

MOJAHEDIN'S IDENTITY CRISIS

By Massoud Khodabandeh

Last month Survivors' Report revealed that a Bulgarian non-combat unit will soon begin assisting with the dismantlement of Camp Ashraf and removal of its Mojahedin residents. At the sending off ceremony on March 29, Bulgarian Prime Minister, Sergey Stanishev said "The Ashraf mission is a delicate one, it requires composure".

Notwithstanding this, MKO leaders have been in denial for weeks, hoping the news would not reach members inside the Camp.

For three years, believing her combat forces to be safely ensconced in Iraq awaiting re-armament, Maryam Rajavi has dedicated all her resources to removing the Mojahedin name from the terrorist lists of Europe and North America. News of the imminent dissolution of the NLA was the harshest blow she and her co-leader husband Massoud Rajavi have suffered since they lost Saddam Hussein as their main benefactor.

Maryam Rajavi has tried her hand at a duplicitous game called 'the third option' - a thinly disguised ploy to have her forces in Camp Ashraf resurrected as an armed force. Some weeks ago, she ordered a handful of supporters recruited in the UK's House of Lords and her lawyers in Luxemburg - who were following a legal case against the European Union for placing the MKO on its terrorist list in 2002 - to announce behind closed doors that her organisation has "given up armed struggle" and is committed to only peaceful means to achieve its political goals. Exposure of this false position by Survivors' Report was so costly to the morale of her combatants that, before her pronouncement had its desired effect, she was forced to retract it. In a rare interview with the LA Times she

admitted that violence could not be ruled out as an option for the Mojahedin. Rajavi's recruits in the House of Lords who had passed her message to the Foreign Ministry were humiliated when a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry reminded them of that interview in a parliamentary debate.

Since this was not enough to restore morale among her followers, Rajavi ordered the captives in Camp Ashraf to mark the anniversary of the Iranian Revolution with a military parade using mock-up arms and artillery made of wood and plastic.

Interestingly, the uniforms of Saddam's Private Army had been replaced by uniforms resembling those of the American and British armies. Then in late February Human Rights Watch published a Statement to answer the criticisms of its initial report 'No Exit' in May 2005. The Statement not only reaffirmed HRW's original findings, but exposed the MKO to further enquiry.

Maryam Rajavi's recruit in the European Parliament, Paulo Casaca, had claimed that no human rights abuses had taken place after 2002. Since the original report had not considered any abuses taking place after that time, the defence against something it had not been accused of was enough to alert observers to the possibility of an ongoing situation of human rights

abuses behind the closed doors of the camp.

It was in this context that, in a press conference on March 10 in Paris, Rajavi's propaganda machine was completely back-footed by the revelations of former MKO member Mohsen Abbasslou.

Abbasslou escaped from Camp Ashraf only a few months ago, reaching Europe through Kurdistan and Turkey. He told reporters that although US military police were guarding the perimeter of the camp, they had little presence inside it and this allowed the MKO to continue its systematic suppression of dissent and disaffection as well as its enforced program of brainwashing. Abbasslou stressed that the Bulgarian troops' mission inside the camp was long overdue. He talked about conditions of forced labour and likened Camp Ashraf to a concentration camp. In response to this unexpected revelation of continuing human rights abuses in Camp Ashraf, the Mojahedin issued a communiqué under the name of National Council of Resistance in which it claimed:

'Mr. Abbasslou is an agent of the Iranian regime who infiltrated the Mojahedin in early 2002.' The communiqué claimed that Abbasslou had not been there more than five months (they retracted this claim in later announcements). It also claimed to have Abbasslou's signatures on various

EDITORIAL



Every time Maryam Rajavi appears to be making headway in her quest to have the MKO resurrected and rearmed, some inconvenient person or fact emerges to sabotage her efforts.

This month it was the revelations of Mohsen Abbasslou which upset her appcart. Our lead article this month details the reaction of Rajavi's publicity machine to his allegations of continuing human rights abuses inside the Mojahedin. What was significant about this latest information was that Abbasslou was in the Mojahedin's camp only from early 2002. He says that, in spite of the US presence around Camp Ashraf after the summer of 2003, the Mojahedin's human rights abuses continued unabated until the time he escaped only several months ago, last summer. Because the Mojahedin did not beco-

me aware of the source of this new information until the day of the press conference itself, the organisation was unable to react with its usual fanfare of false information and forged documents. Instead, Rajavi was forced to react to a series of media reports, and as usual, being totally reliant on propaganda to assert its position, a lot of contradictory, angry and embarrassing material spewed out of Auvers-sur-Oise in the following days.

What is becoming embarrassingly obvious is that Rajavi's cult has recruited supporters in various western parliaments. She has tried to use them to show her political power in front of her hard-core cult members. But has failed dismally.

This month's article 'The Mojahedin Candidate' shows why. When the cult's

members are so indoctrinated that they are able to read lies about their own past and about their own family as if they were in a film, then it is clear that no one can believe a word that they utter.

Ebrahim Khodabandeh goes some way in his notes from Evin prison, to explaining how the system of brainwashing works. But, as he admits, it is sometimes hard even for those who lived through it to explain how it works.

What is clear is that this cult is able to use sophisticated methods of psychological manipulation to recruit even politicians - with impunity. The implications for democracy are dire. Let us be clear, this is the real danger to the west from this organisation, not its potential for terrorism. ■

Mojahedin's Identity Crisis

letters in which he has accepted that he is indeed an agent. (One of Mr. Abbasslou's claims in the press conference was that signatures were forced from him at gun point, by injecting chemicals into his body and by suspending him over a septic tank and threatening to let him go).

The communiqué also claimed that the press conference had been "boycotted" by the media - even though an exclusive interview with Abbasslou had been broadcast prior to the press conference by Bulgarian Darik Radio.

A few hours after this announcement, the BBC Persian Service broadcast its own interview with Mr. Abbasslou in which he spoke about the current situation in Camp Ashraf and his own experience of human rights abuses.

The BBC report ended: "we could not



reach MKO officials to have their comments."

The Mojahedin's response to the BBC interview was another communiqué, this time signed by the "spokesman of the MKO in Europe", posted in Persian language on its various web sites claiming that:

"The joint operation by Ayatollah BBC

and Mullah Ajei (Iran's Intelligence Minister) in broadcasting this interview has been the work of the agents of Iran's Intelligence Ministry in the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)." In its communiqué, the Mojahedin's spokesman claimed that Mr. Abbasslou had been handed over to the American Military Police in charge of Camp Ashraf in early 2004, contradicting the previous NCRI communiqué which claimed he had entered the camp in early 2002 and was handed over to the Americans in less than five months. A basic calculation shows that, even by its own account of events, there is a year missing, which does not make any sense, except to add weight to Abbasslou's claim to have been imprisoned somewhere in the camp. In this communiqué, the MKO could not hide its anger against human rights perso-

nalities such as Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, Member of the European Parliament and founder of AMAR Charity organisation, referring to her as "an English woman called Emma Nicholson".



