



Secretary-general's Message on the Arrival of New Year and Nawroz Celebrations

On behalf of all courageous Democrats as well as members of Political Bureau and Central Committee, I feel so honoured to congratulate you

and all adherents and adorers of Norooz across the world on the occasion of the New Year and the nature's resurrection. In a considerable number of countries of the Middle East and the Near

East, Nawroz, this ancient national celebration of the Kurds and other Iranian peoples, has become as one of the official days of festivity.  Page 2

Islamic Republic's records in regards to human rights is still murky


In February of this year, Maurice Capiturne who has been scrutinizing the situation of human rights in Iran for 7 years, publicized his report for 2001 in this regard. Mr. Capiturne who has been banned to visit this country for 6 years, has declared in his report that the human rights situation in Iran is still disappointing.  Page 12

Iran still the leading violator of human rights, state department reports

The State Department published its annual human rights report. Collin Paul, the US Secretary of State affirmed in this regard "Experiences have proven that the countries who highly respect human rights, are the most stable and the most successful countries. In fact, respecting human rights for peace and sustainable economic development is vital."

The Secretary of State in this report has written on the extent of human rights violations in various countries: in the year 2001 human rights violations for instance, torture, continued, and approximately 60 people have been executed. Disappearances, extensive uses of torture, sexual harassment, stoning and lashing are among the barbaric treatment are still continued.

We support any peace that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people

The Oslo Agreement, despite all of its shortcomings, revived the hopes of peace in the hearts of Palestinian people. The joys of these hopeful moments could have been found in the celebrations of the Palestinian people of the occupied.  Page 10

Meeting of the SIMEC Working Group on the Kurdish Question, Brussels, 22 February 2002

The SIMEC Working Group on the Kurdish Question met in Brussels on 22 February, hosted by the Belgian Socialist Party, PS, and chaired by Conny Fredriksson, of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, SAP, and Chair of the Working Group. Participants gathered to review the current situation of Kurdish people in Iran, Iraq and Turkey and a report from the delegation to Northern Iraq, which took place last year. The agenda also included the future activities of the Working Group. Khosrow Abdullahi and Adel Alyasi represented PDKI in this IS meeting on the Kurds.

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Noam Chomsky's expression of concerns over the lack of freedom of expression in Turkey

Noam Chomsky, American philosopher following the jailing of his latest books publishers in Turkey, criticized the lack of freedom of expression in Turkey in a letter to the United Nations. "Hurriyet" Turkish daily reported: Chomsky after being informed of the detainment of the publishers of his book stated that he would be present in the trial of the detainees in Istanbul. Turkish Security Court in Istanbul will try "Fateh Tash" the director of Aram Publishing Centre in Turkey for publishing the book "American Interventions". Chomsky in a section of his book has criticized the policies of the Turkish government in regards to the Kurds in this country.

Nawroz, ancient national celebration of the Kurds and other Iranian peoples



...Besides, thanks to the importance applied to this joyful day by the Kurds and all other Iranians across the globe, Nawroz has come to be a well-known day for almost all over the world. Accordingly, wherever Nawroz celebrations are observed, especially in the countries where Kurdish and other Iranian compatriots reside, hundreds, even thousands of citizens of the host countries take part in the festivities, thus demonstrating their solidarity with the devotees of Nawroz.

The high importance attached to Nawroz by our people's scions and the glorious celebrations held across the world on this day demonstrate the fact that Nawroz has come to be regarded as one of the most important symbols of light prevailing over darkness, joy and happiness over anguish and distress, abundance and affluence over famine and dearth; in short, it is an emblem of the victory of good over evil. No doubt, it is for this very reason that the ruling gangs of the regime, from the very first days when they usurped power in Iran up till now, have with all their wicked power fought against Nawroz so as to diminish its significance, and – if possible – hinder the celebrations.

It is precisely from this discontentment stance and the inhuman view point that the authorities of the regime - under the pretext of the concurrence of Nawroz and the Mourning Days of *Muharram* – have called on the Iranians to refrain from observing this ancient national holiday so as to “uphold national solidarity”!

Despite our utmost respect for *Imam Hussein* and other martyrs of *Karbala*, it is most surprising to see that the authorities misusing the conjunction of Nawroz and the Mourning Days in order to make Iranians refrain from practicing this age-old and long-lasting national day, trying at the same time to justify such an inappropriate claim under the cloak of “national solidarity”!

Accordingly, just for the sake of solidarity, all Iranians are sincerely expected – while paying full respect to their *Shi'ite* compatriots' religious faith – to celebrate the Nawroz of this year in a more glorious way than the previous years, because what is shared and valued most by all Iranians has for ages been the national celebrations of Nawroz; therefore, upholding it, is sure to be regarded as a symbol of national solidarity – not the mourning days of *Muharram* which is solely practiced by the followers of the Shiite religious sect.

Valiant Compatriots! With the beginning of 1381 of the solar year, the Iranians have left behind a year overflowing with stress and strain as well as devotion and self-sacrifice in their struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights. They will begin a year of glorious life and struggle, a year which – all factors taken into consideration – is going to be one full of more intensified endeavor, more eventful, and at the same time more fruitful as well.

In the year 1380, the Islamic regime didn't abandon its rough policy of suppressing freedom, in contrary, striving with all in its power, imprisoned the freedom-loving activists, killing many and secretly eliminating many others. Still those who gloriously made it to victory were no one other than you, our courageous compatriots.

On the threshold of Nawroz and the New Year's celebrations, the main instigators of the regime, under the pressure of public opinion in Iran and abroad, had to back out in a number of arenas, particularly, letting out on bail a group of discontented intellectuals. Fortunately, though, not only such retreats didn't have any propitious effects among Iranians or internationally, but it also discredited the despots ever more. The heavy bails taken from politico-religious prisoners are undeniable factors demonstrating boundless fear among the authorities resulting from the intensifying struggle of the people and the dark destiny awaiting the regime.

Over the past two months or so, the ring-leaders of the

establishment, especially those among the so-called reformists, have been trying to divert public attention to some trivial matters, their aim to use the imagined danger of an external invasion as a pretext to justify suppression against liberals and freedom activists. The seditious and unbridled behaviour of the leaders of Islamic regime have, more than ever before, resulted in the regime's isolation internationally, a fact that has added to its more and more alienation among various layers of the Iranian society. It is on us Iranians, to confront the regime's hardliners in their conspiracies and seditious activities in any way possible, and do not let them drug our country into yet another devastating war just to prolong the life-span of their control over our homeland. It goes without saying that the one and only way to full-fledged victory is solely attainable through our ever more solidarity and unremitting struggle to prevail over the regime in Iran, thus averting any wicked result emanating from the protraction of the hegemony of this regime over the destiny of Iran and Iranians.

