

# USADIran Dispatch

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## USADI Commentary

### **Mohammad Khatami: a hypocrite, *par excellence***

An Iranian man convicted of murder was hanged in public in the northern town of Gonbad-e-Kavoos Wednesday, the *Kayhan* evening newspaper said, bringing to 10 the number of executions in Iran reported by local press over the past week.

*Agence France Presse, December 17, 2003*

Iran's President Mohammad Khatami Wednesday voiced his opposition to the death penalty, adding that he did not even wish for the execution of captive Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein.

*Agence France Presse, December 17, 2003*

While Khatami's ridiculous comment about the death penalty on the same day that a man was publicly hanged may amuse some, to the Iranian people it was just the latest act of double talk in a long list of lies and deceptions by Khatami since becoming the President in 1997. The biggest lie, of course, was Khatami himself, the "moderate reformer." During the week-long anti-government student demonstrations in Tehran last June, the most popular slogan was "Khatami resign, resign."

In another report from Tehran yesterday, AFP quoted Khatami as saying that "Iran was ready to pardon most members of the People's Mujahedeen," the main Iranian opposition group.

Last week, Iraq's Governing Council (IGC) issued a statement, dictated by Tehran, calling for the expulsion of Iranian dissidents by the end of December. And a day later, in tandem with the Iranian regime, a member of the IGC told the AFP that it "is considering handing the People's Mujahedeen back to the Iranian authorities."

Khatami's talk of "amnesty" and "pardon" for members of the Iranian opposition is as preposterous as his "opposition" to the death penalty. Tehran's execution of its political opponents and rights abuses are well documented. Last November, the United Nations condemned the continuing and systematic violations of human rights and the use of torture, inhuman and degrading punishments. According to the U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for the year 2002, "supporters of outlawed political organizations, such as the Mujahedin-e-Khalq organization, were believed to make up a large number of those executed each year" in Iran.

Khatami, along with Iran's former President Rafsanjani and Supreme Leader Khamenei, were all involved in the massacre of the Iranian political prisoners in the summer of 1988. When Khatami speaks of "amnesty," for the Mujahedeen it is like Hitler speaking of mercy for the Jews before sending them to the gas chambers.

Only one thing could explain Khatami's overnight interest in "amnesty" for the Mujahedeen. According to many analysts, "Iran's clerical rulers are nearing the 25th anniversary of their Islamic revolution under greater pressure than ever." As domestic opposition to the regime expands, Tehran desperately needs a way to defuse the situation. The elimination of its "most effective opposition" would be a "significant political and security gain for Iran".

Our administration must send a loud and clear message to Tehran: We will not allow the clerical regime to silence Iranians brave enough to speak out or act against its brutality at home and terrorism abroad. As Americans, we understand the wicked nature of this regime and will not allow thousands of Iranian dissidents to be sent to the gallows in Iran. This would certainly be unethical and would be un-American to say the least.

### **When Iran's "Hanging Judge" is a Big Fan of "Pro-Reform" Khatami**

Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, who as head of Iran's first revolutionary tribunals after the 1979 birth of the Islamic republic sent hundreds of people to the gallows, has died at the age of 76, state TV said...

In a recent interview in the *Kayhan* daily, Khalkhali... regretted that he did not have "enough time to punish all the traitors of the people and the country". He voiced no regrets for his verdicts. "If I had to do it again, I would restart," the judge wrote in his memoirs... He was later politically sidelined, **while supporting pro-reform president Mohammad Khatami.** (*AFP, November 27, 2003*)

### **Executions in Month of December:**

Two Iranian men convicted of murder have been hanged in Iran, with one of the executions taking place in public, press reports said Tuesday. (*AFP, December 16, 2003*)

Four men... have been hanged in front of a crowd of 3,000 people in northern Iran, a report said Saturday. (*AFP, December 13, 2003*)

Three Iranian prisoners convicted of murder were hanged in a jail in Tehran, the *Entekhab* daily reported Thursday. (*AFP, December 11, 2003*)

"Exiles and human rights monitors alleged that many of those executed for criminal offenses, such as narcotics trafficking, actually were political dissidents."

