

## World community raps Iran on human rights

**AP** Associated Press

### U.N. condemns Iran's human rights situation

*The Associated Press, Dec. 20, United Nations* – The U.N. General Assembly on Monday approved a resolution criticizing Iran for human rights violations, citing new restrictions on freedom of expression and the persecution of political and religious dissenters.

The measure, which is not legally binding but reflects global opinion, was approved 71-54 with 55 abstentions.

The world body said there is a "worsening situation" regarding freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of the media, "especially the increased persecution for the peaceful expression of political views, including arbitrary arrest and detention without charge or trial."

It cited "crackdowns by the judiciary and security forces against journalists, parliamentarians, students, clerics and academics; the unjustified closure of newspapers and blocking of Internet sites." It also criticized the disqualification of large numbers of candidates and harassment of opposition activists in the run-up to parliamentary elections in February...

It urged Iran to abide by its human rights obligations and to fully implement the ban on torture, expedite judicial reform, eliminate religious discrimination, end cruel and degrading punishments such as amputation and flogging, eliminate stoning, and institute prison reforms.

The resolution, which was co-sponsored by 34 countries, deplored Iran's execution of children under the age of 18 in violation of international statutes...

**MEHRNEWS.com**



### Tehran snubs UN resolution

*Mehr News Agency, Dec. 21* - Assefi said the [UN] resolution issued on the human rights situation in Iran is political and unreal. Assefi stated, "This resolution is undocumented and far-off from the existing realities in Iran. It has been compiled based on distorted, unreliable and inaccurate sources and is not credible."

### Under Iran's 'divinely ordained justice', girls as young as nine are charged with 'moral crimes'. The best that they can hope for is to die by hanging

**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

*Sunday Telegraph, Dec 19* - As one young woman awaits sentence and another faces death this week, Alasdair Palmer reveals the Iranian legal system's shocking barbarity towards children

"My mother doesn't visit me in prison. If you see her, tell her she promised to bring me cheese curls and chocolate. And she shouldn't forget to bring my red dress."

Those pathetic words may be among the last utterances of a 19-year-old girl, identified only as Leila M, who has been condemned to death in Iran for "acts incompatible with chastity".

According to Amnesty International, Leila has a mental age of eight. What evidence there is of her life so far records an existence of unrelieved misery and brutality.

She was sold into prostitution at the age of eight by her parents. She recalls the experience of when her mother "first took me to a man's house" as "a horrible night. I cried a lot ... but then my mum came the next day and took me home. She brought me chocolate and cheese curls."...

Earlier this year, she confessed to the authorities that she had been working as a prostitute since she was a child – perhaps because she thought that they might help her escape her miserable existence.

The courts did respond by pulling Leila out of prostitution, but they also imprisoned her and used her confession to convict her of "moral crimes", for which the judges have decided the appropriate penalty is death.

They dismissed evidence from doctors and social workers that she has a severe mental handicap... There is every indication that the Supreme Court will decide that Leila must die. Earlier this year, they upheld a sentence of death on 16-year-old Atefeh Rajabi. Atefeh had also been convicted of "acts incompatible with chastity".

In her defence, she said she had been sexually assaulted by an older man. The judges did not care. So, on August 16, at 6am, Atefeh was taken from her cell and hanged from a crane in the main square of the town of Neka.

Witnesses report that she begged for her life as she was dragged kicking and screaming to the makeshift gallows. She shouted "repentance" over and over again – a gesture which, according to Islamic law, is supposed to grant the accused the right to an immediate stay of execution while an appeal is heard.

Atefeh's cries were in vain. Haji Rezaie, the judge who presided over her trial, put the noose around her neck himself. He said he was pleased to do it. "Society has to be kept safe from acts against public morality," he insisted.

He ordered that her body be left hanging from the crane for several hours so people could see what happened to teenagers who "committed acts incompatible with chastity".

In the case of Hajieh Esmailvand, a young woman found guilty of adultery with an unnamed 17-year-old boy, the Supreme Court has not only confirmed the death sentence imposed by the lower court, but changed the means of death from hanging to execution by stoning....

Article 104 is specific about the type of stones that should be used when a woman is to be punished for adultery. They "should not be large enough to kill the woman by one or two strikes, nor should they be so small that they could not be defined as stones". Hajieh will die slowly, in agony, buried in sand, as officials lob correctly sized stones at her head.

It is a fate that also awaits Zhila Izadyar, a 13-year-old girl from the northern province of Mazandaran. She has been sentenced to be stoned to death after her parents reported that she had had an incestuous relationship with her 15-year-old brother and had become pregnant by him.

Zhila has already received a "preliminary punishment" of 53 lashes. A representative from Iran's Society for the Protection of Children's Rights has managed to visit Zhila in prison. She found the 13-year-old in a desperate state, in solitary confinement and unable to keep down food. She has not been allowed to see her child.

"I am scared. I want to go home," said Zhila. "I want to go back to school like the other children." But if Iran's judges have their way, Zhila will see neither her school nor her home again. She will be buried up to her neck and the last thing she will see will be stones hurtling towards her head.

