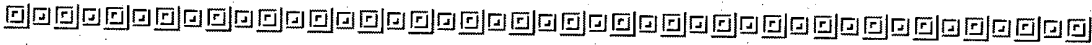


Iranian Refugees At-Risk

Iranian Refugees' Alliance Quarterly Newsletter

(Summer/Fall 97)



"UNSAFE HAVEN": Iranian Kurdish Refugees in Iraqi Kurdistan (Part I)

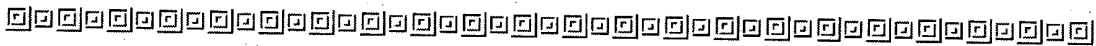
The European Convention on Human Rights and the Absoluteness of Article 3 - M.A.R. v. United Kingdom

Gender Persecution & Iranian Women Refugees (an introduction)

Turkey Halts Deportation Campaign

Presentation at OSCE

Year End Report- Fiscal 96

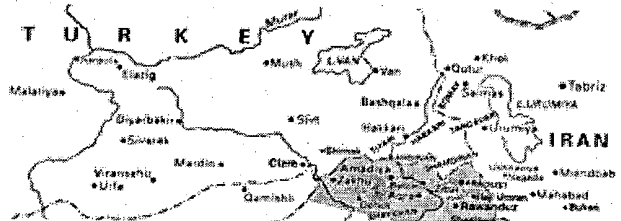


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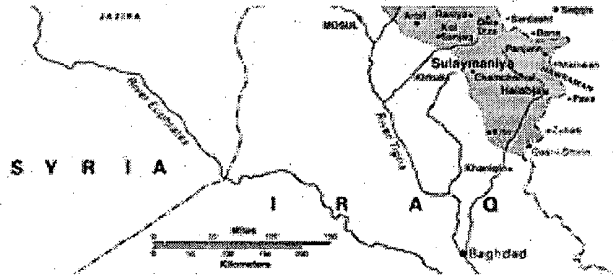
(from Iranian Refugees At Risk Summer/Fall 97)

Shortly after the establishment of the autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq, known as the Kurdish "safe haven" six years ago, the government of Iran stepped up its campaign of terror, violence and intimidation against Iranian Kurds in northern Iraq. In July 1996, over 2,000 Iranian troops invaded Iraqi Kurdistan, penetrating more than 200 km inside Iraqi Kurdistan in the "safe haven" area, to destroy the bases of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran. While threats of large scale attacks continue, the menace posed by agents sent or hired by Iran has become so alarming that every Iranian Kurd in northern Iraq feels a price tag on their head.

As a result, a growing number of Iranian Kurdish refugees have been fleeing from northern Iraq to Turkey in the past years, as this has been their only avenue to



resettlement in a safe country-the only possible safe solution for them. However, as the refugees have crossed the mine infested and high security border zone, many have been arbitrarily pushed back across the border by the Turkish border officials without ever having a chance to apply for a temporary residence permit in Turkey. Dozens of others who have been fortunate to receive assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] in Turkey have been forcibly returned to northern Iraq, some even after having received a third country's admission for onward resettlement.



Moreover, since February 13, 1997, the UNHCR has changed its policy on assistance for Iranian refugees fleeing northern Iraq. Citing misinformation, the UNHCR indicated that Iranians in northern Iraq have acceptable levels of security and have sufficient opportunities for resettlement from northern Iraq. The UNHCR has since refused to assist many such refugees and has instructed them to return to northern Iraq. This has been seriously detrimental for the refugees, making them more liable for deportation by the Turkish authorities.

This article summarizes parts of a comprehensive report under publication by Iranian Refugees' Alliance, which describes the perilous situation of Iranian Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq and classifies northern Iraq as an unsafe first asylum country for Iranian Kurdish refugees. Based on this information the Iranian Refugees' Alliance criticizes the use of physical and legal barriers by Turkey and the UNHCR in blocking Iranian Kurdish refugees from northern Iraq from access to safe asylum. The first part of the report, which is presented in this issue, deals with the general situation of the "safe haven" and the Iranian government's activities in the region. The second part deals with UNHCR activities in northern Iraq and the abusive and unfair treatment Iranian Kurdish refugees from northern Iraq have been receiving after fleeing to Turkey.

I- Safe Haven for Whom?

Following the end of the Gulf War and a failed Kurdish insurrection in northern Iraq, a Kurdish enclave or "safe haven" was established in 1991, in response to the desperate conditions of Iraqi refugees massed in refugee camps along the Turkish and Iranian borders and particularly to Turkey's decision to close its doors to the tide of refugees. Brutalities committed by the Iraqi army had forced some 1.5 to 2 million people, mostly Kurds, to flee to Turkey and Iran. American, French and English aircraft based at Incirlik air base in Turkey were deployed to enforce a no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel in Iraq. The government of Iraq withdrew its troops from most of the Kurdish region on October 23, 1991.

