to the Kurds and other ethnic minorities.

An assembly of constitutional experts is to be elected on August 3, but the draft which they will have one month to approve does not mention autonomy for any of Iran's regions.

The Deputy Premier Mustafa Chamran, said in an interview published at the weekend that the Government was determined to reestablish its authority in Kurdish areas with the Army's help.

One target mentioned by Dr Chamran was the reoccupation of the military base at Mahabad. Mahabad was the capital of a short-lived Kurdish republic proclaimed under Soviet auspices at the end of the Second World War.

Kurdish guerrillas raided Mahabad garrison during the February uprising and captured many weapons, some of which were reported to have been used when Kurds pinned down the 28th Iranian Division at its garrison in the Kurdistan provincial capital of Sanandaj in March.

The Kurds claimed to have captured two tanks earlier this month when they intercepted a military convoy trying to re-open a border post at Soro, on the Turkish frontier, to "restore law and order and prevent smuggling." Some of the Iranian troops were forced to flee through Turkey.

Ayatollah Khomeini received at the weekend a personal note of apology from the Chinese Communist Party's chairman Hua Guofeng for visiting Iran in the closing months of the deposed Shah's regime.

Press reports yesterday said that the note was delivered to the ayatollah on Saturday by the visiting Pakistani Foreign Minister, Agaha Shahi, who met him at Qom.

The press also reported yesterday that a team of Islamic guards in Qom, Ayatollah Khomeini's home town, will punish anyone eating in the daytime during the Moslem fasting month of Ramadan. The Tehran newspaper Bamdad said transgressors would be punished in public, but did not indicate the type of punishment.

● Iranian nationals and foreign travellers may no longer take Persian carpets with them when leaving Iran, the customs department ruled yesterday. Passenger carrying carpets have been stopped at Tehran's airport lately in a drive coinciding with curbs on the export of foreign exchange.

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