The barbarity towards children of the Iranian legal system is all the more surprising in that it contradicts the international legal obligations on the treatment of children, which the Iranian government has adopted. Iran is a signatory both to the International Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which explicitly forbid the execution of minors - let alone their killing by stoning....

There are no plans to change any of the provisions of the Penal Code that relate to children, and which state that girls as young as nine can be executed (boys have to reach the age of 14 before they can be killed).

Many Iranians are revolted by the brutality and injustice of their judges' attitude to children. Shadi Sadr, an extremely brave lawyer who represents Atefeh Rajabi's family, has filed a suit against the judiciary for wrongful execution, and is preparing a murder charge against the judge who hanged her.

While fundamentalist mullahs still hold on to power in Iran, her suit is unlikely to succeed. Indeed, those who are disgusted by judicial decisions cannot even safely express their condemnation of a system that not only hangs children, but beats them to death in public: Kaveh Habibi-Nejad, a 14-year-old boy, suffered this fate on November 12 for eating on the streets during Ramadan. Witnesses said that they thought he died because "the metal cable being used to flog him hit his head".

Mahbobeh Abbasgholizadeh, an Iranian academic, was arrested on November 1 after having queried some aspects of Iranian justice in a speech she made at a conference. She was held for a month before being released and charged with "acting against the security of the country". If she is convicted, it could mean an indefinite prison sentence....

For Hajieh Esmailvand and Zhila Izadyar, the prospects are bleak. The best they can hope for is to die by hanging rather than being stoned. As for the mentally retarded Leila M - she seems likely to hang in public before Christmas.

### **Norwegian protest to Iran**

*The Norway Post, Dec. 21* - Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen has condemned the planned execution of the mentally retarded 19 year-old Leila M in Iran. Among other things, the girl has been accused of prostitution.

Norway has sent a formal protest to Iran about the matter. A representative from the Iranian embassy in Oslo was on Monday summoned to the Foreign Office to receive the Norwegian protest. Petersen says the planned execution is totally unacceptable.



### **Leila's sentence to be upheld**

*Radio Farda, Dec. 22* - Mohammad Hossien Pourian Mehr, a member of the Islamic Republic Judiciary system admitted that a young woman accused of prostitution has been sentenced to execution in a court in Iran. The member disproved of the woman's mental illness...

Leila Mafi, a very young Iranian woman, whose sentence to execution has been upheld today, suffers a mental age of eight.

It is not clear how many other women suffer in the same way as Leila does and are awaiting executions.



### **EU urges Tehran to improve rights record, stop support for terrorism**

*Agence France Presse, Dec. 17, Brussels* - EU leaders are ready to intensify their political and economic ties with Iran if Tehran allays concerns over terrorism and human rights, they said in a draft text Friday at a summit in Brussels....

Moreover, they "confirmed the Union's readiness to explore ways to further develop political and economic cooperation with Iran, following action by Iran to address other areas of concern," the draft text said. Those areas were "the fight against terrorism, human rights and Iran's approach to the Middle East peace process," it added.

### **Tehran rejects EU proposal**

*News Network Television, Dec. 18* - Referring to the draft declaration of EU leaders, the chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said Iran does not recognize the Zionist regime and will not accept any condition for expanding cooperation.

Boroujerdi said Iran's cooperation on nuclear issues is a basis for the European countries' agreement to expand cooperation, adding, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has adhered to its commitments."

He said the European countries' failure to gain consensus for Iran's membership in the World Trade Organization, the MKO leader's speech at the European Parliament and the conditioning of expanded relations with the Islamic Republic on the recognition of the Zionist regime were important instances of the European countries' breach of their pledges. Boroujerdi said, "Now we are distrustful of the European countries and they must make efforts to build confidence."



### **Flood of freedom can wash away every one - Tehran's Friday Prayer leader admits**

*IRNA, Dec. 17* - In his second sermon to Tehran's Friday prayer, Ahmad Jannati (secretary of the Guardian Council) criticized the organizing of Iran Zamin Festival and said, "We have got to the point that we have to import dancers from abroad." He added, "As if we are not self-sufficient in this field and we have to bring people from Armenia and elsewhere... I am warning these people, if they want to do these kinds of things in the ten-day ceremonies of Fajr (on the anniversary of the 1979 Revolution), they should know that people will counter them..."

Jannati said, "The day the valve of a dam is opened in the name of freedom, if there are no barriers to control the flood, the flood will wash away every one. The flood-barriers must be strong. I pray to God to wake us from the sleep of ignorance."



### **Iran: Rights groups shine spotlight on capital punishment in Iran**

*RFE, Dec. 21, Prague* - "Unfortunately, every year there are some 300 to 400 executions in Iran," said Abdolkarim Lahiji, vice president of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (IFHRL). "When we look at a number of executions, we have to consider it in proportion with the population of that country. Considering the population of China and the U.S., I have to say that Iran is on top of the list."...

The IFHRL's Lahiji notes that Iran condemns young alleged offenders to death and then executes them when they turn 18.

"According to our figures, 25 teenagers under the age of 18 who have been sentenced to death are awaiting their unfair sentences to be applied," Lahiji said.