The stance adopted by the authorities in connection with the non-violent movement of teachers across the country, and the hostility shown by the former, particularly the ferocious onslaught made by the oppressive armed forces of the regime aimed at scaring off other strata of the society from supporting these industrious, honourable public servants, clearly demonstrate the fact that the authorities – under the influence of their animosity against the aspirations and ideals of the Iranians – are breaking their necks to propagate the seed of discord among different sections of the citizens, and then suppress one group after another. Consequently, it is up to all of us to be mindful of our enemies' conspiracies, never giving them any chance to cause dissention or disaccord among the companions of freedom and liberty. Nobody can disregard the reality that there are various stratas of the people in Iran whose interests differ in certain aspects. Besides, we shouldn't forget that struggle against any form of

national, social, class, cultural and racial oppression is to be regarded as quite justified. Therefore, we are of the opinion that under the existing circumstances, a most comprehensive front has to be materialized so that the regime of Islamic Republic can be stamped out for good. At present, realization of freedom and democracy are the common ideals of all Iranians. Consequently, creation of an all-inclusive front for such a common end is an urgent necessity, with no efforts spared for its solidarity.

Cultured Journalists and Progressive Writers and Scholars!

Over the past years, you have really demonstrated that you have courageously risen against reaction and tyranny far more decisively than other sectors of the Iranian society, and that you have made use of your pens as most decisive weaponry to strike down anti-freedom and anti-democratic establishment and the enemies of social justice. Consequently, all Iranians are indebted to you for your admirable bravery and self-sacrifice. We, as the Kurdish political activists, have utmost respect for your exalted morale and heroic stance, always holding you in high regard. The sapling that has been nurtured with the blood of your most cultured colleagues, such as *Saied Sirjanni, Muhammad Mukhtarri, Muhammad-Ja'far Pooyendeh*, and the likes, is on the verge of bearing fruit. At this stage, too, freedom-lovers of Iran have confidently put their faith in you, the journalists and writers who must take the leading role as the vanguards in this glorious struggle.

Striving Women and Youth of Kurdistan and Iran all-over!

In the glorious struggle of the Iranians to put an end to dictatorship, you have clearly demonstrated to be highly vigorous and competent. In all and every arena of fighting against tyranny, from polling stations to demonstrations held across Iran and the struggle put up by the university

students and etc... the signs of your prowess and heroism are strikingly apparent. Irrespective of the fact that the reactionary and monopolist bands on the one hand, and the incapacity and powerlessness of those whom you brought to power, on the other, blocked up the way to almost all exigent reforms, it was only you who – with your expedient, vigilant votes on several occasions of election – valiantly communicated to the tyrants in our homeland your own message and the will of all Iranians, making the despots know damn well that you have set your heart on reform and that you are true lovers of freedom and irreconcilable foes of dictatorship. Now that it has become quite clear to every one that this regime is utterly bereft of any capacity for reform, and

The reactionary and monopolist bands on the one hand, and the incapacity and powerlessness of those whom you brought to power, on the other, blocked up the way to almost all exigent reforms,

that the so-called reformists, too, are almost of the same brand as monopolists, it is high time for us all to get prepared for the final combat and do our utmost to find a decisive solution. Accordingly, you should relentlessly head towards unity, array your lines, raise explicit slogans, throw off hesitancy and caution, as it is time for all of us to confidently march forward in the reassuring brightness of the existing realities.

Fearless and awakened students of Tehran and other Iranian universities!

In the history of Iranian peoples' struggle for freedom and democracy, students, and universities as a whole, have always acted as vanguards and pioneers. It was not just an accident when the leaders of the newly established Islamic Republic violently locked up the doors of universities across Iran so as to bring about a ring of obedient underlings at universities and save itself from the danger of contending with the dauntless forces. But contrary to their expectations, you courageously demonstrated in plain sight to the

peoples across the world that you have remained – and will remain – faithful to the ideals of your predecessors, and that university students are the kind of forces who can never be made – under any circumstances- to bow their heads before the ruling despots. The uprising staged by Tehran University students in July 1999 (*Tir 1378*) and the solidarity shown by other universities that terrified the ring-leaders of the double-ignorance regime, did clarify this fact to friends and foes. You and every foreign observer saw how the Islamic regime in its entirety hypocritically dealt with the developments of the July 18, and in what brutal a manner locked up innocent noble students in detention centres. Having embraced the violators of university sanctuaries, the

ruling junta vigorously expressed appreciation for the cruel acts committed, divided awards and generous rewards among the perpetrators of those crimes and promoted them all as well. There are still a considerable number of the most

valiant colleagues of yours in the jails of the whip-hand worshippers who are moaning under heavy, unjust sentences imposed upon them. Consequently, all Iranian freedom-lovers, including the Kurds, are expecting of you to relentlessly continue your sacred course of struggle more decisively than before so that with the co-operation among you and all the liberal organizations, not only can we release the jailed students, but instead of a prison so vast as Iran constructed by the despots for freedom-lovers, we can renovate a free, flourishing homeland for all the gracious Iranians.

Valiant People of Kurdistan!

The history of the Iranian peoples' liberation movement bears witness to the fact that in the struggle for freedom and democracy, you have always been at the fore-front, scarifying for your part a great number of your most distinguished scions for this end. Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, PDKI too, takes pride in the fact that under any circumstances, it

has always been supported by you, enjoying your all-inclusive backing. At present, too, when the history of liberation movement of the Kurdish people – alongside that of all Iranians – is passing through a most crucial stage, PDKI, far more than ever before, is counting on your unsparing generous support.

The main reason that different strata of the Kurdish people wholeheartedly support PDKI lies in the fact that our Party has always chosen its political mottoes and course of action in such a way as to conform with existing realities, with its goal always being just a full-sized mirror reflecting your aspirations – you the honourable people of Kurdistan. With a sense filled with truthfulness, I should say that you can – and must – as always have confidence in PDKI. At present, and in future, just as in the past, our Party chooses its mottoes compatible with the existing realities in Kurdistan, Iran and the region, as well as in accord with international circumstances, being, at the same time, ready for self-sacrifice and immolation.

Accordingly, let's renew our long-lasting pledges, ever more consolidate relationship between the Party and the Kurdish community in Kurdistan, amass together around Democratic Party's banner and slogans, and far from any self-praising, feel quite assured that the most reliable way to fulfill your aspirations and achieve your goals is solely the course followed by Democrats. Our Party expectantly depends on your financial as well as moral assistance, and relying at the same time on the boundless power of yours, approaches the final stage of victory.

The Honourable Peoples of Iran! You are perfectly aware that the Islamic Republic has presented you with nothing other than war and bloodshed, death and destruction, and jailing and torturing of your loved-ones. Accordingly, it is now crystal clear to all that as long as this regime

remains in power, the whole situation in Iran will never take a turn for the better. So, let's all hand in hand and in union rise up to our full strength to shake up the foundation of this reactionary regime. The rabble-rousers of the regime, making use of "divide and conquer" policy, went to all extremes so as to make you suspicious of the Kurdish people in Iran. You should be fully aware that the Kurds in Iran have always been your most reliable ally in fighting against oppression and dictatorship, and never pursuing any end other than exaltation, freedom and the advancement of Iran.

In this auspicious opportunity we sincerely assure all those who have given their heart to the freedom and independence of Iran that the demands made by the Kurdish people and PDKI have never gone – and will never go – beyond the borders of Iran.