The "safe haven" project succeeded in wooing more than a million Iraqi Kurds back from the border zones. However, shortly after its establishment, incursions by Baghdad, Iran and Turkey as well as economic privation imposed by Baghdad and the West itself has perverted the very notion of "safe haven". Despite an aerial exclusion zone north of the 36th parallel, the Iraqi military has continued intermittent, sometimes heavy shelling of northern Iraq villages by long-range artillery. In August 1996, more than 30,000 of Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guard troops moved into the area at the invitation of one of two rival Kurdish political parties. Over 6,500 Iraqi dissidents and Kurds, mostly employees of US-funded non-governmental organizations, were evacuated fearing Baghdad's return to the north in force. NGOs not funded by the US government, about half of the original total, continued their operations in a climate of growing insecurity and in a society with a significant segment of its professional class evacuated.¹

Turkish military forces have crossed the border into northern Iraq frequently in order to eliminate the bases of the Kurdish Workers Party's, a militant organization seeking increased autonomy or independence for the Turkish Kurds. The largest operation included 35,000 Turkish troops which penetrated up to 40 kilometers into Kurd-controlled regions of northern Iraq. As discussed below, Iranian government's air and ground attacks have also hit the region on a regular basis.

Baghdad's 1992-1996 embargo has meant that Kurds in northern Iraq have been living under a double embargo, as the 1990 UN embargo against Iraq included and continues to include the northern Kurdish regions.² International relief has been limited to emergency needs, and gradually reduced "from nearly \$600 million in 1991, to \$71 million the next year, to \$22 million by the fall of 1996."³ According to one source, at times it has seemed "as if UN and NGO food rations were all that sustained the Kurdish economy".⁴ UN relief efforts have excluded the infrastructure construction necessary to rebuild the region's war-torn economy and to create institutions of civil society, as neither the Western coalition nor the neighboring countries favor granting even the most minimal rights of self-government to Iraqi Kurds.

In mid-1992, elections led to the establishment of an administration shared equally by the two major Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by Jalal Talebani, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Masud Barzani. Although the power-sharing agreement seemed to have averted a 20 year old conflict between the PUK and KDP, bloody internal conflicts between the two parties started in 1994 and have continued in an erratic fashion, with the most recent clash occurring in July 1997. Serious human rights violations have been committed by both parties and significant deterioration in the human rights situation continues under Kurdish control.⁵ Massive new displacement of the population and hampering of aid delivery have further aggravated the humanitarian crisis. Primordial rivalries, lawlessness, and the proliferation of firearms have all contributed to a chronic lack of security for the whole

population.

In their rivalry for power, territory and money, the PUK and KDP have given neighbors of the regions under their control, namely Iran and Turkey, as well as Baghdad, free tickets to interfere and assert their control in northern Iraq by proxy. "Operation Provide Comfort" as the "safe haven" project has been termed by some commentators has become "Operation Provide Cover" for the activities of these governments, which include an extensive military and intelligence presence as well as air and ground attacks as they please. Middle East specialist David McDowall foresees that the Kurdish protagonists are likely to find themselves increasingly fighting for the policy interests of their external patrons, rather than for any intrinsic Kurdish interests.

II. Iranian Kurds in Northern Iraq

Since 1980, tens of thousands of Iranian Kurds have fled to Iraq. The cause of their flight can be traced to the Iranian government's repression of minority groups and political dissenters. Kurds, numbering 7.5 million⁶, have been among the first political dissenters to face brutal repression and execution by the Islamic government of Iran. Nearly 200,000 soldiers dispersed over 3,000 military bases have been deployed to Iranian Kurdistan to prevent even the slightest attempt at rebellion. Military operations include mining the Kurdish zone, specifically the border zone, and the destruction and evacuation of the Iranian Kurdish villages. Kurdish sources estimate that, to date, more than 40,000 Kurdish civilians and some 5,000 cadres and fighters have lost their lives in the conflict.⁷ Approximately 300 Kurdish villages in Iran have been destroyed (271 villages destroyed between 1980-1992 and 113 bombed between July and December 1993).⁸

Nearly 10,000 Iranian Kurds are said to be in Iraqi Kurdistan.⁹ Iranian Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq had numbered many times more, but in 1982 the Iraqi government transferred them en masse to the Al-tash camp,¹⁰ 160 km (100 miles) west of Baghdad. About 4,000 of them are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and are therefore officially recognized as refugees.¹¹ Most of the refugees are associated with Kurdish political organizations, such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI)¹², the Communist Party of Iran (Komala), the Union of Revolutionary of Kurdistan¹³, and the Organization for National and Islamic Struggle of Iranian Kurdistan (Khebat). Some have previously been members of the parties while others have remained inactive members or take up periodic duties. They have remained in northern Iraq fearing persecution for their present or past political activities in Iran or Iraq. Many of them live under the protection and support of the Iranian political organizations in their camps, as the local Iraqi Kurdish administration is unable to provide them security, and material assistance from international aid organizations is not available to all refugees.