### **Judiciary uses coercion to cover up torture**

*Human Rights Watch, Dec. 20, New York* - The Iranian judiciary is using threats of lengthy prison sentences and coerced televised statements in an attempt to cover up its arbitrary detention and torture of internet journalists and civil society activists, Human Rights Watch said today. Since September, more than 20 internet journalists and civil society activists have been arrested and held in a secret detention center in Tehran. Most have since been released on bail. In a public letter to President Mohammed Khatami on December 10, the father of one of those detained, Ali Mazroi—who is also president of the Association of Iranian Journalists and a former member of parliament—implicated the judiciary in the torture and secret detention of the detainees.

Immediately afterwards, the chief prosecutor of Tehran, Judge Saeed Mortazavi, filed charges against Mazroi for libel. On December 11, Mortazavi ordered the detention of three of the released detainees—Omid Memarian, Shahram Rafizadeh and Ruzbeh Mir Ebrahimi—as witnesses for the prosecution in the case. These three journalists and Javad Gholam Tamayomi, a journalist who has been in detention since October 18, were brought to Mortazavi's office.

Mortazavi threatened the four detainees with lengthy prison sentences if they did not deny Mazroi's allegations. They were interrogated for three consecutive days for eight hours each day.

On December 14, the four detainees were brought in front of a televised "press conference" arranged by Judge Mortazavi, and forced to deny that they had been subjected to solitary confinement, torture and ill-treatment during their earlier detention. That evening, Iran's government-controlled television news broadcast videotapes that showed the four detainees saying that their jailors treated them as "gently as flowers."

## **Specter of Iranian influence haunting Iraqi elections**



### **Tehran meddles in Iraqi elections – Naqib**

*Radio Farda, Dec. 21* – Iraqi interior Minister Fallah Naqib accused the Islamic Republic of Iran of interfering in Iraq's elections and said, "Iran funds certain

Iraqi Shiite groups so they would win in the country's elections."

He added, "A group of Iranians have been able to obtain Iraqi ID papers so they can participate in Iraq's elections." He told Asharq Al-Awsat, "Iran hopes to direct the elections towards its own interests through these people."



### **Iranian links undermine mullah's drive for power**

*The Sunday Times, Dec. 19, Basra* -- AN alliance of religious parties that want to turn Iraq into an Islamic state is facing a growing challenge in the country's election and is accused of having secret links with Iran.

As campaigning was launched last week, a coalition of leading Shi'ite parties called the United Iraqi Alliance began as firm favourites for the poll on January 30.

At least 60% of Iraqis are Shi'ites. With much of the Sunni population threatening to boycott the election, the coalition that was pulled together on the orders of the revered Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has looked unbeatable.

Last week there was evidence that even in the Shi'ite heartlands — including the second city of Basra — the coalition is far from unshakable. It is being undermined by fears of Iranian influence and tribal loyalties to local candidates....

As registration closed for candidates, it emerged that at least eight coalitions will oppose the United Iraqi Alliance, in addition to 73 other independent parties. Among the main challengers is the Iraqi List, led by Iyad Allawi, the interim prime minister. Despite his links to America, Allawi has secured strong backing for action taken against Sunni insurgents in the north, including last month's attack on the rebel stronghold of Falluja.

"Everyone is going to vote in this election because it represents our freedom," said Maki Abdullah, a Basra trader who echoed the sentiments of many.

"I will definitely support Allawi because he is a strong man who is dealing with the bad people."...

In Basra, SCIRI and its militia, the Badr brigade, have a strong grip on local government. They also control much of the British-trained police and are thought to have murdered dozens of former members of Saddam's Ba'ath party.

Many citizens oppose such shows of force and are furious to see pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini, the late revolutionary Iranian leader, displayed in a police station.

"How can they reverence someone who put this city under siege and bombed us?" asked one unemployed engineer, referring to attacks on Basra in the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s.

As one senior British Army officer said last week: "In Basra, Iran is seen as shorthand for anything bad. Every crime or explosion is blamed on an Iranian outsider. Yet one way or another so many people have Iran in their background. It's going to be a big factor here."...

In Basra, Amer Al Fa'azi, a leading member of the Dawa Islamic Movement, said it was "obvious that many politicians were receiving cash from the Iranians. They have been supporting these people so they can control our future".

Amer is planning to use western-style election techniques from posters and leaflets to election meetings, door-to-door canvassing and TV broadcasts.

However, he said that Iraq's election would have its own unique flavour. As well as his party political allegiance, he is also a leader of the 140,000- strong Beni Amer tribe. "Of course they will all vote for me because of my tribal relationship. It's not like in Europe," he said.

Muzahim al Tamimi, another tribal leader, has put together a list of independent candidates — including doctors, lawyers, teachers and engineers — to challenge the religious leaders and the established political parties. He is expecting intimidation by Islamic militias but believes that he can attract votes from those who are fed up with "the corruption and robbery of political leaders".

## **The Washington Post** **How Iran is winning Iraq**

*The Washington Post, Dec. 17, by David Ignatius --* If you had asked an intelligence analyst two years ago to describe the worst possible political outcome following an American invasion of Iraq, he might well have answered that it would be a regime dominated by conservative Shiite Muslim clerics with links to neighboring Iran. But just such a regime now seems likely to emerge after Iraq's Jan. 30 elections.