Baroness Nicholson visiting Ebrahim Khodabandeh in Tehran

Relying on the power of propaganda to nullify inconvenient facts, Maryam Rajavi summoned her recruits from the UK House of Lords and yet more lawyers to her residence in a Paris suburb. This was a display of power geared to convincing her members that she has the political clout to have the MKO removed from the terrorist lists, and have her fighters re-armed to be used in the west's nuclear stand-off with the Iranian government. Shortly after, British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, in a Channel 4 television interview, spoke of the Mojahedin as a globally recognized terrorist organisation, reminding the interviewer that they were listed in the UK in 2000 when he was Home Minister.

Rajavi's response was to air for the viewers of the sect's satellite channel, a message read in English to the assembled gathering in her residence in which she was 'convincing' the UK Government to remove the Mojahedin from its terrorist list.

In addition, a fresh communiqué emphasised that: "Jack Straw as exposed in 2004 by the National Council of Resistance (MEK) as the middle man who facilitated the bombardment of the Mojahedin military camps (during the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces)

as an appeasement to the mullah's regime. Also, he has announced the hanging of 20 members of the Mojahedin in Iran as acceptable." It is interesting that all the above communiqués have only been published in Persian and have been used for internal purposes. The idea that you can commission some recruits from the House of Lords and pay lawyers to beg the neoconservatives to use the Mojahedin as "good terrorists", while swearing left, right and centre at politicians, officials and even independent media, could not be a more ridiculous concept. Significantly, the communiqués were removed from the MKO's websites as soon as they had been seen by its supporters. But this was not the end of the issue as Rajavi had hoped. On March 13, Radio Farda (an independent Persian language radio sponsored by the USG) broadcast that the Bulgarian Parliament had agreed the mission of Bulgarian troops to take charge of the internal situation of Camp Ashraf.

Radio Farda also interviewed Mohsen Abbasslou about ongoing human rights abuses inside the camp and the Bulgarian army's mission inside the camp. Abbasslou told listeners, "Coalition forces are outside Camp Ashraf and have no control over its internal affairs. The problems of this cult continue and therefore human rights and freedoms are violated." The Mojahedin's response was to put back all the communiqués it had previously withdrawn and to issue another, signed this time by "the legal representative of the Mojahedin in Camp Ashraf". This communiqué claimed that: "the agents of the Iranian Intelligence Ministry in the administration of Radio Farda commissioned this report because a newspaper which is against the presence of the Mojahedin in Iraq has referred to this report in its Baghdad edition." Contrary to the announcement of the Bulgarian Interior Ministry, which emphasises that its soldiers will be deployed to take charge of the internal security of the camp, the Mojahedin claims that

the Bulgarians would not enter the camp and would be deployed only on its perimeter. The Mojahedin again stressed that the internal matters of the camp have been in the hands of the Mojahedin for the past 20 years and will remain so under the memorandum signed by the American army. The communiqué again emphasises that the report made by Radio Farda was the work of the agents of the Iranian regime in this American radio station.

What we are witnessing is the Mojahedin suffering a severe identity crisis. Its sudden changes of face and clothing according to the scene and the actors in it, creates the impression of a comedic farce more worthy of the theatre rather than the political stage. Is the MKO an autocratic armed resistance movement, is it a destructive cult which can order its recruits – including those from various parliaments – to push its agenda in political circles, is it a secular, democratic, feminist organisation, is it a news agency, a human rights defender, is it the only opposition, is it the only threat, is it the only resistance movement...

Maryam Rajavi has so many guises she is becoming dizzy with the effort of switching from one to another and shoring up leaks and gaps as she continues to try to hoodwink and brainwash the multifarious players integral to fulfil her (and her husband's) ambition for power. ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Resistance or Terror?

Saudinet, March 2, 2006

In his article "Resistance or Terror" in Saudinet, Iraqi author Dr. Mohannad Al-Barak, has discussed the issue of terrorism in Iraq and terrorist groups supported by Saddam:

"There are many questions for Iraqi people regarding the measures taken by the government to fight violence and terrorism. For instance, was it out of mercy to free thousands of criminals and murderers from prison? Or was it planned in order to execute the plans of Saddamist against the Iraq's resistant people? Is leaving thousands of explosives and weapons in AlGha'Gha something out of ignorance?

Where are thousands of Saddam's fedayeen and spies, who were pillars of his regime?

Why isn't there any comment on Saddam's Fedayeen, Mojahedin-e Khalq of Iran and pro-Saddam Palestinians? And who's this Zaqawi?"

Mr. Albarak continues as follows:

"Iraqi's will never forget that the Saddam and his murderous regime are responsible for terrorism in our country; they planned the assassination of our people. They enjoyed beheading, killing with axe and wild tigers and dogs as well as establishing and supporting terrorist organization; such as horrible spying organization tied to Estekhbarat, and other terrorist organization like the Mojahedin-e Khalq that targeted liberation movement of Arab and Muslim people."

Excerpted from 'Exiles: How Iran's Expatriates are Gaming the Nuclear Threat

New Yorker, By Connie Bruck, March 6, 2006

In Paris, Rajavi formed the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which initially was a genuine "council," including other opposition groups in addition to the M.E.K., but the other groups subsequently dropped out. Rajavi's style of leadership was autocratic from the start, but by the mid-eighties the signs of a personality cult were unmistakable... "In short, the Mojahedin had metamorphized from a mass movement into an inward-looking sect in many ways similar to religious cults found the world over," [Ervand] Abrahamian wrote [in his authoritative book], "The Iranian Mojahedin".

... The M.E.K., demonstrating its long-honed talent, was wresting opportunity from this latest misfortune [disarmament in Iraq, 2003]. Having lost its Iraqi patron, narrowly escaped annihilation by U.S. forces, and come close to being delivered into the hands of its bitterest enemy, it was promoting its candidacy as an agent of regime change. In Camp Ashraf, M.E.K. fighters being interviewed by American intelligence officials struck consistent themes, according to a former U.S. military officer. First, they

should be taken off the F.T.O. list. Their forces could then assist the Coalition Provisional Authority, patrolling the border between Iraq and Iran. And, more broadly, this former officer continued, "they saw themselves as the equivalent of the Iraqi National Congress, the Chalabi group that was used so heavily in prewar planning. They wanted to be like that, and part of the solution of a new Iran." A person close to the M.E.K. said that it offered to provide intelligence, both on Iran and on Iranian activity in Iraq.

