



Witness Statement of Aziz Mamleh

Name: Aziz Mamleh
Place of Birth: Mahabad, Iran
Date of Birth: 1950
Occupation: Attorney

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

Date of Interview: March 3, 2011

Interviewer: IHRDC Staff

This statement was prepared pursuant to an interview with Aziz Mamleh. It was approved by Aziz Mamleh on March 3, 2011. There are 15 paragraphs in the statement.

The views and opinions of the witness expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center.

Statement

1. My name is Aziz Mamleh. I was born in 1950 in Mahabad, Iran. I left Iran for France in 1980 as a representative of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI)¹ and have been here ever since. I have had no activities with the KDPI since 1982. Prior to the revolution, I was an attorney working in Tehran. During the revolution, I worked against the dictatorship and set aside my work as an attorney.
2. Before the fall of the Shah's regime and the start of the revolution, I was a member of the KDPI. I became a member through my contacts with the late doctor Ghassemlou² who was the Secretary-General of the party. I started my political work in secret. During the revolution and until 1984, I was actively working for the Party. At times I was a consultant to the Central Committee of the KDPI while at other times I was an active member of the Central Committee. While in France, I was a representative of the Party. I held numerous positions in publication, communication and leadership [roles] and was an advisor to the late Dr. Ghassemlou.

The Special Delegation and Negotiation with the Kurds

3. The Islamic Republic's central government imposed war on Kurdistan twice. Once the war came to be known as the three months' war because the officials, in particular Khomeini, requested peace after three months. The second time was the 24-day war of Sanandaj³ and what came after that. After the three-month war, Khomeini sent a message stating that ill wishers had excited him into reacting and that we should negotiate for peace. On behalf of the interim government of Mr. Bazargan,⁴ a Special Delegation came to Kurdistan. It consisted of Dariush Forouhar,⁵ Mr. Sabaghiyan⁶ and Mr. Sahabi⁷. Chamran⁸ was also a member of the Delegation but was never physically present.
4. The delegation came to Mahabad. To meet with them, the Delegation of the Representatives of the Kurdish People (DRKP) was formed, the leader of which was the late *Mamosta* Sheikh

¹ The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (PDKI) is a political opposition group in Iran and the leading Kurdish political party in the country. It was founded on August 16, 1945 in Mahabad, Iran. Its objective is to establish Kurdish autonomy in administrative, legal and educational matters without jeopardizing Iran's territorial integrity.

² Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou was the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran from 1973 until his assassination by agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1989.

³ The 24-day war of Sanandaj of 1980 was an armed struggle between Kurdish rebel forces and the Iranian government. During the conflict, the Iranian government is reported to have fired 14,000 shells on the city of Sanandaj.

⁴ Mehdi Bazargan was the first prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran and head of Iran's interim government from February 4, 1979 to November 6, 1979.

⁵ Dariush Forouhar was one of the founders and leader of the Nation of Iran Party, a pan-Iranist opposition party which advocates the reunification of the Iranian peoples.

⁶ Hashem Sabbaghian was the minister of interior in Prime Minister Bazargan's interim government and served in the Iranian parliament from 1980 to 1984.

⁷ Ezatollah Sahabi became a member of the Council of Islamic Revolution in 1979 and served as Head of National Budget Center under Prime Minister Bazargan.

⁸ Mostafa Chamran Savei served as the first defense minister of the Islamic Republic from 1979 to 1980 and was a member of parliament.

Ezzedin Hosseini⁹ while the speaker was the KDPI. There were also representatives from *Komala* and *Fadaian Khalq Guerillas* (which had a branch in Kurdistan). I was one of the KDPI representatives to the DRKP and participated in the meetings.

5. The reason for the failure of the negotiations was that at the onset of them, the DRKP issued its general demands in 26 articles that came to be known as the 26-point plan. It was given to the representatives of the government but received no clear responses. Since the KDPI was looking to achieve a political resolution and reach an agreement with the ruling government so as to prevent a renewed war, they summarized the demands in six articles and handed that to Bani Sadr¹⁰. The information I have is based on what was said in the party. Bani Sadr delayed on giving any response to the articles and the six point plan was disagreed upon.
6. Official meetings only took place once between the Special Delegation and the DRKP. Their excuses for rejecting the plans were superficial as well as essentially contextual. The superficial excuses were that they didn't want us to use the term "autonomy." Bani Sadr even proposed the term "*khodgardani*," self-governing. Contextually, they didn't agree with any of our demands. They disagreed with the presence of the local council or the *peshmerga* as the popular forces in Kurdistan as well as allotting a budget for Kurdistan to eradicate poverty. Basically, they said that it was early for such talks since Iran was still in trouble and that since the Kurds had endured a lifetime of suffering, they can endure it for a while longer too. We asked that they do what was in their power, to announce certain promises and undertake certain obligations that they would perform the demands later on. They hadn't come to Kurdistan to obtain a result from the talks but to kill time.
7. The official meeting of the delegations took one hour. I believe, however, that the government delegation came to Kurdistan three times. There was also a formality meeting prior to the official meeting. Before the end of the war, the delegates went to the mountains and even spoke to Jalal Talebani and asked that the meetings be convened. The preliminary meetings started from the mountains but the official meeting only took place once and for one hour.¹¹ While in Kurdistan, the Special Delegation tried to cause a chasm between the Kurdish parties through meeting with them individually and on a personal level, to meet with the parties to negotiate in private. However, they failed their goal of spreading hypocrisy.

