



Fringe meeting at the Palais des Nations on Ashraf
Geneva - March 9, 2011

International human rights organizations and experts condemn human rights violations in Iran express concern against threats to Ashraf



From left: David Matas, Gianfranco Fattorni, Eric David, Sid Ahmed Ghozali, Eric Sottas, Paddy Ashdown, Juan Garcès, and Emmanuel Poillâne

Recommendations to UN and US:

- *To force Iraqi government to remove the loudspeakers and end psychological torture of the residents*
- *The UN to station a permanent monitoring team in Ashraf and for the US to protect the UN team with a small military unit*

Paddy Ashdown

High representative and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2002-2006

The 4th Geneva Convention does not end when the war ends. Those refugees who have been put in difficulty or under threat in times of war, that positional protection is not removed from them when the war ends, it is removed from them when their position is put right.

Eric Sottas

President of OMCT

There have been attempts to move Ashraf, to close it and there have been direct attacks. It is crucial to remind the situation of Ashraf and the need for its protection.

Jean Ziegler

Member of Board of directors of France Libertés

The PMOI is the only movement that can save us from Islamophobia. I want simply to tell them: thank you because you are fighting for our freedom and our dignity.

Simultaneously with the 16th session of the Human Rights Council, a meeting was held on the invitation of World Organization against Torture (OMCT/ SOS-Torture Network), France Libertés – Fondation Danielle Mitterrand and Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP) on March 9. The meeting discussed the latest developments in Iran as well as the dramatic humanitarian situation prevailing at Camp Ashraf, where 3,400 residents are disarmed non-combatant protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention (particularly the article 45). The representatives of the USA, former occupying power, gave written guarantees to each individual in the Camp on ensuring their security. Excerpts from remarks made by the speakers follow in next pages:



Gianfranco Fatorini
Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP)

Since the establishment of the Islamic republic in Iran, millions of people have been discriminated or deprived of their fundamental rights. Iran has been among the countries with highest sad number of executions. The death penalty is an instrument in the hands of the government to deal with political instability and social crisis. Iranian officials said, about 80% of executions are related to cases of drug trafficking. In fact this accusation often barely conceals summary executions of the opponents. For too long the international community has remained indifferent, allowing leaders in Tehran to believe they could continue that policy with impunity. 3,400 PMOI Members live in Camp Ashraf and it greatly disturbs the Iranian authorities because of the role that organization plays in the protest movement in Iran.

Eric Soffas
World Organization against Torture (OMCT)



Since the arrival of the current Iraqi government, tensions against Ashraf haven't stopped rising. There have been attempts to move the camp, to close it, there have been direct attacks, and the latest attacks were launched in January directly against the residents. The difficulty in recent months was to bring medicines, a kind of humanitarian aid. There is clearly a desire to make the situation deteriorate, to get residents to leave and if possible to drive them out of the country. At the same time the regime has become more suppressive and executions have increased. The announcement of the possibility to get a special rapporteur on Iran made Tehran to react. In this context it is crucial to remind the situation of Ashraf and the need for protection.



Emmanuel Poilâne
France Libertés – Fondation Danielle Mitterrand

It is now for several years that Danielle Mitterrand has been very attentive to the humanitarian situation of Camp Ashraf and France Libertés speaks regularly at the Council of Human Rights in Geneva to help defend the human rights of political refugees in Ashraf. We wrote with OMCT and MRAP a written declaration to be submitted to this session of the Human Rights Council calling on the UN, the U.S. and Iraq to bear fully their responsibilities in ensuring the protection and security of every individual detained in Ashraf. With the winds of freedom blowing today across the Arab world, the fate of Camp Ashraf could be a strong sign of political change in the region. The weakening of dictatorships must be a lever for more diplomatic strength coming from the United Nations and the United States in order to come back to a healthy balance and Iraq respecting human rights.

Sid Ahmed Ghozali
Former Algerian Prime Minister



We are facing a problem of emergency. This is to take immediate action to avoid returning to the situation of a humanitarian disaster. In the past two years, what happened in streets of Iran was really a popular uprising that has continued against the regime as such for the first time since the formation of the Islamic Republic, slogans have become «Down with dictatorship», «down with Khamenei», and it is a desperate regime. When a dictatorial regime feels beleaguered, it tends to make diversion and create crisis outside the country. That's why for three years, Iran has exerted continued pressure on the Iraqi government, mainly through al-Maliki, who accommodates for the demands of the Iranian regime.

David Matas

Human Rights Lawyer



Eric David

Expert on international law

Juan Garcès

International and human rights lawyer



Paddy Ashdown

High representative and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002-2006)

Camp Ashraf is a group of 3,400 refugees from Iran in Iraq threatened with genocide.

The threat is not a theoretical construct based on the logic of their situation. It is explicit, spoken, blared continuously, twenty four hours a day seven days a week, from 210 loudspeakers around the camp.

In July 2009, Iraqi forces attacked the camp and killed eleven residents. Loudspeaker voices now shout out "Have you forgotten the July attacks? Do you want the murders repeated?" Other voices shout through the loudspeakers: "I will kill the PMOI members." Since everyone in the camp is a PMOI member, the threat is equivalent to shouting "I will kill all of you". This is a threat which needs to be taken seriously. When a threat of genocide is made this blatantly, the international community must react.