Human rights abuses in MKO since the fall of Saddam's regime

Press conference by Iran-Interlink, March 10, Paris

The conference introduced Mohsen Abbasslou, the most recent member of the Mojahedin to have escaped Camp Ashraf in Iraq. He was in Camp Ashraf until only a few months ago. With documents and other evidence to support his claim, he alleges that he suffered various forms of torture and mistreatment up to the time he escaped. Mr Abbasslou's interviews with Bulgarian Darik Radio, BBC Persian Service and Radio Farda were broadcast over several days.

The Mojahedin responded with a webcampaign to discredit Mr Abbasslou.

Camp Ashraf Escapee: Camp Ruled by Violence

Darik Radio, March 10, 2006

Human rights in the Ashraf refugee camp in Iraq are being violated on a daily basis, an escapee told media.

Mujahideen leaders in the camp still have power over the rest of the people there, Mohsen Abbasslou has told private Darik radio. "I had no future in this camp, that's why I escaped," Abbasslou says.

People were often beaten, forced to work for the leaders, although it wasn't their responsibility, the escapee explains. He claims that most of the people did not want to stay in the camp, and those who disobeyed orders were beaten constantly and yelled at a lot.

There was no one to turn to when all this happened, Abbasslou said, because the only troops guarding the camp were stationed outside of it. Americans do control the outside and they let no outer threats reach the population of the camp, but there is no one to help with the violence inside, the man explains.

Although he confirms that camp refugees have been long ago stripped of all weapons, Abbasslou says that claims that there hadn't been an incidence [of human rights abuses] in the camp for three years are false. "I myself was severely beaten by the leaders of the Mujahideen organization within the camp nine months after the American troops took guard," he says.

Open letter to Mike Colle - Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Family Network Association, March 17, 2006

Shahram Golestaneh has been denied citizenship in Canada because according to one newspaper: "In 1994 he was convicted over an attack ... when a mob armed with sticks, mallets and a sledgehammer ransacked a building just a few blocks south of Parliament Hill, ... Golestaneh was convicted of breaking and entering and of an attack on internationally protected premises. A woman suspected by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service of masterminding the attack was deported in 1993. CSIS identified her as the Canadian leader of the Mujahedin e Khalq of MEK...Canada designated the group a terrorist entity under federal law... Golestaneh denies being involved with the MEK."

The Family Network Association, based in Sweden wrote an open letter to Ontario Minister of

Citizenship and Immigration, Mike Colle, outlining Golestaneh's current, ongoing membership and promotion of the MEK. "Documents and evidence of his activities in promotion of the heads of this cult-like terrorist organisation in Canada could be submitted in any court of justice if needed", said the Association in its letter. Recent photographs were also provided showing Golestaneh backed by MEK and NCRI banners in a promotional demonstration. ■



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Association to Support Victims of Mojahedin-e Khalq has nominated April 8th to be the day each year which will commemorate the victims of internal suppression by the Mojahedin. This year, the day will be commemorated in Paris with a series of films and speeches followed by an evening meal.

Although the Mojahedin has claimed the lives of several thousand victims in its forty-one year history, we have chosen specifically to commemorate the victims of internal suppression because in the parlance which describes the terrorist Mojahedin's history as that of an opposition or resistance movement, or tries to define its terrorist acts as legitimate armed struggle, their voices have been rarely heard. In no struggle for freedom is there place for suppression and torture. Yet, this is what the Mojahedin has inflicted on its own members when they

have dared to disagree with the leaders, Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. The victims of this internal suppression include those who have been killed, those who have lost their sanity and those who remain under the organisation's control. April 8 is a day on which those who have been fortunate to escape can give voice to their suffering. We anticipate that in the coming years, more and more of the victims of internal suppression and victims' families will be able to join us in freedom.

For further information,
contact Anne Singleton by emailing info@suvivorsreport.org
or telephone +44 113 278 0503. ■

MOHSEN ABBASLOU BBC INTERVIEW ABOUT CAMP ASHRAF

BBC Radio, March 10, 2006



Abbaslou: I had some friends in the camp. I had no future in the American camp. We faced an uncertain future, therefore I and four of my friends escaped the camp July 6, 2005. I personally thank the US forces, but the reality is that the cult has remained in Iraq due to the problems of the coalition forces.

BBC: you mean MKO officials tortured MKO members in coalition camps?

Abbaslou: Well, US forces had surrounded Camp Ashraf and

One of the MKO's members has recently escaped the group's camp in Iraq. We asked him why he escaped.

had no control over its internal affairs and this had allowed the MKO to apply their cult-like ideologies. I myself was beaten by the MKO officials, they injected sterilizers into my body, I was virtually executed, they hanged me, forced me into the septic tank, they forced me to admit to what I had not done. There are others like me, such as Amir Abbas Mashour (known as Mahmoud Moshtaghi). They had forced him to divorce his wife. He loved his wife and so, he set himself on fire. Other friends were on hunger strike for a long time, they had sewn up their lips only because of the situation....

Well, this is the violation of human rights....

BBC: this was our conversation with Mohsen Abbaslou, former member of the MKO.

We could not reach MKO officials to have their comments. ■

ABBASLOU; INTERVIEW WITH RADIO FARDA

Radio Farda, March 15, 2006

According to the news agencies, Bulgarian forces have taken control of Camp Ashraf, 60 miles north of Baghdad, since a week ago. This camp houses nearly 3000 MKO remnants in Iraq who have been supervised by American [military police] after the Iraq war. Last week, a former member of the MKO, Mohsen Abbaslou who has escaped from Iraq, took part in a press conference and talked about the difficult situation of MKO remnants in Camp Ashraf and the violation of human rights by this organization.



In an interview with Radio Farda's Ali Sajjadi, he referred to his membership in the MKO and said: "if a window is opened to the outside world, all MKO members would leave and barely a 100 would remain."

The MKO announced that Mr. Abbaslou has never been a member of the organization and that he had been expelled to the US-run camp (TIPE, next to Camp Ashraf). The U.S. State Department lists the MKO as a FTO. "The remaining members in the MKO camp have no hope for the future," Abbaslou says.

Ali Sajjadi (Radio Farda): First, I asked

Mr. Abbaslou about the history of his cooperation with the Mojahedin-e Khalq organization.

Abbaslou: I was a supporter of the MKO inside Iran for nearly 10 years until Afghanistan was freed by a US-led coalition, then the MKO pressed me to go to Iraq to continue my campaign there; so, I went to Iraq in June 2002 and joined the MKO.

