

# Kurds besiege gendarmes in border post

From Liz Thurgood  
in Tehran

The Iranian Government announced new plans to crush the Kurdish rebels yesterday after it was reported that 50 gendarmes had been trapped inside their border post since an attack by some 400 Kurds on Tuesday night.

All radio contact had been lost with the post at Hani Garmaleh and the Kurds were reported to be in control of key highways.

The siege, and the massacre of 52 Islamic guardsmen earlier this week, appeared to have taken the Government by surprise. As Shi'a Iran went into mourning, the Defence Minister, Mostafa Chamran, left for Kurdistan to "coordinate the fighting" and the armed forces chief of staff, General Hossein Shaker, announced that plans to crush the insurgents would go into operation "within the next two days."

absence of their leaders, Dr Ghassemlou and Sheikh Ezzrudine Hosseini, who are both wanted men.

This fighting marked the first major action since early September, when the Kurdish rebels lost key urban centres in a crackdown ordered by Ayatollah Khomeini.

The bazaars in Qom and Tehran closed yesterday and Esfahan, traditionally a religious city, declared a two-day mourning period for those who died in the ambush. Demonstrations were also held in several cities, including Tehran.

Events surrounding the massacre were still confused yesterday. Reports in the local press suggests that several guardsmen might have been victims of the armed forces. The guards, officially called "the guardians of the Islamic Revolution," are a paramilitary force raised from young and inexperienced Moslem volunteers when Ayatollah Khomeini came to power.

Highlighting possible differences between the guards and the armed forces, the Defence Minister and the Chief of Staff have claimed that a contingent of guardsmen moved out of Sardasht without informing the local garrison and against Army advice. This was denied by a guardsman who said that his men had been fired at by soldiers passing through the

The siege, coupled with sporadic attacks on at least three other border posts and a microwave communications tower overnight, appeared to be a continuation of the Kurdish guerrilla offensive that started on Sunday when the 52 guardsmen were killed in an ambush outside the border town of Sardasht.

The offensive was originally expected in the winter, still six weeks away.

One result of the violence has been an indefinite postponement, announced earlier this week, of elections for people's councils in eight Kurdish towns. The councils had been proposed by the Islamic regime to give the Kurds more say in handling their own affairs. Sources here have said that the Kurds refused to cooperate with Tehran because of the

area.

In an interview with the Islamic Republic, a daily considered to be the mouthpiece of Qom, the guard claimed that an Army column had approached the area, heard shooting and, thinking it had come under fire, shot back. The guardsmen were forced back into the hills where the attack by the Kurds continued, he said.