### **State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for year 2002**

### **Man Faces Death Penalty for Car Sticker!**

An Iranian man faces a possible lengthy prison term or even the death penalty for attaching a sticker to the rear window of his car proclaiming "The era of arrogant rulers is over," his lawyer said on Thursday.

Ali Akbar Najafi, 27, was arrested in June in southern Tehran.

"After being kept blindfolded in solitary confinement for 53 days he now suffers psychological problems," his lawyer said. (*Reuters, Dec. 18, 2003*)

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

1201 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004

Tel: 202-661-4675, Fax: 202-318-0402, E-mail: [dispatch@usadIran.org](mailto:dispatch@usadIran.org)

## U.N. Censures Iran

### **U.N. Takes Issue With Iran's Human Rights**

**UNITED NATIONS** - A U.N. General Assembly committee approved a resolution Friday expressing serious concern at human rights violations in Iran.

The resolution expresses serious concern at "the continued deterioration of the situation with regard to freedom of opinion and expression" and at the use of torture and other forms of cruel and inhuman punishment. (*Associated Press, November 21, 2003*)

### **UN Panel Votes To Rebuke Iran On Human Rights**

**UNITED NATIONS** - A key U.N. committee on Friday approved a Canadian-drafted resolution accusing Iran of human rights abuses, including torture, suppression of free speech and discrimination against women and minorities.

Specifically, the Canadian resolution expresses concern at public executions, the use of torture and amputation, the arbitrary sentencing of political dissidents, suppression of press freedom and systematic discrimination against women and girls "in law and in practice." (*Reuters, November 21, 2003*)

## **Iranian Rebels Urge Pentagon Not to Let Iraq Expel Them**

**The New York Times, December 13, 2003**

**WASHINGTON** — Representatives of an Iranian opposition group are appealing to the Pentagon to overrule an order this week by the Iraqi Governing Council that would expel its members from Iraq by the end of the year, possibly to Iran.

The group, the People's Mujahedeen, maintained armed camps in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. It is listed by the United States as a terrorist organization, but it has strong supporters in the Pentagon, who see it as an important pressure point on the Iranian government.

The request was sent on Thursday to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and shown to The New York Times on Friday by someone sympathetic to the group. It is being cast by some in the organization as a last-ditch effort to avoid an expulsion that could put its members into the hands of the Tehran government.

Iran has quietly been seeking to persuade the Bush administration to agree to hand over the group, administration officials said. Tehran has relayed word through intermediaries that it may move in turn to expel members of Al Qaeda that it says it has in custody. But the Bush administration has rejected the idea of such an exchange...

In a letter sent Thursday to Mr. Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz and others, a lawyer for the group argued that the United States had an obligation under the Geneva Convention as the occupying power in Iraq to prevent the organization's members from being expelled.

Any expulsion, particularly to Iran, "would constitute a violation of the laws of war and an egregious breach of international human rights law," said the letter from Marc Hezelin, a Swiss lawyer representing the group.

Iran has hailed the decision to expel the group by the end of the year. The order did not specify a destination, but the Iranian statement suggested that Tehran believed that it would be given custody of the fighters...

## **Iran opposition group warns US that expulsion would be a war crime**

**NICOSIA** - Iran's opposition People's Mujahedeen group said Friday it had told the US authorities that any attempt by Iraq's US-controlled Governing Council to expel thousands of its members to Iran would be a war crime for which Washington would be responsible.

Earlier this week the Governing Council said it planned to expel the Mujahedeen, whom it accused of terrorism, by December 31. On Thursday a member of the council said Iraq's interim rulers are considering handing them over to the very Iranian authorities they have been fighting to overthrow.

A statement issued by the Mujahedeen also said the handing over of the Mujahedeen to the Islamic republic "would be a war crime and a crime against humanity."

The statement also said deportation would violate an international treaty binding states not to "expel, return or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture."

A Mujahedeen official said the (IGC's) move showed Iran was exerting a malevolent influence on the Governing Council, 24 of whose 25 members had recently visited Tehran.

"As long as the fundamentalist regime remains in power in Iran, democracy in Iraq is an illusion," he said.

The official also noted that "quite a few members" of the Mujahedeen in Camp Ashraf had US or other citizenship and families living in the United States and elsewhere in the West. (*Agence France Presse, December 12, 2003*)