Nearly ten months after the fall of Saddam Hussein, I was still in the organization. In January of 2004, after 45 days of hunger strike and being beaten by the MKO, they sent me to the US-run Camp (TIPF) and on July 6th I and four of my friends escaped from US-run camp and Iraq to Europe.

Sajjadi: What about your differences with the MKO in Iraq?

Abbaslou: I joined the MKO with the goal of fighting dictatorship and achieving freedom, democracy and human rights. Unfortunately, since the first day I entered the organization, I understood that the organization was clearly much different from what it advertised. I witnessed violation of human rights on daily basis, politically, organizationally and individually. They forced us to do what we didn't like. They forced members to divorce their spouses; we had no contact with our families and there was no access to free media and press; everything was under censorship. Most of the forces there had been taken to the camp by promises of a good job, life and ...

These convinced me to leave the organization. Every week, I wrote requests for leaving and they always refused. Now, they have announced that "we expelled him from the organization after 5 months". This is not true. I was on hunger strike for 45 days. I didn't eat for a week and after 45 days of hunger strike, beating me hard and a week of solitary confinement, they agreed to let me go.

Sajjadi: How is the situation of the MKO, particularly after Iraq war and the presence of coalition forces in Iraq?

Abbaslou: The presence of coalition forces in Iraq was a window and I really thank them. Nearly 600 members left

the organization and joined the US-run camp; some others escape the MKO's camp and went directly to Europe and I saw some of them here in Europe; others joined the US camp. But the violation of human rights continues despite the presence of coalition forces. I myself was beaten by MKO officials and people like Mashrouf Dianati and Behrooz Mohammed Khojini. That was ordered by Vajihah Karbalayee and Mahnaz Shahnazi. After the coalition forces took control of Iraq, they beat my friends Faramarz and broke the teeth of Ali Dehghani. They thrashed a man called Atta in the middle of the camp and in front of other members. Another member, Mahmoud Moshtaghi was forced to set himself on fire because he was under pressure to divorce his wife; this still continues despite the presence of coalition forces in Iraq. Coalition forces are outside Camp Ashraf and have no control over its internal affairs. The problems of this cult continue and therefore human rights and freedoms are violated.

Sajjadi: How many are there now in the camp?

Abbaslou: There must be nearly two thousand members or so in the camp of Mojahedin. When I was in US camp, there remained 250 out of 600 who had defected; others had gone to Iran or had to go to Iran.

Sajjadi: What do they do?

Abbaslou: Nothing. The situation is disappointing. The morale is low. They have to work for the MKO with no rewards. They have no hope for the future but I want to tell them that we are pursuing their case here. We try to press human rights groups to find a way for our friends there. The situation is far better for those in the US-run camp. They are free, they are in touch with their families and hereby I say to them that "don't worry and keep your morale."

Sajjadi: You said the organization forced them to work without rewarding them?!

Abbaslou: According to the rules of the cult, the time of these members has been preplanned for 24 hours of the

day. From the time they wake up in the morning they have to work in the farm, building, road making, kitchen, sanitary duties and...MKO officials try to make them tired so that they don't think of other things.

Sajjadi: Mr. Abbaslou said that 100 members would reluctantly remain in Camp Ashraf if a window is opened to the outside world. After Mr. Abbaslou's press conference in Paris, the MKO released a statement claiming that Abbaslou has never been in the MKO and after 5 months of joining the MKO he had been deported to USrun camp in 2002. The US State Department lists the MKO as a foreign terrorist organization. ■

A PERSONAL VIEW FROM EVIN

By Ebrahim Khodabandeh

Terrorist or freedom fighter:



Any account of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) will reveal a black record of destroying family relationships and misappropriating various people's lives and belongings. All of the organisation's terrorist actions inside Iran after they fled the country have been planned, facilitated and directed from inside Iraq with the intelligence, training, weapons and equipment provided by Saddam Hussein. The people of Iran will not disregard this under any circumstances. In their eyes, not only is the PMOI not a freedom fighting organisation, it is a betrayer which stood alongside Iran's enemy throughout the war and through the Iranian people's hardship.

In his book, *A Shared Pain*, Antoine Gessler refers to the people who have suffered from the misdeeds of the organisation led by Rajavi:

"... their lives should have continued differently. All were promised an uneventful existence. That is, until the day their destiny was turned upside down because somebody stole their body or their soul, sometimes both. Their dreams ruined; their flesh ravaged; they will not be able to forget."

From mental prison to physical prison:

I believe that imprisonment degrades any person's human dignity. Particularly a person who, whether right or wrong, has sacrificed everything for his goals and has not sought anything for himself; and who from the beginning until now had no other motivation in his life but to fulfil his duty toward God and his people.

I also believe that the relationship between a prisoner and his prison warden, no matter how good and respectful it might be, consists of barriers which, one way or another, divide them from one another. Surely you could not establish a warm and friendly relationship with a person who has denied you your freedom and has demeaned your beliefs.

The quest for liberty and an independent identity is in the nature of every human being

Throughout history, no other demand or requirement of human society has been more paramount than the mutual demands to live in freedom and enjoy self determination. A person can define themselves as human to the extent that they have the right and the power to choose freely, and to the extent that their independent identity from which to make their own decisions is fully recognised. A prison is a prison, even though it might look like a palace. And above all else, it damages your human feelings. But, for a person who has spent over two decades of his life as a full-time member of the People's Mojahedin Organisation, and has passed through the different stages of the Internal Ideological Revolution and never possessed anything of his own, a physical prison has no hardship compared to the mental prison which has no bars and chains.

Indeed, to some extent it has its own advantages.

In a physical prison, a person can move only within the small boundary designated to him, is only allowed to do specific things at predetermined times and is, of course, deprived of many facilities.

In the mental prison, by using sophisticated, complex and sometimes abnormal methods and mechanisms, the person is inculcated into a specific way of thinking. He is eventually trained to control his own mind within a narrowly defined framework and not to let his thoughts escape from it. In such prison there is always the possibility that the smallest hole to the outside, free world could lead to the flight of the mind.

Then the prisoner would no longer be in the hands of the prison warden. Therefore he must continuously be brain-washed.

In the Mojahedin, this is done in the daily Current Operational Sessions (a daily session of self-criticism practiced inside the organisation for all its members at different ranks) so that both the outlets and the inlets of the mind are blocked up and closed. The Internal Ideological Revolution, which places the leader in the position of absolute right, has this functional effect that it first establishes mental boundaries in one's mind and then makes the person perform actions which would, according to a sound mind, look totally lunatic. The acts of self-immolation in June 2003 in Europe are eminent examples of this behaviour. Alain Chevalérias in his book *Burned Alive* refers to these horrendous acts. Wouldn't it be interesting to know how the victims are persuaded to perform these sorts of actions willingly?