Freedom-foes who have always harboured enmity against the brave people of Kurdistan, as much as they have had in their wicked power, have prevented you to hear the voice of this gallant people and that of their vanguard Party, PDKI, and have always tried to confront you with a divergent image of this people's demands. As a result, in this auspicious opportunity we sincerely assure all those who have given their heart to the freedom and independence of Iran that the demands made by the Kurdish people and PDKI have never gone – and will never go – beyond the borders of Iran. This valorous people demand nothing more than equal rights for all Iranians as well as official recognition of national identities of different peoples of our homeland. PDKI has always attached a great importance to the solidarity of the Iranian peoples, as well as appraising the joint struggle of these peoples as the greatest guarantor for the victory of the general struggle throughout Iran.

Iranian Political Opposition Groups! You are certainly fully aware

of the fact that the only factor which has made it possible for the cleric regime to remain in power has been neither its dwindling social base nor foreign support and not even its oppressive military or police forces, but it has only been discord and lack of any common platform, especially among the "outlawed" opposition groups. And this is despite the fact that patriotic forces of Iran have common goals. Consequently, our responsibility regarding the destiny of Iran and Iranians calls for our agreement on a minimum joint platform aimed at changing the regime in Iran and attaining our fundamental

common end, thus extorting this weak point from the hands of the rulers, a point which has so far helped to prop up the regime of tyranny. Iran is a great country, so the souls of all Iranians must be as great as our homeland.

In so great a country as Iran, all our compatriots can live side by side in peace and harmony, enjoying equal rights and freedoms. Securing such rights and freedoms for all Iranians is the one and only way, which will pave the course of progress and prosperity for our homeland. PDKI, for its part, is absolutely ready for dialogue and cooperation with any patriotic Iranian force that genuinely believes in freedom and democracy.

Honorable Compatriots! Dear People of Kurdistan! In the political horizon of the first day of our New Year, 1381, rosy rays of victory are clearly visible. In order to have our homeland drenched in the invigorating light of these rays for ever, and the sun of freedom never disappearing from the sky of Iran, our unity and preparedness is utterly necessary for an unremitting struggle to put an end to the life of dictatorship and for the achievement of this admirable end. Thanks to the mighty, immutable will power of our compatriots, this sacred goal is sure to be attainable. ■

Mykonos Affairs, a historical disgrace for the regime of Islamic Republic

Five years ago, on April 10, 1997, the final verdict of the Berlin Court known as the Mykonos Trial was delivered. In this trial that was set up for investigating the murder case of Dr. Sadegh Sharafkandi (Secretary-general of PDKI) and three of his associates, after 274 sessions and investigating the case, aside from the convicted who were given life sentences and other minor sentences, the highest ranking officials of the Islamic Republic were listed as the order-givers of this terrorist act. The unparalleled endeavors of the prosecutors, judges and other German judicial administrators aimed at revealing the true nature of Islamic republic as a terrorist instigator, deserves respect and appreciation. The Berlin Court with delivering a verdict of such historical significance, despite revealing the truth, in reality defended its independence, and proved that it would not back off from its decision despite pressures from the Bonn and Tehran governments. With the delivering of such a courageous verdict, and with the request of organizations and parties, the German government and other European governments, condemned the terrorism of Islamic Republic and in support of it recalled their ambassadors. After a long period of conducting the policy of terror and killing of opponents by the regime abroad, and after the Western countries turning of blind eye on many cases of Islamic Republic's terrorist activities, this decision was a noticeable change in the position of western countries in regards to the policies of terrorizing opponents and also exporting terrorism by the Iranian regime that in fact the deliberate step of the Berlin court judges became the building blocks for such a posture by these countries; furthermore, this time



justice was not entirely surrendered to "state interest". The delivering of such a verdict despite the fact that it became a historical disgrace for Islamic Republic, it also attested the years long claims of the organizations, and outspoken and independent personalities on the nature of Islamic Republic. It also revealed that we cannot expect from a regime that violates the most fundamental social and political rights of the people to respect international rules and norms. On the other hand, the decision of Mykonos trial proved this reality to the regime's opposition - that in fact

had pursued a common policy in this regard - that if they take advantage of such experiences, the grounds for unification and alliance in struggle for other common goals and objectives will be paved, and this itself will result in practical cooperation in many fronts. It also came to be known for the people of Iran the more widespread aggression of the terrorist acts of the regime becomes, the more the regime's lack of concerns for the respect and dignity of the people of Iran at

international stage, and in fact it is the people of Iran who at the end of the tunnel as a result of Islamic republic's terrorism will suffer and lose the most.

On the fifth anniversary of the delivery of Mykonos trial, we wish to express our feeling of immense gratitude to the prosecutors and the German judicial system as whole who did not allow the low to come second to diplomatic interests, and also proved to the despots that justice and human rights could not be sacrificed for economic and commercial interests, and the conductors and directors of such barbaric acts cannot wonder in western capitals while their hands are soaked in the blood of freedom activists of this great country.

Regarding the remarks made by Shahroudi, the head of the Islamic Republic's Judiciary

Recently, one of the Tehran dailies exposed that "Muhammad Shahroudi" one of the top agents of the hardliners, and the head of the judicial apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran has criticized the handling of judicial matters of the country in a gathering of the judges and judicial cadres of the country in early spring and has expressed his concerns to the deficiencies of the judicial system and all the injustices inflicted upon the people of our country by this apparatus. Shahroudi who speaks of justice and handling of the judicial issues based on the rule of law as one of the most important obligations, in this meeting harshly criticized the situation of the judicial system of Iran under the Islamic Republic and considered it as primitive and even less advanced than the third world and stated that "The prolongment of a divorce case in such a way that takes 20 years, is intolerable; 20 years for the determination of a common life is not taking care of, it is a waste of life." Shahroudi also referred to an instance of a "custody" that lasted 21 years and

stated "People are about to burn out and suffocate, but unheard. Even the necks of the innocents are not safe from the thorn of the judicial apparatus." He in his speech referred to the widespread existence of torture and methods of forceful confessions from the detainees in intelligence and security offices and revealed that "By the time people reach a judge, they witness the other world".

The fact that the people of Iran are outraged by the judicial officials and the administrators of the judiciaries of the country is not hidden to any one because these are the problems that thousands of the people of our country face and feel in their souls and bones daily. However, the remarks made by Shahroudi, the head of the judiciary and his criticisms of a system that himself is in charge, deserves a more deliberate scrutiny and investigation that such criticisms of the judicial or any other institutions, even of a milder nature would have resulted in the detainment of journalists and even the member of parliaments. But Shahroudi has always rejected the truth of their claims.

Aside from the disgust and annoy of the people of our country from the regime of Islamic Republic of Iran, if the western countries and international organizations reevaluate the nature of this regime solely according to the criticisms and comments of the high-ranking spokespersons and authorities of the regime, they will come across many realities. Because the head of the executive branch who is Khatami, has complained about powerlessness and inability! Shahroudi too criticizes the conditions of the judicial system in such a way! The guardian council and other imposed institutions overlook the power of the lawmaking, Majlis, approved by the people's representatives, and their oppositions and criticism do not get anywhere. The security system also admits that its men were involved in the "chain killings".