Iran is about to hit the jackpot in Iraq, wagering the blood and treasure of the United States. Last week an alliance of Iraqi Shiite leaders announced that its list of candidates will be headed by Abdul Aziz Hakim, the clerical leader of the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. This Shiite list, backed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, is likely to be the favorite of Iraq's 60 percent Shiite majority and win the largest share of votes next month

Wary of trusting Iraqi Shiites to manage the campaign, the Iranian intelligence service has been pumping millions of dollars and hundreds of operatives into the country. The Iranians have also recruited assassination squads to kill potential Iraqi rivals, according to several Iraqi officials. One Iraqi Shiite tells



**Abdul Aziz Hakim with Iran's Khatami**



me the Iranians view the hit teams as a kind of "insurance policy" to make sure they prevail, even if the U.S.-backed election process should fail ...

Senior U.S. commanders in Iraq had hoped Allawi's slate would win in January, but they are beginning to assess the consequences of Shiite victory. Not only would it empower the mullahs, it would alienate Iraq's 20 percent Sunni Arab population, who mostly won't be able to vote next month because of the continuing wave of terrorism in Sunni areas. As sectarian tensions increase, post-election, so will the danger of a real civil war. What will become of the U.S. military mission in Iraq? Will we really arm one group of Iraqis in a sectarian conflict against another

Given the stakes for the United States in these elections, you might think we would quietly be trying to influence the outcome. But I am told that congressional insistence that the Iraqi elections be "democratic" has blocked any covert efforts to help America's allies. That may make sense to ethicists in San Francisco, but how about to the U.S. troops on the ground

I talked by telephone this week to a Sunni tribal leader from Ramadi who, in a more rational world, would be one of the building blocks of a new Iraq. His name is Talal Gaaod, and his father is a leading sheik in the Duleim tribe, which has power in what has become known as the Sunni Triangle, west of Baghdad. Gaaod, who earned his undergraduate and master's degrees at the University of Southern California, has tried various ways to help stabilize his area. He proposed a tribal security force in Anbar province earlier this year that was backed by local Marine commanders but later vetoed in Baghdad. Encouraged by Jordan, he brought about 50 Iraqi Sunni leaders to Amman in November to discuss Iraq's problems. But the Jordanians canceled the meeting after the U.S. offensive in Fallujah began. He wants to believe the United States can create a better Iraq, but he's losing hope.

"It is a miserable situation," Gaaod told me. "My people feel that Iraq is going into a deep hole. Things are not improving but getting worse. A lot of good people are leaving the country -- I'm talking about technocrats, tribal leaders, the middle class. I blame the United States for giving the clergy a front to lead events in Iraq. I am sure you will regret this one day. It will not work. One hundred years from now, it will not work

Iraq's Shiite majority deserves its day in the sun, after decades of oppression, and the January elections should endorse the reality of majority rule. But future historians will wonder how it happened that the United States came halfway around the world, suffered more than 1,200 dead and spent \$200 billion to help install an Iraqi government whose key leaders were trained in Iran. Our Iraq policy may be full of good intentions, but in terms of strategy, it is a riderless horse

## **The Boston Globe**

### **Iranian meddling in Iraq**

*Boston Globe, Dec. 22, GLOBE EDITORIAL* - When

campaigning began for elections scheduled for Jan. 30 in Iraq, the first hot-button issue raised by Iraqi politicians was the specter of Iranian influence.

US officials as well as Arab leaders are breaking no new ground when they warn in public about Iranian meddling in Iraq. They are fearful of Tehran for geopolitical reasons. They don't want Iranian-style theocracy to spread beyond Iran's borders...

Campaigning for the new National Assembly alongside Prime Minister Iyad Allawi last Wednesday, Iraq's interim defense minister, Hazem Shaalan, suggested that parties represented on the electoral list of the United Iraqi Alliance -- a list compiled primarily by religious Shi'ites loyal to Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani -- might be soft on national security because they are in thrall to Tehran...

The political spin of the minister's accusation shows that many people in Iraq harbor profound fears of Iranian influence.

That fear has less to do with ethnic or sectarian animosity than with Tehran's political system. According to Shaalan, the Iranians "are fighting us because we want to build freedom and democracy and they want to build an Islamic dictatorship and have turbaned clerics to rule in Iraq." ...

## **Daily Telegraph**

### **Ex-enemy Iran may be biggest winner in Iraqi poll**

*Daily Telegraph, Dec. 21* - Iraqi officials fear that the big winner from next month's historic election will be its powerful neighbour and former enemy,

Iran...

"There is a real concern that the interference we are seeing from Iran at the moment is just the beginning, and that Baghdad could be slowly slipping into the orbit of Teheran," said Safa Rasul, chief of staff of Iraq's National Security Council...

In the Kurdish-controlled north officials say they have intercepted a steady stream of fighters from the terrorist group Ansar al-Islam, which they say Teheran has sheltered since the US-led invasion to topple Saddam. "Iran is continuing to work with Ansar," said one senior Kurdish official, who believed there were 1,500 members working in Iraq for the Ansar group, an affiliate of al-Qa'eda....