In such a system, people cannot be permitted anything like a normal life and are not even free to associate freely with their surroundings, otherwise their mental insulation would

be opened up. One should under no circumstances be exposed to the realities of the outside world, nor be permitted to think independently.

Function of the mental prison:

In the year 1985 in Paris, the cornerstone of the Mojahedin's so-called Internal Ideological Revolution was laid down. A pseudo revolution which above all, was the basis for extending the strict limitations and restrictions already imposed upon the organisation's cadres, leading eventually to their complete isolation from the outside world. Gradually, using complex methods, members became more bound within their own mental margins so that they were deprived of the ability to make even the simplest decisions.

I ask, was there any threat from their side? Why was it necessary to isolate the members from the outside world and practically imprison them in order to keep them within the framework of the struggle? What sort of threat could have been expected from or against people who had joined the organisation by leaving everything behind and who had accepted every kind of hardship over the years? The cadres now had to learn to walk not on their own feet but on those of the leader and were taught to consider their souls and minds as belonging to him and empty their brains from any thoughts except those dictated by the leader and bear love only for him in their hearts.

Everyone who submitted to this process reached the understanding that whatever exists outside the organisation is surely Satanic and corrupt and that reality is only within one man's grasp; that he is the only one who tells the truth, and that we, collectively, are the most fortunate generation to understand his potential and then struggle under his guidance.

People were frightened of the outside world and they were openly warned that if just for one moment they leave the bounds of the Internal Ideological Revolution and the daily Current Operational sessions they would be cursed. In the theory of the Internal Ideological Revolution, the value of any member is directly related to the extent of their devotion to the leadership and their submission to him, heart and mind.

Gradually, through time, a system was established in which values specific to itself evolved. So that, the normal contact of an ordinary member with his close relatives or friends who happened to be travelling to Iran was considered a betrayal and an unforgivable sin. Yet, dealing with Tahir Habush, the chief of Saddam's Intelligence and Security Agency, and the leader himself receiving boxes of money, along with assassination orders to be carried out inside Iran, was measured as humble service toward Iran, Islam and humanity. The topics of the Internal Ideological Revolution one after another isolated any slit towards the outside world and strengthened all the mental fences. Members were bound in such a closed mental prison that

they would never allow themselves to even think about anything but what the organisation prescribes.

When the organisation announced that the Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran had abducted Jamil Bassam and Ebrahim Khodabandeh from Syria, transferred them to Iran, and jailed them in Evin prison, they did not mention who had already stolen their minds and souls over the years, had physically and mentally imprisoned them, had denied them their human identity and turned them into powerless objects who had no will to make any decision.

What is past is prologue:

Once upon a time, in the year 1965 under the deposed Shah's regime, some revolutionary Moslem youths decided to struggle against his dictatorship. They identified armed struggle as the means to topple the regime and free the oppressed people of Iran. To do this they needed to establish a covert organisation which, in order to be safe against the Shah's security system, would be based on minimising the information given to its members. Since this organisation was vulnerable to detection by SAVAK, people had to leave their homes and families and live communally in safe houses and act without question on the organisation's commands with an iron discipline. They had to attend self-criticising sessions in order to rid themselves of non-revolutionary and liberalistic manners, so that they would be better prepared to accept the leaders' orders. And this is how the PMOI was formed. The members and the cadres became so isolated from their surroundings and they practiced so hard to dissolve into the organisation that in time the Central Committee could, by a simple decree, change the ideology and even the religious beliefs which had once been the motivation for joining the struggle, and face no objections. Of course those few people who had not rooted out their liberalistic manners and had not become obedient enough, had to be eliminated or be given up to SAVAK. This was a unique phenomenon in the contemporary history of Iran in any group, organisation or party. Ms Tahira Baqirzadé, Mr Ahmid Ahmid and Mr Mohsen Nezhad Husseinian, prominent members of the organisation in those days, have dealt with this issue in their memoirs which I had the chance to read inside prison. I believe a considerable number of today's members of the organisation have never heard of the above mentioned people let alone read their books.

Development of mental prison:

But this process - being isolated from society and normal social life - continued more rapidly after the 1979 revolution and then outside Iran. In the new phase of the organisation's history, under the phenomenon of the Internal Ideological Revolution, not only had people to leave their homes and families but they also had to consider their parents, spouses and even children as enemies; obstacles



Ebrahim visiting with his mother in Iran

on the path to reach understanding of the noble position of the leadership. Members, even in the west, had to avoid the internet or satellite television and be fed information by the organisation only. Iraqi territory provided a perfect opportunity to establish a huge safe-house with no opening to the free world so that members could have their brainwashing performed step by step without any interference. Members in the west would also spend some time there to acquaint themselves with the internal atmosphere of the organisation and become pure and obedient elements.

In the People's Mojahedin's school of teaching, religion, home country, emotion and everything else are all concentrated in one man only. 'Islamic' means what he has said, 'popular and nationalistic' mean what he has expressed, and 'emotions' should be exclusively directed towards him. The cornerstone of this teaching is of course based on a big lie. The sort of lie which is so enormous that for some people it leaves no doubt that it is the whole truth and nothing but the truth! All ideologies based on monopolies; such as Fascism, Zionism or Communism, which stand on the guidance of a moral leader are based on the belief that "we are better than all". A person who enters the People's Mojahedin Organisation must accept that the organisation and its leader stand above the whole universe and are the peak of evolution. They should truly believe that in the present disastrous and dreadful world, the organisation and its

leader are the only hope left for the salvation of mankind and the only guide for the oppressed people of the world toward blessing. If you believe this you would believe anything. Surely this is not the first time that someone has tried to impose his authority upon people under the cover of inviolability and it will probably not be the last time. But, understanding the mechanisms behind enforcing such an unreal belief system is difficult even for those who have had personal experience of it. It is achieved by the intensive imposition of logic around justifications and by continuous slow abrasion of people's trust, nationalistic and religious feelings. And finally one reaches a state of fake judgement that whatever he does is absolutely right because the leader ordains it.

Who is the victim?

London's popular, controversial mayor, Ken Livingstone, suggested that in the ceremony held for the families of the victims of the London Underground blasts, the families of the terrorists should also participate in the same way as the other families of victims of sabotage and violence. In thinking anew about the present era and examining the subject of terrorism with appropriate humanity, it is possible to realise that the terrorists themselves are in some ways also victims who have been caught up in a mental trap and lost their lives.