Because the majority of Kurds in Iran speak the Sorani dialect, Iranian Kurds in Iraq have lived in Sorani-speaking south of Iraqi Kurdistan, where PUK has been dominant.¹⁴ Currently, most Iranian camps are located in areas around Sulaymania and south of Erbil, which are under the control of the PUK. Most of those who live on their own also live in and around Sulaymania and Erbil. Only a small number of Iranian Kurds live in areas under the control of the KDP. Since the Iraqi Kurds took control of northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War, Iranian Kurdish organizations have acceded to the Kurdish administration's demand to not stage cross-border military activities against Iran. However, the Iranian government continues to cite such armed attacks as justification for its military incursions in northern Iraq.

Although Iran claims to be targeting the bases of the organizations, it has often targeted the residential camps and personal residences of the refugees, who are not only known as dissenters of the Islamic regime, but despite their current relationship with the political parties are always considered as their potential supporters. Similarly, both party militants and refugees have been targets of Iran's individual terrorist attacks.

IRAN'S AIR ATTACKS

After the cease-fire in 1989 between Iran and Iraq, Iran began hitting bases of Iranian Kurdish organization and villages inhabited by Iranian Kurds, which at the time were located near the border. However, after March 1993, the Iranian government began systematic shelling and aerial bombings of the border villages inside the territories controlled by Iraqi Kurds. Many of the attacks, including the first bombings in March 1993, which destroyed the Azadi Hospital run by two French international medical non-governmental organizations, took place in the no-fly zone above the 36th parallel, where the U.S. and other Western aircraft patrol the skies. Throughout 1993 and 1994 villages near the Iran-Iraq border which had been recently rebuilt were destroyed again, thousands more of the population became newly displaced, and dozens of civilians were killed or wounded.¹⁵ Six months after the first attacks, one report said that the UNHCR was drawing up plans to resettle about 5,000 Iranian Kurds who had fled their homes on Iraq's northern border with Iran.¹⁶

Two reports by the Federation International des Ligues des Droit de l'Homme (FIDH) Fact Finding Commission shed more light on the extent of Iran's air attacks.¹⁷ For example, between August 1993 and August 1994, FIDH's report listed 35 attacks directed by the Iranian armed forces in the region of Sulaymania, including bombardment by artillery and rocket, border violations or fly-overs, installations of military bases and the laying of mines. At the time of these attacks several people were injured, the population was evacuated, and vineyards and orchards were burned.¹⁸ In one series of artillery bombardments in the Raniya region, FDIH reported that at some moments as many as six bombs a minute are alleged to have fallen on Qala Diza, killing

40 people and wounding some 50 others.¹⁹

To complement and facilitate air attacks, Iranian ground forces advanced several miles into northern Iraq.²⁰ Members of Revolutionary Guards were dispatched admittedly on "intelligence" missions to gather information for more bombardment of the region. Some Guards were captured by Iraqi Kurdish forces, but were released after Iran threatened to bomb major towns like Sulaymania.²¹

Iran's goal in the air raids, however, went beyond harming Iranian dissident Kurds and party bases in northern Iraq. Massive numbers of Iraqi Kurds were also targeted in air attacks.²² The intention was to make Iraqi Kurds pay a high price all along the region's 200-mile border for supporting their Iranian brothers by leaving thousands of villagers homeless and destroying their livelihood. Once hundreds of local Kurds who used to live off trade in anything they could buy on the Iranian market lost their business as a result of the attacks, the Iranian government stepped up its efforts to use them against the Iranian Kurds. Those who wanted to continue buying from the Iranian market were now required to "pay for border access with information." Iranian officials visited homes of Kurdish farmers regularly, "pressing them to take weapons to protect the border." According to Kurdish officials, some important tribal leaders agreed.²³

IRAN'S ISLAMIST ALLIES

Looking for strategic and ideological zones of influence in Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran had long created and supported Kurdish Islamic parties. After the creation of the Kurdish autonomous entity, Iran initially relied on these parties.

The most powerful group, the Islamist Movement of the Iraqi Kurdistan (IMIK), was formed in 1986 during the Iran-Iraq war and is headed by Shaik Uthman Abdl al-Aziz.²⁴ In an interview, its leader declared IMIK's aim "to establish an Islamic state in northern Iraq similar to the one in Iran."²⁵ There is ample evidence of Iran supporting and using the IMIK to reinforce its military presence in northern Iraq. In October 1993, arms left behind by the IMIK during clashes with the PUK were said to have Persian writing on them.²⁶ In 1994, several Kurdish officials, including the minister of military affairs and customs officials at the Iranian border, said that Iran's Revolutionary Guards had set up a joint military base in areas controlled by the IMIK.²⁷

A second group is the Hizbollah, which was formed in 1982 in Iran, and is led by Sheikh Muhammad Khalid Barzani (a cousin of [KDP leader] Masud Barzani).²⁸

Sources close to United Nations' guards in Baghdad have described the group as an "offshoot of Iran's Revolutionary Guards" which is "free to operate in northern Iraq" and is "well-armed, well-paid and well-organized."²⁹ In late 1988 the group split and

the Revolutionary Hizbollah was formed, led by Adham Barzani. It is based in the Diyana region. 30

A number of killings, abductions and forcible returns of Iranian Kurds in northern Iraq have been attributed to these Islamic groups. Majid Salduzi and Mulla Ahmad Khezri, two Iranian refugees who had stopped being members of the KDPI three years earlier but continued to live in Iraqi Kurdistan because of their record of political activities, were reportedly captured in January 1995 and handed over to Iran by the Revolutionary Hizbollah forces.31