Privately, [US] officials concede that Iraq is likely to take "an Iranian turn" after the election, a notion unimaginable before the invasion, when neo-conservatives in Washington believed they could create the Middle East's first secular democracy. Now many grudgingly accept that the elections are likely to usher in an Islamic state....

Asked what level of influence Iran has over the parties, one western diplomat replied: "Vast. In the south of the country the whole idea of Iraqi nationalism has broken down. There's a strong sense of community with Iran."



### **Religious scholars must supervise elections**

*IRNA, Dec. 17* – Jannati, secretary of the Guardian Council, made comments on the Iraqi elections during the Friday prayers. He said: "Religious scholars can play a good role in this field. They must supervise this election because there might be rigging, which must be prevented..."

He stressed: "The accusations leveled against the Shiites and Iran must be resolved there."

### **Iran official calls for massive turnout in Iraq elections, pressurize for their own candidates**

*AFP, Dec. 17, Tehran* - A senior Iranian official urged Iraqis to take part massively in next month's elections amid barely concealed expectations here that a high turnout will deliver power to the long oppressed majority who share Iran's Shiite faith.



"If you really want to have a relatively assured future, participate in the forthcoming election and vote massively for those who care about Iraq," said Ayatollah Ahmad

Janati, a leading hardline cleric who heads a powerful watchdog body that vets all legislation and candidates for public office...

"Iraqi clerics and other caring Iraqi personalities should supervise the elections, since they (the US-led coalition) may do things in order for the people not to reach their desired results," he said.



### **Basra residents protest Iranian takeover**

*Az-Zaman daily, Dec. 21* – In the past two weeks, we have received many letters from the residents of Basra, expressing their dissatisfaction at the situation in

Basra. They say Basra residents are victims of the power centers in this strategic Iraqi city:

Mr. Abdol Karim Yusef AlBatat writes in an email, "They sell off Basra's grounds while the residents of Basra are hope-sick for buying just a house or enlarging their stores. Iranians buy large grounds, date orchards and farming grounds. Believe me, there is nothing left for us to sell and for them to buy."

Mr. Sami Askar Al-Nawijed writes in his letter, "Farsi has become more common in Basra than Arabic, especially in daily tasks, trade, buying and selling... In dealing with armed groups, you cannot speak with them unless you speak Farsi. The hearts of these armed individuals is made of stone and revenge brims over on their eyes."

Mr. Dawoud Hassan Al-Basri says, "We Basrawis feel isolated from Iraq. There is no government to follow up our needs. No one speaks of government nor knows anything about the country's president. In agencies, no one listens to complaints. If someone complains, they tell him, 'Brother, go learn Farsi, otherwise no one will listen to you.' The people are in a bad situation. They are many night-time assassinations... My cousin lives in Al-Zobair town and he is thinking of moving out because of the threats posed by armed groups with Islamic slogans."



### **The bridge of good will... and Iran the neighbor**

*Al-Mashreq daily, Dec. 18, Iraq* – Our neighbor does not give us time to get over our present problems. On the contrary, it takes the worst advantages of our present conditions, so much that Iraqi officials say they are actively trying to nourish the waves of terrorism on Iraqi territory under the excuse of confronting the US...

These days, not only we hear hot reports about Iran's interference in Iraq's elections, its results and the participants in it, but it is also heard that the Iranians have entered some Iraqi cities to take advantage of democracy and influence the results of elections to the benefit of a group that could be called Iran's lobby. And if this is true, it is the responsibility of the Iraqi Interim Government to quickly solve this problem in order to carry out the elections and ensure its integrity...

One can say with confidence that the bridge of good will must connect the two to each other, but Iraqis not only don't feel such a thing, but they sense the exact opposite.



### **Bush renews warning to Iran, Syria against 'meddling' in Iraq**

*AFP, Dec. 20, Washington* - President George W. Bush on Monday cautioned Iran and Syria not to interfere in Iraq's internal politics, saying the United States had a variety of ways to retaliate if the two countries failed to heed his warning.

The message is the second within a week from the US president to Tehran and Damascus to refrain from "meddling" in Iraq.

"When I said the other day that I expect these countries to honor the political process in Iraq without meddling, I meant it. And hopefully those governments heard what I said," Bush said at a news conference.

"We have tools at our disposal -- a variety of tools, ranging from diplomatic tools to economic pressure," he said.



### **US commander: Iran is long-term threat to Iraq**

*The Washington Post, Dec. 17* – "The Iranian government's influence on Iraq needs to be watched," [Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the U.S. commander in Iraq] said, but does not appear to pose a major problem in affecting next month's elections...

"I don't see substantial Iranian influence on this particular government that will be elected in January," he said. "I see Iran as more of a longer-term threat to Iraqi security..."



### **Blair: We do not want another Islamic Republic**

*Baztab website, Dec. 22* – Sources close to the Interim Iraqi Government believe that the main reason for Tony Blair's unexpected trip to Iraq was to warn Allawi about the victory of Shiites and Islamists in Iraq's elections.

This source told Fars News Agency, "Blair explicitly warned about the victory of Shiites and Islamists in his meetings with Allawi and Ghazi Al-Yawar in Iraq's January elections." Blair has stressed that they do not want another Islamic Republic in the region.