Do these comments and evidences really not reveal that under what authority the people of Iran live and face what adversities and deprivations? ■

I will not sit on this bloody table

"Dialogue of civilizations in a country that has left the outcome of the killings of activists and writers in a limbo, is not appropriately rewarding"

On February 26, 2002, a rumor was publicized regarding the invitation of Islamic Republic from the Iranian writers and a number of foreign writers for participating in a gathering in Kish Island for discussing and exchanging views on the subject of dialogue of civilizations. Keeping in mind that the regime of Islamic Republic of Iran does not really believe in the dialogue of civilization and only attempts to utilize it as a state propaganda, we draw the attention of our readers to the response letter of one of our distinguished Iranian writer, Ali-Ashrafe Darwishian listed as one of the attendants of the gathering published in the Iranian daily "Hayat-e-No". As we see, Mr. Darwishian has rejected their invitation in this letter:

Along with my sincere gratitude, in 531 issue, Tuesday 26 February 2002, a news under "Kish Island, the host of world wide writers" was published that my name was also appeared along the list of the invited. I request that according to press norms, my response to be also posted in the same column. I, Ali-Ashrafe Darwishian, not only decline this invitation, but I also extremely oppose such a gathering and boycott it because sitting on this table while the majority of the people of my homeland are struggling day and night to find a loaf of bread is treachery. The dialogue of civilization in a country that the faith of the cases of the killings of freedom activists and writers (Muhammad Mokhtari, Muhammad Jafare Puyande and etc...) still remains

mysterious; students are still convicted unfairly; journalists and brave writers are detained and others are called to appear in various suppression centres; outstanding instructors and awarded students are fleeing the country; the teachers are heavily suppressed while civil rights are violated. This gathering is somewhat similar to the Shiraz art festival during the previous government. In the list of the invited no noticeable foreign personalities are visible, this is also an indication that they do not value this gathering. In my opinion, first dialogue must start within a civilization itself, then between civilizations, but we witness that huge expenses are made and the drum is beating. I will not sit on this bloody table. ■

“Immoral requests deserve no attention”

The farewell letter of an executed Kurdish prisoner in the hands of Islamic Republic authorities

The Islamic regime of Iran executed a former Kurdish activist on January 24, 2002. Karim Toujali was executed at the backyard of the Islamic Intelligence Office in the city of Mahabad in the province of West Azerbaijan, Iran.

Karim Toujali was born in 1968 in the village of *Toujal* located in the suburb of *Sardasht* in West Azerbaijan, Iran. He established political ties with the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) in 1982. Karim Toujali later joined the *PISHMERGE* forces, Kurdish Freedom Fighters, of the PDKI in 1986. Karim Toujali resigned from his political career in 1996. Therefore, to settle down, he headed to Turkey to find refuge in a third country with the help of United Nations in Ankara, a traditional way of finding a new home in Europe, North America or Australia. Karim Toujali waited for two years to be transferred to a third country by the UN; it did not happen. He was captured by the Turkish police and was handed over to the Islamic regime of Iran in 1998, contrary to all international measures and agreements.

According to the official publication of the PDKI, “Kurdistan”, Karim Toujali was interrogated violently and tortured for almost 4 years. Karim Toujali was executed on Thursday morning, January 24, 2002, and the Islamic regime of Iran refrained from handing over his body to his family for 3 days.

Karim Toujali wrote to one of his friends, another

Kurdish activist, to reassure him that the political life must go on with no hesitation. What follows is the exact translation of Karim Toujali’s final farewell written in Kurdish.

I had been thinking about writing a letter for a while so I could inform you about my conditions. I know that you must have been worried about the position that I would take under interrogation after my capture. Trust me, I had neither any time nor I had been allowed to have any visits until just recent few days. In this fearful situation and under these horrible circumstances I will write these few lines and send it to the world outside.

First, I would like to tell you about how I was captured: I was asked by the UNHCR in Turkey to go to Ankara in February 1998. With the intention of resolving any departure problem from Turkey and sending me to a third country, I was taken by the UNHCR to the Turkish Central Security Office in Ankara. The UNHCR official introduced me to the Turkish police, and I was instructed by the UNHCR to leave my address with the police. I was told to be present at the police station upon receiving order from the Turkish police.

One month later, I was summoned to appear before the Turkish police. I took precautionary measures and contacted the UNHCR by telephone to prevent any surprises. They reassured me that my situation had been looked

after and I should go to the police station without any worries about my case in Turkey.

I was hand-cuffed immediately upon my arrival at the police station. When I opened my eyes I was at the Turkey-Iran border. Attempts of pleading and bribing were not effective in making the Turkish police change their mind of deporting me back to Iran. Therefore I was handed over to Iranian intelligence squads who had been awaiting my arrival on the other side of the border.

I was taken to the Security and Intelligence office in the city of Khoy, in the province of West Azerbaijan, Iran. After a few days of interrogation in Khoy, I was then taken to the Central Office of Intelligence for the Province. There, *Haji Ghodret* told me that the intelligence office had been looking for me for one year. I was told that they were finally very happy to have me at their hands. *Haji Ghodret* also said that only my cooperation with Intelligence Officers would save my life. [*Haji Ghodret*, meaning Mr. Power, is a secret nickname for a popular Iranian Regime Interrogator].

Things were going well initially. I knew their initial good behavior was a deceptive tactic to get information and a confession out of me. I did not tell them any thing that they wanted to hear. I did not reveal any information, and this made them increasingly furious as time went on.

The “good times” ended after a few days of intensive but “pleasant” interrogation and

came generously the “holy blessings”. I do not want to go into the details of the “Holy blessings”, neither do I want to make any bones about it. I do, however, want to tell you that I was taken to a room in a basement that resembled an operating room. The room was equipped with all kinds of torturing devices and a projector. I was put under the powerful projector, then electric currents were sent to my head many times. I would then be taken out semi-consciousness. The interrogators wanted any information about other PDKI activists. They tried very hard but they did not succeed; I did not tell them anything.

I was then taken to the city of Sardasht. After two months of intense interrogations, torture, beating and physical assault I was then taken to the detention center of the Intelligence Central Office in the city of Mahabad.

With the exception of the Intelligence officers, nobody was aware that I was held in the detention center in Sardasht. The intelligence officers - with their hidden agenda- tried very hard to deviate me from my beliefs. They wanted me to digress my Party and start giving them information about the PDKI activists. On the other hand, I had enough political experience to tolerate the torture and to fight for my beliefs to dismay the Intelligence officers; therefore, their search to find any information about the Kurdish activists from me had failed.

The interrogators asked me to denounce the Kurdish cause publicly at the following places:

- State-run television stations

- To speak publicly at a Friday prayer in the city of Sardasht
- To speak for the local counselors and elders from the Belfet region in a mosque in the village of Mirabad.

I refused to do them all. Then came their last request. The interrogators asked me to cooperate with their secret service. They asked me to “work” on some friends close to me as an infiltrator so they could provide the secret service with information on the Kurdish activists in the future. I should tell you that with any kind of cooperation, outwardly, they were promising my freedom and significant financial rewards. I was very aware of their tactics and intentions; therefore, I did not give much consideration to what they were saying. Immoral request deserves no attention; don’t you think so?