According to the KDPI they were executed in Urumieh on March 1, 1996,32 and a 1997 Amnesty International report listed their names among the political prisoners who were reportedly executed in Iran in 1996. Seven KDPI activists were reported to be arrested by the IMIK on October 20, 1996 in the Halabja region. The KDPI held Anwar Anabi, a military commander of the IMIK, responsible for the act and said after Anabi turned them over to the Islamic Republic, the seven were taken to a Pasdaran jail in Paveh, where they have been tortured and face possible execution. 33

Another Iraqi Islamic group controlled by Iran is the Shi'a Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The Badr forces, SCIRI's armed militia, are estimated to be 5000 strong. In October 1995, following an agreement between the PUK and Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim of the SCIRI during a visit to Tehran, at least one brigade of Badr forces, the Imam Ali, was moved to northern Iraq from the south.34 Analysts marked this as a new threshold in Iran's drive for ascendancy in the "Western-protected" enclave.35

IRAN'S BASES OF OPERATION INSIDE NORTHERN IRAQ

Iran is also said to have "tentacles" all over the north, from humanitarian missions to intelligence bureaus.36 It maintains several intelligence offices in northern Iraq, run by the Revolutionary Guards. According to Iranian Kurdish sources such offices are located in Erbil, Sulaymania, Raniya, Masif, Diyana, Halabja, and Dohuk. Depending on which Iraqi Kurdish party controls the region, that party's armed forces stand guard in front of these offices. In 1996, an "intelligence leak" disclosed plans by Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Revolutionary Guards to conduct "intelligence activity" and "possibly a chain of explosions" in Iraq. It also stated that "talks with tribal leaders south of al-Sulaymania" to cooperate and plan "terrorist operations" had already begun in northern Iraq.37 "Among the field officers who moved to northern Iraq were commanders of camps run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, namely Brigadier Generals Mohammad Karmi of Hamzah camp, Javad Ja'fari of Ramadan camp, 'Abdol Reza Maskari of Nasr camp in Naqadeh, Shela'i of Zafar camp in Kermanshah."38

In the past three years, Iran has also begun establishing Red Crescent Society offices in northern Iraq. According to Kurdish sources many of the employees at these offices are recruited from Iran's Security and Intelligence forces and from the Ramadan camp.³⁹ Iranian Kurds describe the purpose of these offices as intelligence gathering and providing cover for violent attacks against Iranian Kurds. For example, one report in April 1996 said that the terrorists who killed four members of one refugee family and a fifth refugee, Mansur Fadaie, returned to the Red Crescent Society office in Sulaymania, after which they easily transferred to the Ramadan camp.⁴⁰ On April 21, Iranian agents driving a Red Crescent Society ambulance attacked an Iranian Kurdish refugee camp in the Bainjan region of Sulaymania. One assailant, captured by camp guards, acknowledged that the attackers had been dispatched by the Security and Intelligence office in Kermanshah (Iranian Kurdistan) to carry out terrorist activities against Iranian refugees, and that they had crossed the border under the cover of the Red Crescent Society's relief aid programs.⁴¹

Iran's long-standing campaign to assassinate Kurdish dissidents was recently highlighted in the "Mykonos Trial." The Berlin Supreme Court trial, which concluded in April 1997, convicted one Iranian and four Lebanese for the murder of three Kurdish Iranian dissidents and their translator in Berlin in 1992. The German judge said that the order to assassinate the four Iranians came from the Committee for Special Operations, which includes the Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Secret Service chief Ali Fallahian, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, and Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. By formally implicating the Iranian government in the assassinations, this ruling proved that the Iranian government is committed to terrorism against its dissidents abroad at any price. If Iran is willing to risk such scandalous international condemnation in Europe, then whatever terrorist measures it uses outside the scrutiny of the West in northern Iraq should not come as a surprise.

IRAN'S PROXY FORCES

Since the days of the Shah, Iran has frequently made alliances with Iraqi Kurdish parties to gain influence in the region and to suppress its own Kurds. In 1967, Mulla Mustafa Barzani agreed to restrain KDPI's political activities in Iran in return for the Shah of Iran's aid against Baghdad. Barzani suspended all KDPI activities hostile to Iran. Later Barzani expelled Iranian Kurds who were still in Iraq. In the summer of

1968, Barzani men captured and executed Sulayman Muini and handed his body over to the Iranians. The body was displayed in Mahabad as one of over 40 Iranian Kurds killed or turned over to the Shah's men by Mulla Mustafa.⁴²