## **Sources of Tehran's power**

### **Mullahs will not give up meddling in Palestinian affairs**

*Javan daily, Dec. 19, Iran* – In its last meeting in Brussels, the European Union raised some issues as preconditions for any economic and political cooperation with Iran, underscoring the views of those observers who said the Europeans are trying to prolong the talks...



What is the message for Iran when one of the main MKO leaders is invited to the European Parliament for a speech?! It is clear that the Europeans deliberately want to steer the talks towards issues that our country will never retreat from its positions on them. For instance, the Europeans have cunningly hidden the issue of Palestine, in their recent declaration, underneath the ostensibly acceptable phrase of "Middle East Peace talks". They have asked Iran to allay Europe's concerns about it whereas this has been a substantial and strategic difference between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the West over the past 25 years. They give multilateral military, economic, media

support to a phony, illegitimate and criminal regime called Israel and are completely informed of the stance of the other party (Iran)... Nevertheless and despite being aware of Iran's positions, the European leaders deliberately tie that issue to the nuclear talks.

### **Tehran's DM threatens to respond from other countries, should US attack**

ISNA, Dec. 17 – Commenting on potential and de facto regional and domestic factors involved in



national security threats, (Defense Minister) Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani said, "Regarding Iran and the threats surrounding this country, there is an image of us that we face economic, political, and social challenges both in the body of the society and within our political structure. Whereas the power we enjoy lies in our popular base, defense capabilities and regional influence. I believe that no one can deny our regional power which extends from Qods (Jerusalem) to Kandhar."...

Shamkhani said, "Our enemies look for our vulnerable points in challenging our power. Their logic of military action is to use their strength against our weak points and challenge our powers. The rationale of neo-conservatives in the United States is based on military might and on exploiting our domestic challenges which constitute an opportunity for them."

The Defense Minister added, "Naturally, we also have our own logic. We pursue to prevent such an incident from happening. This is Iranian defense logic. If others make their decisions by taking regional challenges into consideration and opt to solve them, then they must recognize Iran's power in the region."



### **Foreseeing the battle of Europe**

*New York Post*, Dec. 20 -- If Iraq becomes an ally of Iran, Shahab-3 missiles will be that much closer to Europe when they're fired. In the 1973 Arab Oil Embargo, the European economy was maybe 10 days away from collapse before it ended. Europe depends even more on Middle East oil than we do. This scenario might just come to pass:

Under tremendous media and political pressure, President Bush decides to cut our losses like a businessman and pulls all U.S. military forces out of the Middle East.

Iranian- and Syrian-backed terrorists take over Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

They shut down all oil exports until Europe is crippled. Then they invade the European continent.

In fact, they already have invaded.

### **Aftermath of Maryam Rajavi's EP visit**

### **A furious Tehran wants EU to abet in suppressing opponents**



### **Strike made mullahs turn round**

*Al-Hayat daily*, London-based Arab language daily, Dec. 17 – In a step which was a setback to Iran's leaders in their relations with the European Union, enhancing

the negative positions of the Iran's internal factions towards the Paris Agreement, Maryam Rajavi, Secretary General of the Iranian People's Mojahedin Opposition (Sic.), attended a special meeting at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the invitation of a number of member states. This was considered a strike which had the Iranian regime turn around itself and says bad words to the Europeans, denouncing the measure which is seen by Iran as a flagrant breach of commitments made in Paris, specifically, the last article which noted Iran-Europe cooperation in fighting terrorism and the activities of Al-Qaeda and the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran.



*Al-Qadr weekly, Jordan, Dec. 18* – A female Iranian leader meets with members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

### **Tehran accused European Parliament**



*BBC Television, Europe Record*, Dec. 18 –

After the Parliament of Europe hosted a speech by the leader of an exiled opposition group devoted to overthrow the clerical regime of this Islamic country, Iranian officials accused the European Parliament of supporting terrorism. Maryam Rajavi addressed a group of

MEPs called the Friends of a Free Iran. Her group is the political arm of the People's Mojahedin which is in the list of banned terrorist organizations of the European Union.

*(This report has been translated back to English from Farsi.)*

### **Government officials continue lamenting about EP hosting of Resistance leader**

**IRNA, Dec. 21** – Hossein Mousavian, chair of the foreign policy committee of the Supreme National Security Council said the presence of an MKO leader in the European parliament contradicts the Europeans' commitments which have considered the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran terrorist. He said, "European governments must naturally deal firmly with this ugly act by a limited number of MEPs..."

"We must consider that the Iran-Europe work process on nuclear issues is faced with a challenge. This process is challenged in our own country, too.

Naturally, the Europeans have parties, groups and ways of thinking that are trying to challenge this process. Besides this, the Americans are certainly not sitting idle and are definitely planning to defeat this process."



### **Majlis official sees EP move as breach of Paris Agreement**

*Mehr news agency, Dec. 18* – Noting the European Parliament's invitation of Maryam Rajavi for delivering a speech, the head of National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Majlis said, "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must pursue this measure which contradicts the agreements through diplomatic channels." In an interview with Mehr news agency, Aladdin Boroujerdi said, "After the passive reaction of European countries to the United States' veto against Iran's joining the WTO, we are witnessing a new move from the European Parliament which indicates that the Paris Agreement does not enjoy a solid basis for implementation." He pointed out, "The Paris Agreement considers the MKO a terrorist organization similar to the Al-Qaeda... The European Union must watch out because such measures could inflict serious damages on Iran's general trust in Europe."