My position, a constant refusal to cooperate, made them very angry and they vowed to sentence me to death. I was then taken to the detention center in the city of Mahabad, where I appeared in an Islamic revolutionary court with no defense lawyer. The ceremonial court, which lasted a few days, sentenced me to death.

Although I have been sentenced to death, I am proud of the fact that no Kurdish activists have found themselves in the dark prison cells of the Islamic regime because of me. That is why I would like to reassure you that I did not give them any information about any Kurdish activists, which might lead to their capture. I must say that the interrogators tortured me and pressured me severely to give them information about other Kurdish activists.

How could I? Irrespective of my mutual ties to PDKI, it is my ethical and moral responsibility to remain committed to all the Kurdish activists. In order to save other Kurdish activists I am, and always will be, ready to be hung in order to preserve my ethical and moral commitment to my comrades.

Off course, *Mirzaie* [a secret nickname for a local spy] testified and disclosed some information in the detention center. That is why it is possible that he may have said something to disgrace my name. Although the interrogators had a lot of specific information about my political activities, I did not confess to any and refused them all.

I would like to reassure all of you that I have not revealed any information about any Kurdish activists. To protect its own interest, the Islamic regime, I suspect, may have made a huge propaganda out of all of this. I am asking that you would reassure everyone who might have had some concerns about themselves that I have revealed no information on anybody.

At the end, I must say that this might be the right time to say farewell, and ask for your forgiveness. I hope that you would forgive me. I, on my part, forgive all of you. Good-bye everyone. ■

This is the exact translation of the letter that Karim Toujali wrote 3 years ago.

The Kurdish letter was published in “Kurdistan” #334, the official publication of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Torture, Imminent Executions

Amnesty International Press Release:

12 Kurdish minority rights activists, including 11 supporters of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) and one supporter of Komala, the Kurdistan section of the Communist Party of Iran, and 5 Arab minority rights activists have been sentenced to death.

Seventeen Kurdish and Arab activists, imprisoned for opposing the Iranian government, have all been sentenced to death and are reportedly at risk of imminent execution. One former Kurdish activist and refugee, who was forcibly returned from Turkey in 1998, and five members of Iran's Arab minority, have already been hanged, and it is feared that more executions may soon follow.

Five Arab men were hanged in Ahwaz, Southwestern Iran, on 27 January. They had been sentenced to death for arms smuggling. According to Ahwazian Arab People's Democratic and Popular Front, an organization based in Europe, another five Arab men have recently been condemned to death in Ahwaz, apparently for opposing the government's policy of land seizures in the region. They are named as Fadhil Muqaddam, Rahim Sawari, Amir Sa'idi, Hashem Bawi and 'Abbas Sherhani.

A former member of the illegal Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), Karim Tujali, was executed on 24 January at Mahabad prison, in western Iran (see further information on EXTRA 97/98, MDE 13/0002/2002, 5 February 2002). He had reportedly been held for three years in Orumieh prison, in West Azerbaijan province, northwestern Iran, before he was executed. According to PDKI, 10 other prisoners formerly associated with the Party are now at risk.

Three of them – Muhammad Sharverani, Khaled Faraidouni and Nader Afani – are believed to be detained in Mahabad prison. All three have been sentenced to death, Muhammad Sharverani in 1998 and the others in 2000.

Three others are believed to be held in Orumieh. They are 27-years-old Hasan Mahmoudi, who was reportedly arrested in 1997 or 1998; 50-year-old Khaled Shoghi, who was reportedly forcibly returned from Turkey and arrested in 1997, and has reportedly been tortured; and Kheder Viesi, who was sentenced to death in 1998.

Saleh Goudarzi, who was sentenced to death in 1999, is reportedly detained in Sanandaj prison. Jalil Zeva'I was 18 when he was arrested in 1993. He has been in prison ever since, and he has reportedly been tortured. Rasul Abdollahpour was reportedly arrested in 1994, and Anvar Alizadeh in 1997. Mohammad Esmailzadeh or Esmaili, aged 35, was reportedly arrested in 1996 or 1997. There is an unconfirmed report that he suffered a leg injury some time after he was imprisoned, which still causes him pain, and for which he has been denied any medical treatment.

Also at risk is Muhammad Mehdi Zaliye, aged 32, who was reportedly a supporter of the Kurdistan Province section of the Communist Party of Iran, known as Komala. He was reportedly arrested in 1992, and is alleged to

be suffering from "neurological problems caused by brutal mental and physical torture".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Kurds and Arabs are two of Iran's ethnic minority groups. The Arab population is mainly in southwestern Iran, and the Kurds in the province of Kurdistan and neighbouring provinces bordering Iraq and Turkey.

The PDKI seeks autonomy for Iranian Kurdistan and states that it "rejects all acts of terrorism and...planting bombs in public places."

The Ahwazian Arab People's Democratic and Popular Front wrote to Amnesty International in August 2001 stating that it is "committed to non-violent opposition" to government policies in the Ahwaz region.

Amnesty International recorded 139 executions in Iran in 2001, although the true figure may be much higher. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 6 of which states that "In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes." Under Article 14 (5), those convicted have the right to appeal against death sentences. ■

Security in an Israel without the recognition of the democratic rights of the Palestinian people is impossible!

Continued from page 1

These hopes eventually faded by the consecutive Israeli violations and its failure to recognize the legitimate rights of Palestinian people. Israel



without considering the lessons of more than half a century struggle of the Palestinian people, attempted to dictate the ruler-ruled, colonial relationship on the Palestinian people on the negotiating table. However, when the Palestinian leaders, despite all the concessions and appeasements resisted these humiliations, Israel started the military assaults on the ground and in the air to pursue its belligerent goals.

Ariel Sharon, with the slogan of security for Israel, under the rubbles of September 11 event, started another round of Palestinian massacres. However, Sharon with the extermination of Palestinians did not only failed to bring security for Israel, but in contrary he brought further insecurity to the people of Israel.

We believe that security in an Israel without the recognition of the democratic

rights of the Palestinian people is impossible!

We invite all the world freedom activists to peace; a just peace that recognizes the blatant rights of the Palestinian

people!
Peace and security:
With the unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories!

With the recognition of the right of self-determination by the Palestinians!

With the creation of a national Palestinian state!

We demand the implementation of the United Nations Resolutions 194, 242, 338, and also the latest UN Resolution 1397 that clearly recognizes the right of the creation of a Palestinian state.

The Committee of Practical Front for Democracy in Iran

Composed of:

Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Iranian People's Devotees Organization

Revolutionary Workers Organization of Iran



Kurds, still the victims of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war

Appeal to the UNHCR on the conditions of Iranian Kurds returning Iran from refugee camps

Dear Ms. Robinson:

The Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) is deeply concerned about the continuous violations of human rights in Iran. In the past month, the Iranian authorities have arrested a number of Iranian Kurds who have been attempting to return to their homeland, 'Iranian Kurdistan' from the refugee camp (Al-Tash) in Iraq, after a long time.

Your Excellency, Kurds have been the victims of oppression in their homeland for many years. It is no longer a hidden truth to the world that Iran has been savagely oppressing the Kurds. According to the international human rights organizations, Iran has the world's most heinous human rights record.