After the Shah's downfall, the remnants of Mulla Mustafa Barzani's group in Iran, Qiyada-ye Movaqqat, became an ally of the Islamic government and commanded armed groups who had established bases in Kurdistan. In fact, one of the first major demands of the Kurds in Iran in 1979 was the expulsion of the Qiyada-ye Movaqqat leadership from Iran.⁴³ Iraqi KDP forces engaged in several clashes with the KDPI in 1980 and 1981 after the Iranian revolution. In 1982, the Iraqi KDP, supported by the Iranian army and Revolutionary Guards, succeeded in driving KDPI peshmerges [militias] from strategic positions in Iranian Kurdistan near the Turkish border. The KDP also took active part in a major Iranian offensive in the summer of 1983, which ended the KDPI's control of vast areas of Kurdistan.⁴⁴ During the Iran-Iraq war, the KDP depended even more on the Islamic Republic than Barzani ever depended on the Shah.⁴⁵

Members of KDPI who were in northern-Iraq in 1994 and 1995 accuse KDP forces of repeatedly attacking their camps in alliance with the Revolutionary Hizbollah and the Ramadan camp, killing and wounding several unarmed party militants and non-combatant women and children. In one instance, in 1995, as many as 200 armed militia members, on order from a member of KDP's Political Bureau and Barzani's nephew, Nuchehid, are said to have attacked KDPI bases in Baserme (in the vicinity of Harir).

However, it has been the inter-Kurdish fighting between the PUK and KDP in the past four years that has given Iran its great opportunity in northern Iraq. The conflict has divided Iraqi Kurdistan into two separate regions, with the KDP controlling the northern and the Iraqi-Turkish border, and the PUK controlling the south and the Iranian border. Both parties have been weakened politically and militarily by their quarrel and have sought assistance from the regional states, a policy which has only exposed them to further exploitation by Iraq, Iran and Turkey.

As this fighting escalated, Iran abandoned its traditional pro-KDP posture and aligned itself with the PUK, which in turn found Iran's assistance vital in its ascendancy over the KDP. The alliance with Iran allowed the PUK to maintain its only link between areas under its control and the outside world. The PUK's main source of income is also through trade with Iran. As revealed in a PUK communiqué, more than \$2.2 million each month are generated in their trade outlet with Iran.^{46 47} Additionally as the KDP has relied more on Baghdad for military assistance, the PUK has relied more on Iran for logistical and military assistance against its rival.

Since the creation of the Kurdish entity, Iran has pressured Iraqi Kurdish groups to stop sheltering Iranian rebels, making any assistance conditional on their cooperation on this

issue.⁴⁸ Iran has reportedly demanded that both the PUK and KDP "hand over members of the dissident groups"⁴⁹ and "curb the activities of Iranian Kurdish rebels in their enclave, much as they did with the Turkish PKK [Kurdish Workers Party],"⁵⁰ meaning, of course, that the Iranian Kurdish parties must be uprooted. According to Kurdish sources, Iran has also wanted "the guerrillas either disarmed or expelled to government-controlled parts of the northern Iraq, where they would be more exposed and less effective."⁵¹

In order to gain Iran's trust and receive its support, the PUK has gradually and increasingly bowed to Iran's demands. First, in the spring of 1995, the PUK closed down the KDPI's radio, which broadcasts to Iranian Kurdistan.⁵² Then, the PUK was complicit and cooperative as Iran began to expand its military and intelligence presence, providing Iranian forces a free-fire zone against Iranian Kurds. Throughout 1995 and 1996, Iranian forces attacked hundreds of Iranian Kurds in northern Iraq with mine explosions, car bombs, assassination attempts by terrorists sent or hired locally, and long and close range artillery. Iranian Kurdish sources report that between 1991 and 1996, at least 218 Iranian-Kurds were killed or injured in these attacks.⁵³ (Also see page 6). The intensity of personal rivalry between the PUK and the KDP leadership and their rival patronage system have also provided a fertile ground for Iran's terrorist activities. Both leaders are known to have their respective party apparatus and fighters much the way paramount chiefs had retinues 150 years ago. Under the umbrella of each party stands a number of chiefs with their own retinues who bargain their loyalty in return for favors or rank within the party system.⁵⁴ Iran has long tried and succeeded in influencing Iraqi Kurdish tribal chiefs to cooperate against its dissidents. Additionally, by exploiting the dire economic conditions of the region, Iran is also reported to be able to easily hire local Kurds for murdering dissidents. The assassins enjoy impunity through primordial loyalties, including allegiances to families, clans and tribes under the umbrella of one of the parties. Therefore, even if an assassin is identified and handed over to security forces of these parties it is unlikely that they will be punished because it may cause defection of a family, a clan or a tribe from that party in favor of the other party or cause more clashes between the two parties.

On July 26 and 27, 1996, 200 Iranian vehicles with more than 2,000 Iranian soldiers loaded with heavy and light weapons⁵⁵ crossed the Iraq-Iran border at Panjwin District in Iraqi Kurdistan and took position in Koy Sinjaq District in the Erbil region within the areas under the control of the PUK. On the morning of July 28, they launched a large-scale attack on the Iranian refugee camps of the KDPI and the party's offices and centers in the Koy Sinjaq area, using all kinds of weapons including heavy artillery, missile launchers and armor.⁵⁶ During the course of this onslaught the KDPI reported that the Azadi Hospital [re-located after Iran's 1993 bombardments of border villages] and the houses of Iranian Kurdish refugees were completely destroyed and set ablaze. Not a single residential unit remained unscathed by the shells from mortars, cannons