## **With Tehran gaining more concessions, EU-3 deal receives another question mark**

### **Iran's secret plans for 'nuclear' gas go ahead despite earlier promises**

*Sunday Telegraph, Dec. 19* - Teheran had assured European leaders that it would suspend uranium enrichment activities, but new information suggests otherwise.

Iran has drawn up secret plans to make large quantities of a gas that can be used to produce highly enriched uranium, despite promises to suspend enrichment activities.

Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, Iran's atomic energy chief, has authorised construction of a plant to make Anhydrous Hydrogen Fluoride (AHF), a gas that has many uses, from petrochemical processing to uranium enrichment.

The plant is expected to be finished by 2006 and will have a capacity to produce 5,000 tons of AHF a year, according to a Western intelligence official. It is to be built near Isfahan, a city where the authorities are said to have authorised a number of secret nuclear facilities.

"Such a plant would directly enhance enrichment activity," said one Western diplomat based in Vienna.

"Iran has a deal with us, but it is pushing the envelope in every way it can.

"It shows that in their mind they have not accepted suspension. Politically, on the domestic stage, the officials in charge have to show that enrichment is still going forward."...

America has previously blocked Iranian efforts to acquire AHF.

Four years ago, Washington put enormous pressure on Beijing to withdraw a shipment of large quantities of the gas to Iran.

According to a report by the Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, in California, China may have sold a blueprint for a facility to produce highly enriched uranium to Iran as part of the same deal. Isfahan is one of the main centres of Iran's alleged programme to develop nuclear weapons.



### **Tehran taking advantage of loophole in agreement with Europe**

*Reuters, Dec. 21, Vienna* - Iran's decision to keep preparing raw uranium for enrichment, a step on the way to making nuclear weapons, breaks the

spirit though not the letter of its pledge to freeze all such activity, diplomats said on Tuesday.

Under a deal Iran reached with three EU nations to freeze all enrichment activity as of Nov. 22, preparing "yellowcake" uranium for enrichment is strictly prohibited. But the accord allowed Iran to finish some limited uranium conversion work that it had already begun before the suspension took effect. But Iran will now continue enrichment-related work until February, Western diplomats told Reuters.

Continuing the work that long "would certainly violate the spirit of the agreement," a Western diplomat said. "Iran has a legal basis for doing it, but it will not inspire much confidence in them," another diplomat said.

Iran's chief delegate to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said separately that Iran would press ahead with its nuclear program. Western diplomats said this would include work broadly but not explicitly covered by last month's suspension accord.

"The Iranians have decided to continue UF<sub>4</sub> (uranium tetrafluoride) production until the end of February," one diplomat told Reuters. UF<sub>4</sub> is a precursor to uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>), the gas that is fed into centrifuges which spin at supersonic speeds to purify it for use as fuel in civilian nuclear power plants or in atomic weapons.

Two other diplomats confirmed the report. One said Iran appeared to be exploiting a loophole in the promise it made to France, Britain and Germany to freeze enrichment activity. "It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone," said one Western diplomat. Whenever there is a loophole in an agreement, the Iranians find it and use it to their advantage, he said...



### **Iran still producing uranium metal**

*Associated Press, Dec. 22, Vienna* -- Iran is still converting uranium in a process that can be used to make nuclear weapons as it exploits a loophole in a recent deal it made to freeze such activities, diplomats said Tuesday.

The diplomats told The Associated Press that Tehran is still turning tons of raw uranium into uranium metal and has said it would continue to do so until February. The metal is a precursor of uranium hexafluoride -- a substance that can then be used to produce weapons-grade uranium....

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency agreed to police the agreement and has placed seals on feed points at Iran's enrichment plant at Isfahan, meant to prevent new material from being introduced into the facilities.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a senior diplomat familiar with Iran's nuclear dossier said those seals remained in place Tuesday, meaning Iran was only converting raw "yellowcake" uranium already in the pipeline into uranium metal.

Introducing new material into the plant is banned under the freeze. But the diplomat said that Tehran's activity was allowed under the terms of the agreement reached between the Europeans and Tehran, which permits Iran to process all of the 37 tons of yellowcake that was already being converted when the deal was struck into a "stable state."

Much of those 37 tons was in the form of a liquid, and the immediate next step would be to turn it into the more "stable state" of uranium metal, said the diplomat.

"All of it was already in the pipeline," he said....

Nuclear experts say that when fully processed, the 37 tons of yellowcake can theoretically yield more than 200 pounds of weapons-grade uranium, enough to make five crude nuclear weapons.

The issue of enrichment is extremely sensitive as the international community tries to determine if Iran is using its nuclear program for peaceful purposes only, as Tehran insists, or trying to make weapons.