In the face of all these injustice, a number of Kurds have been arrested over the past month accused of living in the camps in a foreign country, Iraq. Numerous journalists, writers and publishers have been imprisoned for expressing their thoughts.

In the beginning of the Revolution in Iran, the Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini declared a holy war against the Kurdish people in



Iran. As a result many Iranian Kurds had no choice but to escape their homeland and take refuge in Iraq. However, after such a long period, these displaced people have decided to go back to their homeland under the UN Refugee Convention.

The names listed bellow are those who have returned home and now face unpredicted destiny in the hands of the Iranian authorities. There is no doubt, the Iranian regime is engaging itself in such barbaric acts to these unfortunate people to prevent the return of the rest of the refugees who have been preparing to return home. The Refugee Convention, which was formally adopted on 28 July

1951, forms the foundation of the modern international legal system designed to protect people who have to flee their countries because of persecution or conflict. It is widely credited with saving countless lives and ensuring means of escape for people facing imprisonment, torture, execution and other human rights abuses for reasons such as their political or religious beliefs, or membership in a particular ethnic or social group.

We urge the UNHCR to find available information about the Iranian Kurdish refugees imprisoned in the **Dizel-Abad** prison in the city of **Kerman shah** immediately following their arrest.

On behalf of PDKI, we are writing to request for your help. Given the current severe living environment in Iran particularly in Kurdistan, we call upon the UNHCR and the international community to act immediately to save the lives of these Kurdish prisoners in Iran.

We are confident that you and your administration will work sympathetically towards all the oppressed nations including the Kurds.

Sincerely,
Sadi Abdi

Member of International
Relations Bureau of PDKI
Vancouver, Canada

List of the Kurdish prisoners that have been sentenced to Death Penalty and long term in jail by the Islamic regime of Iran:

	<u>Name & Last name</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Date Arrested</u>	<u>Verdict</u>	<u>Place of Prison</u>
1	Mehmmod Rehmani	Taze-awa	2002	15 years in prison	Kerman shah
2	Abdullmajid Rehmani	Taze-awa	2002	5 years in prison	Kerman shah
3	Khalid Rehmani	Kizeh	2002	Death Sentence	Kerman shah
4	Salih Mehmmodi	Taze-awa	2002	15 years in prison	Kerman shah
5	Hebib Nadri	Taze-awa	2002	15 years in prison	Kerman shah
6	Anaiet Baweis	Taze-awa	2002	2 years in prison	Kerman shah
7	Aziz Sifollah	Taze-awa	2002	15 years in prison	Kerman shah

The treatment of minorities in Iran does not meet the norms set out in the Declaration on Minorities or in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Continued from page 1

According to his report, the number of executions and public lashing has escalated in the last year, and no significant changes have occurred in the Islamic Republic with regards to human rights. In Copithorne's report the judicial system in Iran has been regarded as the most fundamental obstacle on the road to reform last year. According to this report, in the year 2001 a large number of newspapers were closed and also a large number of journalists have been detained and imprisoned. In the report of Human Rights Commission's special envoy, the punishment of lashing in public last summer has been pointed out.

The imprisoning of the members of "freedom movement" and holding them in solidarity confinement and their trial behind closed doors, and the ill-treatment are some of these bitter realities that Mr. Copithorne has taken necessary measure for their inclusion in the report. Discriminatory acts against ethnic and religious minorities and women, and the lack of considering the international norms in the Islamic Republic's trials still continue.

We draw your attention to a portion of this reports that deals with the violations of Kurds' rights as an ethnic and religious minority in Iran:

STATUS OF MINORITIES

Introduction:

1. In his last several reports the Special Representative has been urging the Government to establish a national minorities policy. In this report he wishes to place this initiative within the international context. To begin with, the Special Representative would refer to Commission resolution 2001/55 of 24 April 2001, which "reaffirms the obligation of States to ensure that persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities may exercise fully

and effectively all human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law in accordance with the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities". The Special Representative notes that this resolution was adopted without a vote. In this regard, he would also draw attention to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 2 November 2001.

2. The Special Representative

The Government must commit itself to addressing urgently the status of minorities in Iran as a whole and to bringing the conduct of Iran in this regard into line with recognized international standards

believes there can be no doubt that the treatment of minorities in Iran does not meet the norms set out in the Declaration on Minorities or in article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. See in this regard the concluding observation of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, following its examination of the initial report of Iran, that the treatment of minorities in Iran is one of its "principal subjects of concern" (E/C.12/1993/7 of 9 June 1993). The Special Representative takes note of the writings on this subject of one distinguished Iranian legal scholar that the Iranian Constitution, in articles 15, 19 and 20 and elsewhere, in part expressly, in part implicitly clearly establishes the right of all Iranians to equality and fair treatment, and that this right has not been implemented in practice. The Government must commit itself to addressing urgently the status of minorities in Iran as a whole and to bringing the conduct of Iran in this regard into line with recognized

international standards, as well as with the Iranian Constitution.

3. The Special Representative hears frequent reference to what is described as the Government's implicit policy of assimilation. It is asserted that such a policy was introduced first by Reza Shah, prior to which time Iran had been in practice a multicultural society. The Special Representative has earlier observed that the original draft of the 1979 Constitution did acknowledge that Iran was a multicultural nation in naming the main ethnic groups that made up the country. He would also note that as

seen in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development, the right to be free from attempts at assimilation is emerging as an international norm.

4. The Special Representative believes that at the first level the rights of minorities

consist not only in the right to be free from discrimination but, put more positively, that there is now an obligation upon Governments to protect minorities against discrimination and procedural unfairness. At a second level are certain positive rights, such as the use of minority languages in education and the media, and basic civil and political rights such as fair trial, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and of association. The Special Representative draws particular attention to the provisions of the Declaration on Minorities in this regard.

5. Information reaching the Special Representative suggests that very little meaningful action is being undertaken by the Government to this end. The use of minority languages in the media is sporadic rather than substantive; the use of minority languages in the educational system seems minimal.

6. Finally, the Special Representative has referred to the need



to involve the minorities themselves in the preparation of a national minority policy, a right articulated in the Declaration on Minorities. Whether or not it is accurate to characterize the prevailing atmosphere as one of Persian chauvinism, as some minority activists suggest, it is clear that the situation is discriminatory in many respects, as well as being incompatible with existing and emerging international norms. The Government necessarily bears heavy responsibilities in this regard and needs to make an urgent start on a national minority policy. For his part, the President is quoted as declaring that "Iran belongs to all Iranians".

Ethnic minorities: The Kurds

7. The Special Representative has in several reports discussed the status of the Kurds. He recognizes the difficulty of capturing the real situation in such matters as the treatment of minorities without access to the regions concerned. The challenge of distinguishing local incidents from broader trends may be also more formidable in this context.

8. In his interim report to the General Assembly (A/56/278, paras. 82-84), the Special Representative identified a number of indicators that conditions may be improving for the Kurds. More recent information suggests that on balance, discrimination and repression continue to exist. A number of specific allegations are set out in annex IV.