and Katyushas.⁵⁷ Two refugees, an elderly woman and a man, died during the offensive; two children were injured and 2,500 refugees fled as a result of the invasion.⁵⁸ Confirming the damage inflicted on the refugees and the ongoing danger, UNHCR representative Abdullah Saied told Reuters that, "The incursion and bombardment in Kurdish areas has resulted in the displacement of many refugees and many of them have fled, seeking refuge and assistance." He called on "the Iranian government to exercise constraint and not harm the refugees or their property."⁵⁹ As the Iranian army was retreating towards Iran, an official of the UNHCR in Arbil said that his office was dealing with an "urgent situation" and "coping with around 2,500 refugees, mostly women and children who fled Koi Sanjaq after Iranian troops shelled their camp."⁶⁰ Many of the refugees stayed at a school in Erbil while the UNHCR tried to arrange the reconstruction of their homes.⁶¹

This large incursion not only showed that Iran has the capability, when it wishes, to strike at the heart of the Iranian Kurdish community in northern Iraq, but also proved beyond doubt that the Iraqi Kurdish security forces, and in particular the PUK's forces are not only unable to protect Iranian refugees but are accomplices in the attacks against them. Accounts by independent international observers and the local population who witnessed the incursion attest to this fact. A German administrator of European Community aid in northern Iraq was quoted as saying, "Iran's forces entered a part of northern Iraq . . . to bomb an Iranian refugee camp, evidently with permission from [PUK leader Jalal] Talabani, whose people controlled that area."⁶²

Other eyewitnesses said that three hours before the Iranian attack, the PUK authorities shut off electricity, imposing a blackout from 10 p.m. until 8 a.m. in an area extending from Koi Sanjaq to Arbil. The six PUK check points in and around that region were removed. One hundred fifty PUK senior cadres had been taken hostage by the Iranians and moved to Marivan, inside Iran, in order to ensure PUK collaboration with them.⁶³

Another source wrote in anonymity, "The terrible fact is that 1) the troops' commander was Jafar Sahraroudi, the terrorist who assassinated [KDPI leader] Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou; 2) his friend of a long time, [PUK leader] Jalal Talebani, had him seen over the frontier, from Marivan to Sulaymania. There, in a mosque, he prepared for him a friendly welcome. And the night after guided him to the environs of Koy Sanjaq, to 'his Kurdish brothers' place, so that Sahraroudi would do the dirty job for him. I know well how unscrupulous Jalal is-but this was beastly. As I know how readily - happily he meets the KDPI leaders, and how innocent he presents himself to them ..."⁶⁴

Although Iran declared the retreat of its forces, the KDP and KDPI said that Iran kept some troops in northern Iraq and warned of more attacks.⁶⁵ In the following weeks as the conflict between the KDP and PUK escalated, Iran was reported to build up an even greater military and intelligence presence in northern Iraq. Thousands of Revolutionary

Guards and the Badr Forces were reported to have joined the PUK in regaining Sulaymania from the KDP in October 1996.⁶⁶ Iran's Revolutionary Guards from the Ramadan, Zefar and Nasser command centers were also said to have set up a joint command center with the PUK in the city of Sulaymania.⁶⁷

While it seems that by moving to areas under the control of the KDP, Iranian refugees may be better protected, this is neither practical nor effective. Due to extreme resource constraints most refugees live with paltry assistance from international organizations or Party hand-outs. As seen in the aftermath of Iran's July large scale attack on refugee camps in Koy Sinjaq, neither the UNHCR nor the KDPI were capable of relocating the camps.

Moreover, as Iran's traditional ally, the KDP's history of involvement in repressing Iranian Kurds in exchange for assistance from the Iranian government has long been a source of distrust between Iranian Kurds and the KDP. Despite tensions resulting from Iran's backing of the PUK, the KDP has not stopped seeking "friendly and strong relations" with Iran. In order to expand its connections with Iran, the KDP has even been willing to dismiss its accusations as "misunderstandings." In turn, the Iranian government is still issuing invitations to KDP members and hosting them in Iran.⁶⁸

The KDP's "tactical" alliance with Baghdad in August 1996, despite the "disappearance" of thousands of the KDP members in 1983 and the killings of tens of thousands of Kurds in the Anfal campaign in 1988 by the Baghdad regime, reveals that should the necessity arise, KDP would not hesitate to appease Iran's government at the expense of the Iranian Kurds. Finally, several reports indicate that a number of attacks against Iranian dissidents have taken place in areas under the control of the KDP. (see box)

Examples of Iran's Terrorist Activities

Abduction, torture and murder:

Kaveh Hakimzadeh, a 16 year old refugee, was abducted by agents of the Islamic Republic on 31 July 1996. A PUK member, who asked for anonymity, later informed his family that Kaveh was seen at a PUK base in Raniya that evening. Kaveh's body was discovered the next day near Rania. He was brutally tortured and forced to swallow acid.