### **ElBaradei confirms Iran capable of producing nuclear weapons**

*Fars news agency, Dec. 20* - In a special interview with the Al-Arabiya Television and in response to a question on the possibility of attack on Iran if it continues its uranium enrichment activities despite IAEA supervision, Mohammad ElBaradei said:

Contrary to what the Iranian officials have said, the resumption of enrichment after six months is not at issue. In the agreement made between Iran and Europe, there is no time ceiling for the talks and consequently for the suspension of uranium enrichment. If Iran resumes uranium enrichment, Tehran's relations with Europe and the U.S. will become turbulent. I hope that we will achieve a mid-way solution by six months that would be satisfactory to both parties...

In response to a question on the subject of Europe-Iran talks whether it is the suspension of enrichment or a halt to Iran's nuclear program, the IAEA general director said: We must understand that Iran's nuclear program is not a technical issue alone, but also a security and political concern, because the ability of uranium enrichment for any country means that it does have the nuclear deterrence potential as well and can develop nuclear weapons in a short period.



### **Tehran endeavors, plans to maintain uranium enrichment**

*Jomhuri Islami daily, Dec. 20* – Aqazadeh, head of the Atomic Energy Organization, said this organization mines 300 meters into the ground to extract uranium rock. He said, "This kind of excavation is unmatched in the region and is considered an innovation."...

Referring to the products of Isfahan Factory, he said, "A product called natural uranium oxide is produced in this factory that can provide fuel for heavy water reactors without enrichment."...

Noting that "we have acquired knowledge of the UCF process", he said, "Suspensions started when 3.5 tons UFX and 30 tons UF4 had already been produced."

Aqazadeh said Iran has temporarily suspended production of UFX and UF4, adding, "All the manpower, reactors, equipment and converters are Iranian."...

Noting that the Iranian negotiators and officials must work prudently to help Iran keep its nuclear knowledge, he said, "Despite international exaggerations, Iran must cooperate with the world to maintain this national achievement for our society and the future generation."

### **Moussavian: Nuclear fuel cycle to be preserved despite Security Council referral**



*Iran daily, Dec. 22* – Seyyed Hossein Moussavian, chair of the foreign policy committee of the Supreme National Security Council said, "The administration's decision is to keep the fuel cycle even if it is at the cost of being referred to the Security Council. The other pest is whether the US will or will refuse to negotiate. If the Americans want to oppose the Europeans' procedure, they will create problems for us because Europe's guarantees cannot be put into practice without US consent."...

He added, "The board of governors can never deprive Iran of the fuel cycle."

### **We will defend nuclear facilities with all our might – military chief**

*Iran daily, Dec. 22* – Major General Mohammad Salimi, commander general of the Islamic Republic of Iran's army said, "Right now we are protecting the nuclear facilities with all our power, including ground forces, anti-aircraft equipment, tactical radars, command stations, guards and moving vehicle and on-foot guards. Attacking these facilities will not be easy."

Major General Salimi also downplayed the importance of reports about foreign forces practicing attacks on models similar to Iran's nuclear power plant. He stressed, "Reaching the destinations and carrying out the plans will not be easy for the enemy. The Air Force has been ordered to protect the air space of nuclear facilities with all its might."



### **Powell on Iran's nukes: It is wise to be suspicious**

*The Associated Press, Dec. 17* – On worries about Iran's nuclear capabilities and the possibility of a future U.S. military strike there, Powell said:

"I don't know of any military action that is being contemplated... What the president has said clearly is that we're going to work with our European Union friends, we're going to work with the IAEA, to put pressure on Iran to make sure that the concerns of the international community are satisfied by Iran."

"We have reason to believe that they have not abandoned the desire to develop nuclear weapons; and if you have that desire, then you may well be hiding things. And so until they have satisfied the

international community and until there is absolutely no doubt in anyone's mind that they are not hiding something, I think it's wise in this case to be somewhat suspicious."

### **Armitage: Iran a major US policy challenge**

*News Network Television, Iran, Dec. 22* – Richard Armitage called Iran's nuclear activities one of five important challenges to the United States policy. He once again accused Iran of making efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. The US Deputy Secretary of State also repeated claims by other US officials about Iran's interference in Iraq's internal affairs and sheltering AlQaeda members.

### **Iran -- A New Approach**

*The Committee on the Present Danger, Dec. 22* - Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei of Iran presents a fundamental threat to peace, for all signs point to his determination to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's people, on the other hand, are our allies. They want to free themselves from Khamenei's oppression and they want Iran to join the community of prosperous, peaceful democracies.

The recent agreement Iran made with France, Germany and Britain to temporarily halt uranium enrichment, while it may slow down its overall program, will do so only briefly.

What is needed is a permanent cessation of Iran's uranium enrichment activities (unless it can be proven the program is for peaceful purposes only), including inspection of recently-revealed secret nuclear facilities, along with those sites already agreed upon...

It must be made clear to Iran that the alternative to a permanent agreement to suspend its enrichment activities will be stiff economic sanctions-- something Iran does not want. A number of strategies can be put in place quickly to build pressure to both reduce the threat and to promote democratic change in Iran.... Ultimately, it is Iranians themselves who will make the breakthrough to democracy and remove Khamenei from power.

*The Committee on the Present Danger is co-chaired by Senator John Kyl, Senator Joseph Lieberman, former Secretary of State George Shultz and former CIA director James Woolsey.*