In 1999, Mehrnaz Foroughi Shad, a high-school girl, was on

her way home in the teachers' residential district. Suddenly there was an explosion...a shell launched by the Mojahedin wounded her and she lost the use of her right eye.

Roughly two years later, Arash Sametipur, a member of the People's Mojahedin Organisation who had been sent from inside Iraq was arrested during an operation. He used his hand grenade to eliminate himself so that he would not be captured alive as he was instructed by the Organisation. The explosion took off his right arm.

If we look at the issue objectively, putting aside bias or dogmatism, we can conclude that these were both, to the same extent, victims of an ideology that uses terrorism as a tool to reach its political goals and does not count the human cost. We must bear in mind that some of the most honest, self-sacrificing and vulnerable youth of society have been brainwashed and then misused for these kinds of aims.

Since 1981, when the Mojahedin's so-called armed struggle against the Islamic Republic of Iran began, the story of the victims of terror and violence is still continuing. Some were assassinated directly or lost their lives in explosions, leaving many families bereaved. Some victims were permanently disabled or disfigured by the acts of terror.

On the other side, some were either executed or killed in clashes with security forces, some became refugees in western countries or holed-out in the Mojahedin's bases in the deserts of Iraq, leaving their waiting families in unfathomable sorrow. The black account continues, and Rajavi's organisation still insists on using terror and violence to pave the way for its other policies.

Victim or criminal!

Iraq's new constitution provides that members of Saddam's Ba'ath Party, regardless of their rank, who were not directly involved in killing, would not be prosecuted. In the case of the Mojahedin, should the members, who are actually themselves victims of the real mastermind behind these actions, be put on trial and be charged? Wasn't it enough that on one hand they lost their whole youth and on the other hand their families suffered their absence for years. Should we now add to their misfortune. Can we correct the cause by punishing the effect?

I am writing not for myself, but on behalf of all those who are still in the mental or even physical prison of Rajavi's organisation. I know full well that they have not given me the authority to be their advocate. But, I believe that so long as one has not stepped out of the organisation and has not made

contact with the outside world and has not dared to think independently, they would hardly be able to free themselves from the obstacles and limitations of the organisation and think differently from what they have been positioned for. I believe that these people certainly are themselves victims, and before being put in jail to face trial and punishment, they should be helped and saved. I strongly believe and insist that a member of the People's Mojahedin organisation in any rank, even if they have directly committed murder, before being a criminal is a victim.

Experience of salvation:

I wish I was not in Evin prison awaiting my own trial so that I could write more openly and show the way to my previous colleagues in a more appropriate manner. Perhaps it is best if I write something of my own recent experience to start with:

In summer 2002, my mother came to England to visit my brother who had left the Mojahedin some years before and had regained a normal life. I learned about this visit through my daughter and yearned to see my mother while she was there. Our visit happened after 23 years of separation. Perhaps it is hard to believe that my mother was the first Iranian person whom I had met with outside the framework of the PMOI since I joined the organisation.

Whatever she told me about Iran and what was going on there, I did not believe. I even openly accused her of working for the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and that her mission was to persuade my brother to go to Iran and work with them. I admit that although I rejected my mother at that time, the sort of crack of which the organisation has



Ebrahim with his late father, his daughter and his grandchildren in 2004

always been afraid, was opened in the margins of my mind creating the grounds for further developments.

In April 2003, Jamil Bassam and I went to Syria to accomplish a mission for the organisation which resulted to our detention there. In the two months that we spent in prison in Syria, during which we were away from the internal atmosphere of the organisation and our supervisors and the daily Current Operations sessions, a channel between my mind and the outside world was gradually opened. The organisation always foretold that 'if we were left alone for a moment without the guidance of our supervisor within the establishment we would be totally lost'. So, for me, the first doubts towards the organisation's acts and policies and what they had inspired in me, occurred in my mind.

In June 2003, we were transferred from Syria to Iran and directly to Evin prison.

There I suddenly faced some realities which, to be honest, I first tried to deny, since they were absolutely contrary to my indoctrinated beliefs.

I vividly remember when I first visited my late father after 26 years. He said that he would not have recognised me if he had passed me in the street. Increasingly, I began to feel that there are other elements apart from the leadership, such as parents and nation and country, that I could love. My mother said that she would have preferred me to be in Evin prison rather than be inside the organisation in Iraq. Perhaps this may look odd to someone who does not have a good understanding of these concepts, but for those families who have suffered for over two decades without even knowing the whereabouts of their beloved ones, this makes sense completely. My late father also told me that he could close his eyes to everything about the PMOI but he would never disregard the mere fact that they went to Iraq and cooperated with Saddam in the war against Iran. And of course I was amazed how I - thanks to the Internal Ideological Revolution and the acceptance of the absolute authority of the Leadership - could accept such an obvious betrayal and consider it as in the best interests of the people of Iran.

The image that the organisation had painted for us of the situation inside Iran - by means of the massive fake propaganda in the west - was entirely opposite to what I experienced for myself. To describe a condition in which the structure of one's mind falls apart bit by bit is rather difficult. Sometimes inside the prison I used to reach the point that I could not find a single good reason to carry on breathing. Many actually break down at this stage and lose the ability to find their real identity again. They would rather stay in prison for the rest of their lives and not step out to the open world again. I must truly confess that I had some bitter experiences in this regard until I was able to achieve some sort of stability.

I read and heard and observed a lot about the PMOI's transgressions. Surely a thick book could have been written about the misdeeds of the organisation, quoting thousands

of witnesses. But as far as I am concerned, what troubles me gravely is the very fact that the Organisation so misused the honesty and devotion and particularly the nationalistic and religious feelings of its members and betrayed their hopes and their trust.

What must be done?

In short, to save the mentally imprisoned colleagues is the duty and obligation of every person who has been saved today. The task is of course critical, sensitive and somehow dangerous. It should be considered that the victim would first line up on the opposite side. As soon as you step in this field you face an enormous amount of accusations and claims and false labels. If you lay your finger on the sensitive part - if you try to somehow break through the mental isolation of the members and try to familiarise them with the outside world - you will immediately be targeted with such ferocious accusations that it is unbearable for most people, unless they have high motives and are absolutely determined to try to help their friends and save them from their misery.

I say to all my old colleagues inside the organisation that if we are opposed to dictatorship then we should start from home. It is not possible to abolish totalitarianism by imposing it upon our own members. To establish a democratic system and grant it to the people, you cannot first deny it to them; and of course you could never topple one dictatorship and then restore democracy with the aid of a much harsher one.

