

STATEMENT

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CONTACT: (202) 661-4675

USADI Condemns Iraq's Governing Council's Decision to Expel Iranian Dissidents

Decision will undermine US security interests in Iraq, democracy movement in Iran

According to wire reports, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) issued a statement on December 9, vowing to "expel the People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran from Iraq before the end of the year." A day later, a member of the IGC told *Agence France Presse* that it "is considering handing the People's Mujahedeen back to the Iranian authorities."

Tehran applauded the IGC decision. Vice President Mohammed Ali Abtahi said: "We have very good relations with the Governing Council, and we have had discussions (on the Mujahedeen) and this decision is the result."

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI) condemns the IGC decision, which runs counter to the interests the Iranian people in their quest for a democratic Iran, and to the United States in its efforts to stabilize Iraq.

As some regional experts have noted, this move "could alter the regional balance of power" and would be "a significant political and security gain for Iran."

With the removal of its most effective bulwark against the spread of fundamentalism, Tehran would pose a major challenge to America's security interests in Iraq.

The handover of Iranian dissidents to Iran's clerical regime would be tantamount to signing their death warrants. Tehran's execution of its political opponents and rights abuses is well documented. Last November, the United Nations condemned continuing and systematic violations of human rights and the use of torture, inhuman and degrading punishments.

When the clerical regime tortures, rapes and murders a Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi for photographing the notorious Evin Prison, one can imagine how they would treat these Iranian dissidents.

Furthermore, the expulsion order is a clear violation of the international laws concerning countries under occupation such as Iraq. According to U.S. legal experts, the Geneva Convention gives the United States the responsibility to enforce the relevant protection for members of the Mujahedeen and any transfer or deportation of them outside the territory of Iraq to any country, and in

particular to Iran, is prohibited under the laws of war applicable to the present occupation (Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention). The same experts stress that United States military law would also bar such a transfer.

The Mujahedeen, “who seek a secular democracy in Iran,” have a proven anti-fundamentalist track record and have been instrumental in revealing Tehran’s secret nuclear weapons program. Silencing them would serve as a deterrent for any emerging opposition to the mullahs and be counterproductive to our goal of a more democratic Middle East region, as well as our war on terrorism.

The United States must act to prevent the spread of the Iran’s Islamic fundamentalism, which is potentially more dangerous and insidious than Tehran’s nuclear program.

In our war on terrorism and in the quest to democratize the Middle East, we cannot afford to hand Tehran their only capable foe on the ground – the Mujahedeen of Iran. These Iranian dissidents are a potential ally and a proven source of intelligence on the theocracy ruling Iran.

As the Iranian regime continues to manipulate the Iraqi Governing Council into doing its bidding, our administration must send a loud and clear message: Iran’s regime will not run Iraq or its emerging government. We did not fight this war and loose brave young Americans to help prop up the Iranian mullahs who force their own people to live in bondage. Neither should we allow the clerical regime to silence Iranians brave enough to speak out or act against its brutality at home and terrorism abroad.

America’s resolve to build a democratic Iraq will not be shaken by schemes hatched by Tehran. As Americans, we understand the evil nature of this Iranian regime and will not allow thousands of Iranian dissidents to be sent to the gallows in Iran. This would be un-American at the least.

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