

## Gross Misrepresentation of Historical Facts

June 10, 2005

[Adolf] Hitler's propaganda minister Josef Goebbels said once, "Tell a lie that is big enough and repeat it often enough and the whole world will believe it." Mahan Abedin's Iranian exile group strikes back (Jun 7) has followed that advice to the letter.

Far from being a "review of both sides of the argument", the article is a litany of gross misrepresentation of obvious historical facts. As someone who has followed the People's Mujahedeen (MEK) since 1972 and written about the group extensively, I would like to set the record straight.

1. There are [not] "dozens of former members" of the MEK who "have consistently complained of gross human-rights abuses ... since 1991". Human Rights Watch refers to the "testimonies" of four such self-styled witnesses. The other eight acknowledge to have gone to Iran after 2001. German and Dutch security services had warned several of them about their extensive ties with the Iranian Intelligence Ministry.
2. If these individuals were, as they claimed, mistreated, why would the MEK arrange for their travel abroad at its own expense. Surely, one would think that any group torturing its own members would want to make sure they never get the opportunity to tell others about it.
3. The MEK does not "insist that it should lead a US-backed effort to bring what it has termed democratic rule to Iran". The convention organized in Washington was not organized by the MEK and was not held in May, but in April. It was attended not by just "powerful Republican lawmakers" but [by] democratic lawmakers as well.
4. The article fails to take note of one of the most obvious aspects of the Iraq war: the heavy bombing of MEK camps by US and British warplanes ...
5. The inclusion of the MEK in the [US] State Department list of terrorist organizations was a "goodwill gesture" by the [Bill] Clinton administration to then newly elected President Mohammad Khatami ..."
6. The MEK played no role in the assassination of US military officers and civilian contractors in Iran 30 years ago. An investigative report in 2002 by the Council on Foreign Relations concluded that the assassination of the Americans was the work of a Maoist splinter group not under the control of [Massoud] Rajavi. Nor did the MEK "participate in the 1979 seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran". Ironically, those who took US diplomats hostage were the very same people the Clinton administration reached out to and the Europeans are continuing to appease today.
7. The "protected persons" status of the MEK was not the result of "a year-long tug-of-war between two US agencies". After an exhaustive 16-month investigation by seven different US agencies, including the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and the State Department, the US government concluded "there was no basis to charge any member of the group with the violation of American law or links to terrorism", according to the New York Times (Jul 27, 2004).
8. It was not the MEK [that] "prosecuted a serious campaign of violence against the Islamic republic". It was ayatollah [Ruhollah] Khomeini's Revolutionary Guards that

- turned a peaceful demonstration by half a million Iranians in Tehran in June 1981 into a bloodbath. Hundreds were executed the same night, some without their identities being established, according to the state-run Ettela'at daily on June 21, 1981.
9. The MEK never "promoted an ideology based on Marxism-Leninism and Shi'ite theology". A mixing of the two would be an oxymoron. Nor was there "wholesale feminization of the organization and the placing of females - irrespective of competence - in all top positions". Had that been the case, the MEK would not have overcome all the schemes and attacks against it by the Iranian regime and its foreign interlocutors in the past 25 years.
  10. Massoud Rajavi's move to Baghdad was not the result of MEK's decision to "ally itself with the former Iraqi regime". It was the French government, and ironically Jacques Chirac, who struck a deal with Tehran to secure the release of the French hostages in Lebanon and who declared Mr Rajavi persona non grata. Similarly, there is no truth to the charge that "MEK forces played a role in the suppression of the so-called Safar Intifada of March 1991". Reuters of May 22, 2002, quoted a senior official of a leading Iraqi Kurdish group, who is today a minister in the new Iraqi government thus: "[We] can confirm that the Mujahedin [sic] were not involved in suppressing the Kurdish people neither during the uprising nor in its aftermath. We have not come across any evidence to suggest that the Mujahedin have exercised any hostility towards the people of Iraqi Kurdistan."
  11. Human Rights Watch's report was based merely on telephonic interviews, hardly the type of testimony that a "credible and high-profile human-rights organization" would lend credence to. Several of these individuals had previously approached Human Rights Watch, the UN special rapporteur on Iran, Professor Maurice Danby Capithorne, and Amnesty International, but to no avail.
  12. The MEK has always invited international human-rights organizations to visit its camps in Iraq. In a letter on October 28, 1994, Massoud Rajavi personally invited Human Rights Watch to send representatives to Iraq to investigate any abuse allegations. In the past 11 years, HRW has not taken up that offer.
  13. In the past quarter-century, Tehran and its apologists in Europe and Washington have consistently written off the MEK. If one were to take that assertion at face value, why then is the Iranian regime devoting so much time, energy and resources to demonize it? Why not leave it to wither into oblivion?

**Ali Safavi**  
**President, Near East Policy Research**  
**Washington, DC (Jun 10, '05)**