9. In the political sphere, perhaps the most dramatic event was the attempted, and in the event withdrawn, collective resignation in October 2001 of all six members of the Majilis from the province of Kurdistan. In a letter to the Interior Minister, the six said "unfortunately, Kurdistan province and the Kurds, especially Sunnis, are denied their legitimate rights, and executive officials are turning their backs to calls for justice on the political, economic, cultural and social issues they have brought out". Late in 2000, a Kurdish member of the Majilis had publicly alleged the existence of "a campaign of repression and serial killings" against the Kurdish community.

Representations concerning the status of the Kurds

The following is a list of specific complaints received by the Special Representative:

- Violent deaths of individual Kurds, apparently the result of reckless or intentional acts of the law enforcement forces;
- The recent kidnapping and death of a popular local cultural figure;
- Death sentences imposed and in most cases carried out against Kurdish activists;
- The continuing refusal of the authorities to allow Kurdish to be taught at any level in schools in Kurdistan;
- The limited use of Kurdish in the print and electronic media and, even then, usually a translation of Farsi material; the air time for Kurdish programming is "drastically shorter" than it was before 1979;
- Various forms of economic discrimination, including access to jobs in general; in the case of the **Piranshehr** Sugar Company, the discharge in May 2001 of 80 per cent of the *Kurdish employees* by a *non-Kurdish* president and their replacement by workers of other ethnicities, "and those who collaborate with the *Pasdaran*";
- The use of Kurdish territory, particularly Kermanshah province, as a "**resting place**" for drug addicts, criminals and other difficult groups from around the country;
- The disallowance of the election to the Majilis of two Kurds representing Orumieh and Naghade districts;
- The gross underrepresentation of Kurdish districts in the Majilis, as also perhaps other districts dominated by other ethnic groups, as seen for example in the failure to add any new seats for Kurdish districts in the latest 5th Majilis redistribution.

Religious minorities: Sunnis

10. In earlier reports, the Special Representative has described the complaints of the Sunnis about the discrimination they face (see for example his interim report to the

General Assembly A/56/278, paras. 74-75). He would recall his earlier comment that underdevelopment seems to coincide with those areas of the country in which Sunnis are in the majority.

11. The Special Representative has now received an allegation of Government control over Sunni theological teaching in Kurdistan through an organization called "Great Islamic Centre in the West", located in Sanandaj. All Sunni students reportedly have to register with the Centre and the Government determines the place of teaching, the subjects, the number of students and the salaries of the teachers. Such matters should clearly be in the hands of the Sunnis themselves.

Yaresan

12. In the south of the area inhabited by the Kurds, there is a little known community called variously the Yaresan or "Al Haq". According to one scholarly writer, the Yaresan are Kurds who practise an apparent form of Zoroastrianism or Yezidism (the only uniquely Kurdish religion), but are labelled Muslims because they adopted several superficial features, including veneration of Ali, the fourth Caliph.

13. The Special Representative has received representations from members of this community concerning local discrimination, both official and social, apparently based on their religion.

14. The Special Representative has received only limited first-hand evidence of the treatment of this community. However, its existence seems to be widely accepted and its treatment to be consistent with the evidence he has received from other non-Shi'ah communities. The Special Representative urges the Government to recognize the existence of the Yaresan, to prevent discriminatory practices against them and to include their representatives in the National Religious Minorities Commission.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Employment

15. In the period under review the scarcity of jobs and the treatment

of workers continued to draw public attention. While a senior government official declared that unemployment had declined to 13.7 per cent between March and July 2001, the press was sceptical. In June, one paper declared that, given the immense number of hidden, seasonal or unregistered jobless people, "independent experts believe the unemployment rate to be over 25 per cent." The press continues to carry frequent stories of unpaid salaries, sometimes stretching over many months. Other stories report workers being laid off, in some cases in very large numbers, and sometimes being replaced by workers from contract companies. There were also reports that some employers were resorting to short-term contracts in order to avoid making worker insurance payments. In October, the press carried a report of a demonstration of some 10,000 unpaid textile workers in Isfahan worried that a recent bill passed by the Majilis would reduce the number of textile enterprises and thus the need for textile workers.

16. ILO is planning to conduct an assessment mission in February 2002

to develop a project in the area of employment creation for women.

17. The President, for his part, continues to express concern about the employment situation. In October 2001 he told the Majilis that 42 per cent of the mostly young people seeking jobs could not find them. The Special Representative is concerned at the Government's generally modest efforts to address what is one of Iran's most serious economic problems, one that carries a devastating social and human cost.

Other Important Issues

Drugs

18. The Government of Iran is now openly recognizing the extent of the social problem generated by drugs in the country. Official estimates are that 2 million persons out of a population of 65 million are now addicts. Press reports suggest that over 100,000 persons in prison are there for drug-related reasons (see para. 23).

19. Iran also remains a major transit point for narcotics. The extent of smuggling has reportedly made soft drugs as accessible as cigarettes, especially in border cities. The efforts

of the Iranian authorities to stop this traffic have been internationally recognized, but Iran is paying a high price in terms of human life and budgetary resources in this struggle. The Iranian authorities have sought regional and international cooperation, cooperation which, according to the experts, is fundamental if real success is to be achieved. As pointed out by the Special Representative in earlier reports, poverty and unemployment are major factors in the rise of drug trafficking and abuse. Sistan va Baluchistan, a major transit area, is one of Iran's poorest provinces. As stated by one Tehran academic, those in the narcotics trade have few economic alternatives to smuggling. The best job for local residents in some areas is working as a guard on a drug-smuggling caravan.

20. From the demand side, addiction is increasingly seen as an illness. It is reported that this year a new Outpatient Clinic for the Treatment of Addictive Behaviour at the Zahedan Psychiatric Hospital has started experimenting with methadone treatment. ■

Disaffected youth, sour economy bode change in Iran
 Monday, April 22, 2002 By Jack Kelly, Pittsburg Post-Gazette

A sour economy, political repression and suffocating social constraints are driving young people in Iran to anger, despair, drugs and possibly revolution. This is no small problem for Iran's ruling mullahs since two-thirds of the population is under the age of 25.

Expatriates and experts agree on that much.

They're divided on whether President Bush's lumping of Iran into the "axis of evil" is likely to make the Islamic republic more or less U.S.-friendly.

The situation inside Iran is certainly in flux and potentially vulnerable to outside pressures.

Iranians are cutting back on food to make ends meet, consuming 20

percent less meat, rice, bread and tea than they did 10 years ago, according to an Iranian Central Bank report. Average family expenses last year were about 30 million rials (\$3,750), well above the average family income of 25 million rials.

Officially, unemployment in Iran stands at 14 percent; unofficially, it's more like 30 percent. Per capita gross domestic product has been stagnant for years, and take-home pay for Iranian workers is now about a third less than it was when followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah in 1979.

Educated Iranians have the hardest time finding good jobs. Only 75,000 positions await the 270,000 Iranians

who graduate each year from colleges and universities.

As a result, Iran has the largest "brain drain" of any country in the world, according to the Iran Report issued by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Approximately one of every four Iranians with a college degree is living and working outside the country.

Patrick Clausen, deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Studies, said the Iranian economy is "miserable" because "the revolutionary institutions that have such control over political life also have a great deal of control over the economy."