The obligation to respect and enforce the agreements of 1949 conventions and an obligation that binds all State parties to the Geneva Conventions. The entire international community is responsible for what happens today in Ashraf. These operations of harassment carried out by Iraqi forces at Ashraf, are collective sanctions taken by Iraqi authorities against Ashraf, violating various provisions of the Conventions of 49, especially Article 50 of the 4th Geneva Convention.

Iraq is bound to the refugee convention that has been de facto recognized to the residents of Camp Ashraf. Violations of fundamental rights and freedoms as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population, ie population of Ashraf, is exactly the definition of crimes against humanity in Article 7 of Statute of the International Criminal Court.

We are witnessing in Ashraf an open torture practiced on the entire population of a city, which experts on torture call «white noise» or noise torture. They subject people to unbearable noise bombardment until the mental, psychological, or physical structure is broken. Psychological torture applies gradually more and more. They went from 60 loudspeakers, to 80, 120, 180 and now they are already at 210 loudspeakers, day and night. What is happening in Ashraf is a flagrant and serious violation of the 4th Geneva Convention. And for this convention, these violations are considered as war crimes and may be prosecuted according to the principles of universal jurisdiction by states that have ratified the Geneva Convention.

The 4th Geneva Convention, which of course protects the rights of refugees in times of conflicts and in times of war, does not end when the war ends. Those refugees who have been put in difficulty or under threat in times of war, that positional protection is not removed from them when the war ends, it is removed from them when their position is put right. It is no good to say that this is now the responsibility of another sovereign government. That sovereign government was created by us. We created the space in which the Iraqi Government came into existence. We cannot hand over that moral commitment in this fashion. I do not believe that the fact that the Iraqi Government is now acting in ways which I find completely unacceptable, is something on which our personal responsibilities both as governments and as individuals, in Britain and in the US, is diminished. It is now our duty to make sure that the promises that we gave are now honoured in full and if the proper vehicle for delivering this is the Iraqi Government then we must make sure that the Iraqi Government does precisely that.



Jean Ziegler

Member of Board of directors of France Libertés

I join the meeting on my personal capacity but I am Vice-chairman of Advisory Committee of Human Rights Council ... The PMOI is the only revolutionary movement of national liberation which has no state support. It is the only national liberation movement that can save us from Islamophobia. They are revolutionaries, who are men and women of faith, Muslims, but fighting for democratic values of freedom, rule of law, separation of powers, universal values. So the fact that they must succeed in freeing Iran concerns all of us. This fight is really exemplary. We really have great admiration and total solidarity with PMOI. They have lost tens of thousands of people, killed, executed, and Ashraf is the last case where youth, women and men are murdered. I want to tell them, simply tell them: thank you because you are fighting for our freedom and our dignity.

Protection and enhancement of the rights of Camp Ashraf residents must be ensured

Joint written statement submitted to the 16th session of the UN Human Rights Council by three major international human rights organizations, France Libertés - Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP)

The statement calls on the US government:

- reiterate without any ambiguity that residents of Ashraf remain “protected persons” by virtue of the Fourth Geneva Convention and as such, must continue to enjoy the basic rights and protection guaranteed by this convention;
- take back immediately direct responsibility for the protection of Ashraf Camp’s residents and deploy adequate military forces that shall also help UNAMI set up a permanent monitoring team in the camp;
- take the appropriate measure to lift the inhuman siege of Ashraf that has continued now for two years, put an end to the psychological torture of the residents that has been going on for the past eleven months and expel the agents of the Iranian government’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security who camp illegally outside the entrance to the southern wing of Camp Ashraf, solely with help and support coming from the Iraqi government and forces;
- remove the PMOI from the foreign terror list of the State Department in implementation of the decision by the Federal Appeals Court in Washington (July 2010), given that in its resolution (0075/2010) adopted on November 25, 2010, the European Parliament considers that “the residents (of Camp Ashraf) are still being subjected to external pressures under the pretext that the PMOI remains on the US’s black list”.



Ruth Wedgwood

Chair, International Law and Diplomacy, John Hopkins Univ.

It would be a great pity if the UN, having coined the phrase RtoP, responsibility to protect, were the first to violate it and to abandon a group of

disarmed civilians to the fate of a fairly brutal regime. I can say this as an American that Maliki is very close to the Iranian regime and one should have no doubt about how he would indulge the wishes of Tehran. In terms of the rights of the people in Ashraf, there is the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is really a restatement of the customary law of human rights. The right of family and to have your family to subsist under decent conditions, articles 17 and 23 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the right to be free from torture, which is article 7 of the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, article 6, the right to life, the right of human personality and the right to recognition before the law.



Annemarie Lizin

Honorary President of Belgian Senate

The responsibility of the United States when they disarmed a group is a responsibility that cannot be undone. The problem is that the treatment of Ashraf people and the difficulty of protecting them show that the war in Iraq has served to extend the power zone of Iran. Iraq is now controlled by Iranian forces. The danger for Ashraf is an illegal operation organized from Iran being led with the tolerance of some cells in the Iraqi forces that would close eyes. On the occasion of the debate on the Iran resolution, it’s one of the points that should be met by the largest possible number of delegations, positively, in relation to the United States, to get the effective protection in coordination with the UN.