Evin prison, Tehran, March 2006 ■

THE MOJAHEDIN'S POINT OF VIEW ON WOMEN

Omid Pouya, Mojahedin.ws website

12 March 2006



Pic: Hoary MKO combatants warm their hands by the light of the latest female victim

To mark the anniversary of International Women's Day on March 8th, the Mojahedin's Television channel broadcast a series of programs about 'women'. The programs focused exclusively on issues pertaining to female MKO insiders, in particular those active in Camp Ashraf, with emphasis on their military potentialities. Earlier, over the course of many meetings and political gatherings in the MKO, the cadres talked enthusiastically about women's role in various social and political movements – Iran's historical Constitutional Movement, for example – and portrayed the women in those movements as 'armed combatants'. In a Direct Contact TV program aired on March 5, 2005, Mohammad Reza Ruhani, a member of the NCRI, gave a detailed description of the role of a female militia in the Constitutional Movement. Regardless of the historical accuracy of this claim – for this is the first time Mojahedin have ever made reference to this – discussing

the historical involvement of women in armed struggle indicates an organized, pre-planned objective. It would appear that the glaring paradox which exists between the Mojahedin's fixed ideological tenets on the one hand (armed struggle serving an autocratic leader), and its overnight, tactical transmutation on the other hand (into a pseudo-peaceful, pseudo-democratic group), has led the Mojahedin to the verge of being engulfed by the earthshaking challenges presented by trying to answer to and satisfy western partners and growing opposition from within its own forces. In its latest engagement with the west, the Mojahedin has tried to 'prove' its adopted pretence that it is moving on the same parallel line of feminist theory as the west, by stressing bourgeoisie teaching in respect to the freedom of women. But in practice, this is in absolute discrepancy with what is actually practiced in Camp Ashraf, and the leaders have to fabricate justifications and excuses in

order to convince the female insiders to continue with their suffering there. Frankly speaking, the Mojahedin has never underlined the importance of dealing with the issue of women as individuals. A passing look at the group's media blitz on women justifies its controversial ideological view in respect to women, which is in no way in accordance with the internationally accepted principles that respects the rights of women.

International Women's Day celebrates the need for a worldwide movement to accomplish what women were deprived of in the past, to end hegemonic control and domination, inequality, violence, humiliation, exploitation and much more.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes no differentiation between male and female individuals. In its articles it uses the term "everyone" without distinction of sex.

Violation of either sex's rights by anyone is condemned by the Universal Declaration. The Mojahedin Khalq has proved to be a serious violator of these rights in many forms, but in particular those of women. The Internal Ideological Revolution can be referred to as one of the most delinquent acts by the Mojahedin to exploit women in order to justify the failure of its strategy of armed struggle.

The Mojahedin's Ideological Revolution abolished the pivotal role of women as the pillars of familial stability. In place of the family, since women comprise about half of the total insiders, the leader introduced a fake program to 'unloose the yoke of historical gender discrimination'. With this excuse, the leader imposed a gynaeocracy (gynocracy) on the organisation, with the actual objective of isolating and monopolizing its women members both ideologically and politically.

Genuine feminist movements have

been formed to defend the axiomatic rights of women because they have been the victims of patriarchal societies which have violated their most evident social, political, and economic rights. Indeed, women have been, historically, largely regarded as men's possessions and as objects absolutely deprived of thought and freedom to make decisions. Yet, surprisingly, this is exactly what has been duplicated in Camp Ashraf, albeit utilizing a modernized format. However, let us not repeat what has been stated recurrently. Let us identify a number of the violations against women in the Mojahedin organization to see how insincere the leader is in his presumptuous claims. (It must be remembered that the leader of the Mojahedin, Massoud Rajavi, is male, and that his wife, Maryam Rajavi, who fronts the organisation in the west, is his second-in-command.)

For women in the Mojahedin:

- As victims of a past patriarchal domination their new frame of reference is no longer a social construct, instead they are now framed by Rajavi's hegemony.
- The leader makes all the decisions and women are deprived of the right to think and decide freely for themselves.
- In contrast to patriarchal systems, Rajavi dominates and possesses not a single but all women insiders.
- They are separated from their children.
- They are abused to attract and manipulate male members.
- They are ordained to divorce and remarry.
- Their matriarchal role is heavily under the bond of the cult interests.
- They are called gorgons, hags and many other names as a punishment.
- The couple's natural relation is referred to as intercourse of brutes.
- They are accused of immoral acts as the means of subjugation.
- While they are forced to dance and

chant slogans in gatherings in western countries to achieve organizational objectives, those in Camp Ashraf are punished by standing long hours in the sun while facing a wall because they have merely walked before the eyes of the male brutes (as Rajavi calls men).

- They are believed to be the same as a coin with two faces; one face is Camp Ashraf with all its limitations and ideological pressures and the other face is the completely different western image.
- Those residing in Camp Ashraf are represented as the symbols of a tough revolutionary woman who marches to strengthen the strategy of armed struggle; those active in the west wear fashionable dress and arrange concerts to advance the Mojahedin's 'third option' for regime change in Iran.

So many contradictions are the outcome of regarding women as instruments to accomplish the leader's objectives. Such a view is the residue of the same reactionary, historical view that regards women as instrumental, sexual creatures devoid of any individualistic entity.

That is evident in Mojahedin cult because;

- The most ordinary organizational affairs are assessed according to a sexual point of view,
- The leadership has a sceptical attitude towards any male and female relations,
- Women are forced to have unwanted abortions,
- Women are banned from marrying freely and forming a family,
- Affection and love are denounced as big sins,
- Under the banner of struggle for the freedom of women, they are exploited in a modern format.

What differentiates between female liberation movements and imperious, modern oppression against women is the objective content of the movement rather than the instrumental

abuse. The Mojahedin's cult-like teachings clearly depict the group's real outlook on women; they remain a historical problem making an obstacle in the path of an assumed evolution.



The Mojahedin Candidate – Redefining 'Clarity'

who seemed a humble, deeply poetic man, really knew the Mojahedin that well. Habibi had a big heart, brimming with wishes and hopes for bringing freedom and democracy, knowledge and education to his people. He always behaved with kindness and respect.

Habibi could not continue working with the Mojahedin. He was too honest to believe in what they really were. That was the same for all of us; not knowing the Mojahedin well in the beginning, especially with its talent for hypocrisy, we only touched its ugliness with our deeper involvement; such a damning ugliness that it inspired in us the huge courage needed to escape its clutches. The Mojahedin leader, Massoud Rajavi, and his wife, Maryam, always told us they wanted to burn our bridges behind us. Only when the bridges were already burnt did they allow us to discover that returning back to our lives would entail traversing strange mountains and valleys of immense suffering.