Haji Hadi, an Iranian agent in Raniya who is known to be a commander from the Ramadan camp and the head of Sardasht's Information and Security Department, is held responsible for Kaveh's murder. He is also known to have killed and tortured Rasul Amini and Ghader Alkun, Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, Revolutionary Leadership

(KDPI-RL) members, with the same method in Raniya. (Sources: KDPI press release August 1, 1996, and Kaveh's friends) *On January 19, 1997, Abdullah Piroutzadeh, a former cadre of the KDPI, who was at the time a shepherd in the vicinity of Diyana, which is controlled by the KDP, was assassinated by the agents of Iran. (Sources: KDPI, "Kurdistan," February 1997, and Abdullah's friends) *Another refugee, Mulla Hossein Hamzehpour, who was previously a cadre of the KDPI disappeared on February 14, 1997. His body was found the next day on the road connecting Qala Diza and Raniya. (Source: KDPI, "Kurdistan", March 1997) *Salim Karimnejad, another refugee and a former cadre of KDPI who was an anchor man in Radio Kurdistan, was shot to death on March 10, 1997, in front of his home in "Kani Qerzale".

*In February 1997 a KDPI member named Ataollah Feizi, who was in Sulaymania to seek medical treatment, disappeared on his way back to his camp. Three days later Abass Badri, another KDPI member who went to search for him, also disappeared. Both their bodies were found near Sulaymania about a week later. A friend of Ata's reported that his eyes were gouged, his legs were broken and his head was ruptured with a spike. Local residents said that both Ata and Abbas were seen in a PUK base. Although the KDPI invited the witnesses to testify, they refused due to fear of reprisal. (Sources: KDPI press release February 14, 1997, and friends of Ata and Abbas) * On December 7, 1996, several PUK forces under the command of Mahmoud Sangavati accompanied a number of Iran's security forces in attacking a camp belonging to the Union of Revolutionaries of Kurdistan. At the time the camp was sheltering families of the Union's members and was protected by some of the Union's armed militants. Six militants along with several of the women and children were captured and taken to PUK's Al-Salam base (5 km from Sulaymania). The men were tortured, their necks and backs were broken, and then they were executed. To cover up the crime, their bodies were taken to Dasht PIRAMAGROUN, 40 km from Sulaymani, where they were buried in mass graves. The women and children remained captive for three days, until the KDPI mediated their release with PUK. (Source: Member of the URK) *On November 30, 1996, a vehicle rented by the KDPI to transport some of its members and their families was attacked by killers in the pay of Tehran. The attack claimed five victims, including a four year-old child and two visiting relatives of Party members, and wounded several others, among them a native driver of the car. (Source: KDPI Press Release, December 3, 1996)

Regular barrage of refugee camps:

*According to refugees who lived in a KDPI-Revolutionary Command camp in the Raniya region in 1995 and 1996, their living quarters were attacked on a nightly basis by mortar, RPG, Katyusha and remote control rockets from nearby heights. Iranian agents were also said to have planted bomb traps and dynamite in refugees' living quarters. *According to refugees residing in a Komala camp 20 km from Sulaymania, their residence was also attacked by heavy weapons, Katyusha missiles and RPG. In one occasion, on June 25, 1995, Komala reported that the attackers left their heavy weapons behind and were able to return to Marivan in Kurdistan of Iran with the help of Iran's Red Crescent Society office in

Sulaymania. (Source: Secretary of Komala central Committee, A list of Islamic Republic terrorist action in 1995 against Komala in Kurdistan of Iraq) *On April 7, 1997, refugees in the Bazian camp operated by the KDPI in the Sulaymania province were severely poisoned with the highly toxic metal, Thallium, the second such incident in two months. Sixty refugees fell seriously ill immediately. They were rushed to Baghdad Hospitals, due to the severe shortage of medicine in northern Iraq. A week later Iraq's Health Ministry Undersecretary said the number of poisoned people admitted to Iraqi hospitals - Saddam Medical City and Karamah Hospital - had so far reached 80. He said many were in critical condition and Baghdad was trying to arrange their transfer to Europe since their hospitals lacked the medical supplies necessary to treat those in critical condition. According to Iranian Kurdish sources the number of the hospitalized rose to 130 persons, 16 of whom were eventually transferred to Austria for medical treatment. (Sources: KDPI Press Release, April 7, 1997, and Reuters, April 13, 1997).

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Joost R. Hiltermann, The Demise of Operation Provide Comfort, Middle East Report, Spring 1997.
- 2 Half a million children under the age of five have died as a result of the UN sanctions - ten times more than were killed during the Gulf War. The World Health Organization has said sanctions should be banned as a political weapon, while the United Nations Food Programme has called it a 'brutal' instrument. (Guardian, May 18, 1996)
- 3 New York Times, September 12, 1996.
- 4 Ronald Ofteringer and Ralf Backer, A Republic of Stateless: Three years of Humanitarian Assistance in Iraqi Kurdistan, Middle East Report Mar.-June 1994.
- 5 Amnesty International, IRAQ: Human Rights abuses in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991, 28 February, 1995.
- 6 International Journal of Kurdish Studies.
- 7 Federation International des Ligues des Droit de l'Homme (FIDH), Fact-finding Mission on the Human Rights Situation: Kurdistan, Brussels, Jan 1995.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Iraqi Kurdistan, Fact-Finding Mission on the Human Rights Situation mandated by the and the Fondation France Libertes, October 1993.
- 11 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME, UPDATE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, EC/47/SC/CRP.6, 6 January 1997.
- 12 The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran reunited in January 1997 with a dissident faction, known since March 1988 as the KDPI-Revolutionary Leadership [KDPI/KDPI-RL joint statement 1/9/97]
- 13 The URK was formed in 1991 and was formerly known as "Cherikhay Fadayi

Khalg Iran - Hoviat".