Why the Negotiations Failed

8. Basically, the ruling class of Iran, then and now, didn't wish to bring a resolution to Iranians' struggle for democracy through which they could solve the problem of multi-ethnicity once and

⁹ Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini was a Kurdish spiritual leader and actively protested the Shah's regime. After the Islamic Revolution, Sheikh Ezzedin was the principal Kurdish negotiator and enjoyed the support of Komala.

¹⁰ Abolhassan Bani Sadr was the minister of foreign affairs in Prime Minister Bazargan's interim government and later served as the first President of Iran from February 4, 1980 until his impeachment on June 21, 1981. For more information on Bani Sadr's role in events at the time, please see IHRDC, Interview with Abulhassan Bani Sadr, (March 3, 2011), available at: <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/witness-testimony/3544-interview-with-abulhassan-bani-sadr.html#.U7GAnZRdWdE>

¹¹ Mr. Mamleh: The newspaper *Cheshmandaz-e Iran* [Outlook on Iran] wrote about this matter in two separate issues.

for all. They didn't believe in general freedoms. When the regime in Iran does not believe in the fundamentals of freedom and democracy, it does not consider solving the ethnicity issue in Iran as a necessity. This was essentially the reason for their unresponsiveness and refusal to offer a solution to the problem.

9. Negative propaganda such as connecting the parties involved to foreign forces, while they were clearly representatives of the people, were for the purpose of deviating from the issue at hand.
10. Our party meetings revolved around the manner and necessity of meeting with the government delegation. Our aim was for these negotiations to reach fruition, to find a solution to this national problem. This was our fundamental agreement. We did disagree on issues but they were minor things. What we were all working towards was to ensure war didn't start again. We were of the opinion that Iran should be entering a new period where personal freedom and social justice was to be respected. What we asked was for the government delegation to participate in the negotiations based on these fundamentals and offer us mutual respect. But that was not how the Special Delegation operated.
11. They had come to kill time so as to allow the government to prepare for another war and although we could see that, we had no choice but to comply as we preferred to reach a peaceful agreement. We were weary of war and tried to prevent it from happening again. However the other side was not listening to what we had to say; war was not an important matter to them. The IRI didn't wish to unite the democratic and national issues. For a short period of time, a democratic atmosphere existed and it was very open and ideal in Kurdistan. People came to Kurdistan from all over and enjoyed the existing democratic atmosphere.
12. Instead of facing the Kurdish problem the ruling regime brought forth excuses. When faced with opposition, the ruling powers in Iran always accuse the opposition of separatism and dependency on foreigners. The accusation of dependency on foreigners for the Kurds is absolutely baseless. None of the Iranian Kurdish parties ever helped the Iraqis. Look at the documents from Saddam's government. It is clear that the Kurdish Iranian political parties behaved very independently from any forces. They certainly had diplomatic relations with other governments but never any special relationships. Even the Iraqi Kurds agree on this.
13. The national and democratic movement of Kurdistan was one founded and instilled based on the joining of forces between political organizations and the people in Kurdistan. If the legitimate resistance was not supported and protected by the people, the *peshmerga* could not resist the onslaught for a day. Everything, other than familiar affairs, of course, was completely in the control of the resistance movement of the Kurdish people. Particularly in rural areas as the regime was in control in cities. People supported the *peshmerga* in every way. As soon as someone was arrested, people wanted to take up arms and fight. The resistance was democratic, legitimate and popular. Furthermore, the leaders of the political parties were from the intellectuals and elites of the nation; people considered them their eyes and hearts.
14. Once no resolution was reached for the Kurdish issue, in November 1979, I went for a mission to Tehran and visited Enghelab Street, in front of Tehran University. Crowds had gathered there.

The atmosphere in Tehran was very political. While there, I also heard the tape of a speech by Mr. Hejazi, a representative at the Assembly of Experts and at times Friday Prayer Imam of Tehran. He was insulting the Kurdish leadership. It was clear to me that the government was killing time and stretching the so-called negotiations so as to prepare themselves for a new surprise attack. They did not believe in seeking or finding remedies.

Dr. Ghassemlou

15. Dr. Ghassemlou was an experienced and determined man who was trying with all his might to reach an agreement with the ruling power through a peaceful and political process. He was the leader of the Party. He was very diplomatic, intelligent and magnetic. I personally only saw his efforts and desires to resolve the issue peacefully. Each time a religious figure would enter Kurdistan, he would personally welcome that individual and attempt to attract his opinion to reach a solution in Kurdistan. Dr. Ghassemlou, *Mamosta* [Sheikh Ezzeddin] and Saremeddin Sadegh Vaziri were very much co-partners in this movement. He often said that coming to agreement with the IRI is very hard, but that there are no other choices. It was difficult to speak of democracy with the ruling body.