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# Kurds' chief committed to self-rule

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Mahabad, Iran—Sheikh Ezzeedin Hosseini, the popular leader of the Kurdish autonomy movement in Iran, is a soft-spoken grandfather. He has a gray beard and wears a white turban, and he bears wounds from the last rebellion of the Kurds, a decade ago.

His right foot is ailing and he apologizes to visitors for not being able to rise to greet them from the Persian carpets that cover the reception room, where he receives petitioners and advisers through the day.

The 58-year-old political-religious leader seems a gentle man. The impression is heightened by his voice—a near whisper, the result of an operation for throat cancer. But he is a tough bargainer, a committed opponent of the Tehran-Qom Islamic regime. And he promises violence if Kurdish demands for self-rule are not met.

“It will be the government's fault if something happens,” he said. “A fight will certainly start if the revolutionary guards [Tehran's security forces] are not with-

# Kurdish leader vows self-rule for his people

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the northwest, executing Kurds who defied the ban on carrying weapons.

Today, nearly every Kurd carries a pistol or rifle, and the arms bazaar flourishes in Kurdish cities as a result of the revolutionary freedom that followed the departure of the shah. Like their traditional moustache, billowing pants, colorful waist-sash and turban, arms are very much a part of the Kurd's costume and his warrior heritage.

"We were fighting for the same thing 10 years ago," Sheikh Hosseini said. "The difference is that no one could hear about our struggle. If we have to turn to armed fighting this time, we will get support from all over Iran."

Two weeks ago, representatives of the Kurdish autonomy movement held a secret meeting in Tehran with leaders of the other major ethnic groups in Iran—Arabs, Baluchis, Turkomans, Turks—and issued a statement supporting democratic self-rule in the areas each group inhabits. They also agreed to let each group pursue its own demands without formulating a common proposal for autonomy.

When the Kurdish rebellion was put down 10 years ago, Sheikh Hosseini made peace with the shah, who provided money to build roads, power plants and other basic services in the long-neglected northwest. Some say this gesture bought off Sheikh Hosseini; others insist that the Kurds simply recognized their limits against the well-equipped military.

But the shah's economics failed to bring wealth to the mountainous region inhabited by 4 million Iranian Kurds, brothers to 12 million others in neighboring Turkey, Iraq, Syria and the Soviet Union.

Land redistribution saddled peasants with loans they could not repay, and agricultural production sank. Feudal landlords reclaimed their properties. Rice and wheat and cigarettes were imported from abroad as the Kurdish areas no longer produced enough of these crops for Iran.

In the spring revolution this year, Kurds dug up their buried weapons—or raided army arsenals—and seized farmlands to plant the crops they are now harvesting. Landlords have tried to win support from the government and from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian revolutionary leader, in their attempt to reclaim these lands. Sheikh Hosseini said he had heard that these landlords had received weapons from the Tehran government, a report he linked to violence last month in three areas that cost 10 lives.

The success of this kind of self-help land reform has fired the hopes of many Kurds to achieve their long-sought goal of an autonomous Kurdistan in Iran—a goal that is also supported by several large landholders.

The fighting that broke out recently during a march in Sanandaj, a Kurdish city 125 miles south of here, began with a minor misunderstanding over the shipment of



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Sheikh Muftizadeh now leaves his Sanandaj home every afternoon and spends the evening away from the city, reportedly for security reasons. Only several hundred supporters turned out for a rally he called in late June, a sign that many Kurds are wary of his close ties to Ayatollah Khomeini and Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan.

Ayatollah Khomeini's attempt to enforce a strict Shiite Muslim ethic has helped to turn the Kurds against him. Most of them belong to the other branch of Islam, Sunni, though they are more relaxed about their religion. Many Kurdish women eschew the full-length veil urged by Islamic zealots, favoring their brightly-colored, gold-embroidered costumes and headdress.

Unlike in many other parts of Iran, Mr. Khomeini's picture is rarely seen in Mahabad. "Khomeini is anti-Kurd, he has sent us nothing but soldiers," a grizzled peasant in a village outside Saqqez said with anger.

Kurdish sensitivities have also been irritated by what they claim is a deliberate distortion of news about their area. That issue led to a protest march in Marivan that was fired on by revolutionary guards, who were attacked by Kurdish riflemen, and another dangerous confrontation was under way.

They are resentful at the lack of industry or development of oil resources in the area. There is one refinery in Kermanshah, Sheikh Hosseini said, "and most of the workers are not even Kurds."

No new government could expect to achieve drastic economic change overnight. But Kurds fought the revolution against the shah in order to achieve political and economic change, and the result has been disappointing, Sheikh Hosseini said.

Sheikh Hosseini, whose father and grandfather were