14 The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq (KDP) has been historically associated with the Kurmanji, or Bahdinan-speaking areas. Sorani and Kurmanji are difficult dialects of Kurdish which are mutually incomprehensible.

15 When the regional administration was established, the region was already devastated by intermittent civil war since 1961, by the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, by an Iraqi onslaught in the Anfal campaigns of the late 1980s, and then by the 1991 Gulf War and its aftermath, including the defeat of a Kurdish uprising which resulted in the exodus of 1.5-2 million refugees. Up to 4,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed, 800,000 were forced out of their homes (USCR) and 50,000 to 100,000 Kurds were killed (Human Rights Watch) during the Anfal campaign.

16 The Guardian, September 9, 1993.

17 FIDH-France Libertes - October 1993 and FIDH- Jan 1995.

18 List handed over to the investigating mission by the Iraqi Kurdish security services. 19 see supra note 7.

20 Reuters, April .21 1993.

21 Agence France Presse, August 27, 1993.

22 Washington Post, 6.5.93

23 The Guardian, September 9, 1993.

24 see supra note 5.

25 Islamic leader sees goal as Islamic Kurdistan, London, Kanal-6 television, as quoted in FBIS-NES, 14 January, 1994, p33. 26 see supra note 7.

27 Agence France Presse, January 18, 1994.

28 see supra note 5.

29 Reuters, November 3, 1995.

30 see supra note 5.

31 Reuters, February 18, 1995.

32 Press Release, KDPI, Bureau of International Relations, Paris, March 14, 1996.

33 Press Release, KDPI, Bureau of International Relations, Paris, Oct. 31, 1996.

34 Reuters, November 3, 1995.

35 The Guardian, November 1, 1995.

36 The Guardian, July 30, 1996.

37 Amman AL-HADATH in Arabic, Iran's Secret War' Reportedly Launched against Iraq, 29 Jul 96p 8, as quoted in FBIS-NES, 7 August, 1996, p 64.

38 Ibid.

39 Ramadan is one of the Iranian regime's camps in Kurdistan-Iran which is set up to combat Kurdish opposition abroad. It is connected to the Hamzeh Seid-Al-Shohada camp which is based in Urumieh and combats Kurdish opposition inside Iran by military and political means.

40 Jahan Emrouz (in Farsi), April 1996.

- 41 KDPI, Iranian Kurdistan (English), 1996.
- 42 David McDowall, A Modern History of the Kurds, 1996.
- 43 Sharzad Mojab & Amir Hassanpour, The Politics of Nationality and Ethnic Diversity, in Iran after the revolution, Edited by Rahnema & Behdad, 1995.
- 44 Martin van Bruinessen, The Kurds Between Iran and Iraq, Middle East Report, July-August 1986.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Isam al-Khafaji, The Destruction of Iraqi Kurdistan, Middle East Report, Oct-Dec 1996.
- 47 The KDP levies "customs" dues worth between \$100,000 and \$250,000 a day (Financial Times, September 10, 1996).
- 48 Reuters, September 4, 1996. 49 The Guardian, September 9, 1993.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Middle East International, August 6 1993, Iran and the Kurds, Results of "containment" (NEXIS).
- 52 Agence France Presse, May 11, 1995.
- 53 Jahan Emrouz (in Farsi), August 1997.
- 54 David McDowall, The Kurds, 1996, Minority Rights Group. On the question of primordial loyalties among the Kurds, also see Martin van Bruinessen, Aga, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1992).
- 55 Agence France Presse, July 28, 1996.
- 56 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 31, 1996, Speaker of Iraqi Kurdistan parliament denounces Iranian attack (NEXIS).
- 57 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 31, 1996, Kurdish radio says no lives lost in Iranian offensive (NEXIS).
- 58 Agence France Presse, July 31, 1996.
- 59 Reuters, July 29, 1996.
- 60 Agence France Presse, July 30, 1996.
- 61 Agence France Presse, July 31, 1996.
- 62 New York Times, September 3, 1996.
- 63 see supra note 46.
- 64 quoted in Vera Beaudin Saeedpour, The Mystery of Parallel Plots, Kurdish Life, No. 20, Fall 1996, letter to the author dated 8.2.96.
- 65 Agence France Presse, August 25, 1996.
- 66 BBC, October 24, 1996, KDP accuses Iran of "invasion", appeals for help, Source: Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan, Salah al-Din, in Arabic 0906 gmt 23 Oct 96 (NEXIS).
- 67 Agence France Presse, October 15, 1996.
- 68 Agence France Presse, February 28, 1997.