"[Iran's economy] is a mixture of central planning, state ownership of



oil and other large enterprises, village agriculture, and small-scale private trading and service ventures," according to the CIA World Fact book. Clausen describes it as "a cross between the mob and old-style Soviet enterprises."

"In 1977, Iran's per capita income was equivalent to Spain's," said Michael Rubin, a Ph.D. in Iranian history from Yale. "Now it is equivalent to that of the Gaza Strip." Dismal economic prospects and political repression are driving young people to drugs and political activism, said Amir Afkhami, 28, who is studying simultaneously for a Ph.D. in Iranian history at Yale and a medical degree at George Washington University.

"For the first 10 years [after the Islamic revolution], the drug problem was blamed on the Shah," Afkhami said. "The drug problem now is about 10 times worse than it was then."

Opium and heroin are easy to acquire from Afghanistan next door. And the surge in addiction has been accompanied by an HIV epidemic, the product of sharing needles.

Government officials put the number of drug addicts at 1.2 million. An AIDS prevention group says it's closer to 3.6 million.

The drug epidemic has one advantage for the government: it permits the arrest of political opponents under the guise of fighting drugs, Afkhami said. "Probably a third or half of drug arrests are political arrests," he said. "It's in the thousands."

Students are leading the political protests against the regime.

"Most do not remember the [Islamic] revolution," Afkhami said. "Unlike [young people in] most of the Middle East, they are very well educated. And unlike the rest of the Middle East, they are extremely sympathetic to the West."

Such sympathy was reflected in a statement issued by the Student Movement Coordinating Committee

on March 21, the Iranian New Year, which said:

"After the tragic events of 11 September...the stupid and antagonist heads of the 'Islamic Republic' continued to chant 'Death to America' and burned the American flag. But luckily our bright and thoughtful youth, even though they had to suffer blows of batons at the hands of the government's mercenaries and thugs, poured into the streets by the thousands and held a candlelight vigil in memory of and respect to the Sept. 11th victims."

The student revolt began in 1999 but reached its height during five days of anti-government protests that started after a soccer game in late November. Thousands were arrested, said Azar Nafisi, a professor at Johns Hopkins University.

At that point, disillusionment with the government of President Muhammad Khatami, who had promised democratic reform and been elected twice by wide margins, had really set in, Afkhami said.

"For a long time, people had put their hope in Khatami for Gorbachev-type reform," he said. "The reality is, he is sort of a smiling face to the rest of the world while the repression in Iran increases."

Khatami was first elected in 1997, and while there has been some loosening of strictures on listening to music and other social activities during his tenure, there has been no substantive political change. If anything, political repression has increased.

Two explanations are offered.

Many think Khatami would like to liberalize Iranian society but cannot because the mullahs -- who control the army, the police, the judiciary and the most powerful economic institutions -- won't let him.

"I think [Khatami] is committed to the rule of law, to working out the internal transition [to democracy] in ways that minimize confrontation," said Judith Kipper, director of the

Council on Foreign Relations' Middle East Forum.

Others now think Khatami always was a closet ally of the mullahs.

"It was just a mock election," said Banfshah Pourzand, whose father is a political prisoner. "They got this guy who would get foreign governments off their backs."

Georgetown University Professor Rob Sobhani agreed. He noted that Khatami defeated an undistinguished cleric in the presidential race only because the mullahs refused to permit 234 other candidates to run on the grounds they were too liberal. "It's as if you wanted to vote for George McGovern, but only Pat Buchanan was on the ballot," Sobhani said.

Experts also disagree on whether Bush's labeling of Iran as "evil" in his State of the Union address in January will ultimately help or hurt U.S. interests.

Khatami and those identified with the reform movement in the Iranian parliament have condemned the speech with the same vigor as the clerics on the Guardian Council. And since January, U.S. intelligence agencies have reported signs of a dropoff in Iranian cooperation with U.S. activities in neighboring Afghanistan and an uptick in Iranian support for anti-U.S., anti-Israel militants.

"I think [Bush's speech] has to hurt because it has tended to confirm what the [Iranian] conservatives say the U.S. is all about," Kipper said.

Some conservatives in the United States, however, believe Bush's putting external pressure on Iran might prompt either a revolution against the mullahs or pro-U.S. reforms.

"From what I heard from the Iranians I talked to," Afkhami said, "they were very happy with Bush's speech. He did make a real distinction between the people of Iran and their leaders. I think Iranians did understand Bush's nuance." ■

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Address:

KURDISTAN B.P. 102-75623 Paris

Cedex 13-France

Fax: +33(0)145852093

Email: kurdistanbulletin@kurdistanmedia.com

**Torture/Imminent execution:
Amnesty International's Urgent
Actions on the executions of
Kurdish politicians in Iran** *Page 9*

**The Farewell Letter from a
Kurdish Freedom Activist
Executed by the Islamic
Republic authorities** *Page 7*

Torture - Prevention is better than a cure - breakthrough vote on new torture treaty

A crucial vote on a new treaty to prevent torture took place on Monday 22 April 2002, at the current session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The Commission voted in favour of an important new instrument - the draft Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture. This new treaty aims to help states to implement their existing obligations under the Convention against Torture to prevent torture in places of detention, such as police stations, prisons, and psychiatric institutions.

The draft Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture will establish an international sub-committee of independent experts enabled to visit any place of detention under the jurisdiction of a state which ratifies this protocol "whenever necessary and without prior consent" in order to monitor the treatment and conditions of detention of the persons deprived of their liberty.

This vote is important because despite the creation and adoption of international and regional instruments prohibiting torture and ill-treatment in absolute terms, these violations are still being

perpetrated in many countries around the world.

The vote at the Commission to approve the draft new treaty is the first step in making this practical method of preventing torture a reality. Amnesty International believes that this vote is a significant step forward in the global fight against torture.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's parliament took similar initiative, but since the clerics reign to power, thousands of people have been tortured and executed in Iranian prisons, and there are still others who are awaiting death rows. The Islamic Republic has signed many international protocols, and this Protocol preventing torture is a huge international success to protect human rights globally, but whether states like Iran and others alike abide by it in principle remains a mystery. The regime has restricted the Commission's special envoy for Iran to visit this country for 6 years, and the authorities are not confident in their human rights record to allow independent experts under this Protocol to have access to their many detentions facilities without prior consent.

You can refer to the following sources and centers to find out more about Iranian Kurdistan

PDKI	PDKI	PDKI	PDKI
International Bureau B.P. 102-75623 Paris Cedex 13-France Tel: +33(0)145856431 Fax: +33(0)145852093 www.pdk-iran.org pdkiran@club-internet.fr	Sweden Tel/Fax +46(0)853490953 GSM: +46(0)739680609 Internet Address: www.pdk-s.com info@pdk-s.com	Canada P. O. Box 29010 London, Ontario N6K 4L9 Tel/Fax: +15196807784 www.pdk.org	USA P.O. Box 239 Dunnloring, VA 22027 Tel/Fax: +17033850181 Email Address: pdk-usa@pdk.org

Other affiliated sites on the net:

PDKI Denmark: www.pdk.net, PDKI Martyrs: www.shehid.com, Radio Kurdistan: www.kurdistansradio.com