Habibi was unfortunate. He made his decision to return with his family to his life in the USA when it was too late. Shortly after I met the Habibi family, the Mojahedin made its controversial Forough-e Javidan (Eternal Light) attack on Iran. What the intellectual critics called "committing suicide all together"!

Forough-e Javidan was a ruthless, random, opportunist act. It jeopardized the lives of each and every civilian supporter of the organisation, who were all, including Mr. Habibi, summoned to Iraq to submit to Rajavi's power crazed ambition. Habibi left Paris with some other supporters and, without the slightest training, was sent to 'fight' with Iran's Revolutionary Guard hardened by eight years of war with Iraq. He died with his pen and notebook, ready to write a new chapter in the Mojahedin's odyssey!

The leader himself knew how remote

the chance of victory was. He stayed in Iraq with his wife in safety, waiting until the victorious Mojahedin fighters could carry them to Tehran.

This is the real story of how Zolal lost her beloved father. He died at the behest of Massoud and Maryam Rajavi, a poet massacred on their battlefield, for their ambitions.

Indecently soon after, Massoud Rajavi gave Zolal's widowed mother to another man. (At that time marriage was still compulsory in the sect, though the marriages were not legally registered so they could be just as easily abolished whenever the leader decided.)

Before getting to know her stepfather, Zolal was sent away from her mother, along with her brother and all the Mojahedin's children, from newborns to 12 years old. The decision was made during the bombardment of Iraq during the first Gulf war in 1991. The allied attack on Iraq did not affect the Mojahedin, and nor did the subsequent sanctions. The Mojahedin never shared in the misery inflicted on the Iraqi people. Rajavi had secured a huge sum from the fortune made accessible to Saddam Hussein by his allies. Massoud Rajavi just wanted to get rid of the members' children as the first step in tearing apart the families altogether. To accomplish this he faked a crisis by moving the children from the safety of the bomb shelters inside the Mojahedin's camps, into exposed buildings in the heart of Baghdad, the main target of the allied bombardment. He frightened the parents into agreeing to their evacuation.

Exceptionally, along with a very few others, Habibi's children had some devoted aunts in the USA. Perhaps they were able to ease their bitter grief for their poor brother by taking care of his children. In the meantime, Zolal's mother was made to leave her new husband in a most brutal way; the leader had ordered everyone in the Mojahedin, by confronting one another with hideous insults, to undertake mass, compulsory divorce.

The seasons turned for Zolal as for everyone, and she became a teenager. Obeying the organization's order to return to its camp in the Iraqi desert, she was surely motivated by a dream of being reunited with her mother again. Alas, she was wrong in the extreme.

Separated from her mother, both remain as slaves of the Mojahedin. Children who, like Zolal, yielded to the Mojahedin's highly sophisticated pressure for them to return, have shown various reactions to the manipulations of the Mojahedin sect. Some committed suicide, like Alan Mohammadi. Some, with great courage, like Yasser Ezzati, fled the demonic Rajavi's Hell. Some, like Zolal, succumbed to the brainwashing machine.

In lying about her own father's memory, Zolal is playing her scripted part in a real-life fiction:

The Mojahedin Candidate. Recently the Mojahedin has used Zolal more and more to enforce its fictional propaganda version of what is happening in Iran – giving a whole new perspective to the beautiful name her parents chose for her, Zolal, meaning clarity. ■

THE MOJAHEDIN CANDIDATE – REDEFINING 'CLARITY'

By Mitra Yousefi

It is November 2004. Yet again we see the notorious terrorist group Mojahedin-e Khalq (MKO or MEK) flaunting themselves in the USA's capital city. Yes, as themselves! The USA's sworn ideological enemy whose history is littered with slogans and mantras against the USA, whose stance on the American embassy occupation in Tehran was of the most extreme and uncompromising.



Zolal Habibi reading from the Mojahedin script

Infamous for being in cahoots with Saddam Hussein's genocides; recipient of vouchers in the Oil-for-Food scandal; charged with imprisoning and torturing its own members, abusing its members' children; enslaving contemporary slaves; exploiting and manipulating women. The MKO's multitudinous crimes still remain unpunished. So, perhaps they could hardly believe it themselves; the terrorist Mojahedin permitted to hold a rally even after 9/11 and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime and exposure of just a few of its heinous crimes. Certainly we – who have fled the Mojahedin's Hell – would not have expected it. And then, with what bitterly amusing irony we discovered that the Mojahedin rally, in the heartland of the USA's democratic institutions, coincided with the release of Denzel Washington's movie *The Manchurian Candidate*; a modern version of the Korean War story of brain-washing and thought reform. Far-fetched as it

may appear to cinemagoers, for us this story is not a fiction. This is how real lives are lived inside the Mojahedin. In a marvellous coincidence between fantasy and reality, the film provided the perfect backdrop from which to examine

and critique the Mojahedin's own real-life version 'The Mojahedin Candidate', with the appearance of the young brainwashed queen of the Mojahedin's carnival, Zolal Habibi. The lead player in the real-life fiction 'The Mojahedin Candidate' in this instance was female. In typically cynical style the Mojahedin manipulates the image of women to hide its ugly fundamentalism. But the mind's eye can easily detect this lie. I am a woman, and it was as a woman inside the Mojahedin that I received the most contemptuous, degrading treatment I have experienced in all my life. Reporting the rally in November 2004, the *Washington Post* said, "...Zolal Habibi thought of her father. She said Mohammad Hossein Habibi, a writer and human rights activist, was killed in 1988 in Iran for speaking out against the Iranian government." Zolal, the queen of the carnival. Her name in Persian means 'clarity'.

Unlike Denzel Washington's character, the lead actor in *The Mojahedin Candidate* with the name meaning clarity, does not show any awareness of having been brainwashed. Yet the lines she has been given for her part clearly defile her own father's memory and whitewash his murderers' hands.

It was in 1987 when I first met a sweet little girl in a suburban Parisian villa belonging to the Mojahedin. Along with her good hearted father, her kindly mother and a tiny baby brother, they had just arrived from the USA. They were exhausted, having travelling through the long distance of places and hours. The little girl, named Zolal, was still vivacious. That night and over subsequent days, I discovered the beautiful and affectionate clarity in her eyes and in her smile. She looked a lot like her father and tremendous love was shown in her looks and gestures toward him. I remember wondering if her father, >11

SURVIVORS' REPORT

Association for the Support of Victims of Mojahedin-e Khalq ©2006

Editor

Anne Singleton

Contact details

Iran-Interlink
PO Box 148, Leeds LS16 5YJ
United Kingdom
Telephone +44 113 278 0503
Email info@iran-interlink.org
Website www.iran-interlink.org