

NEWS ON IRAN

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DOMESTIC

Strikes, protests

Iran Zamin, Jan. 8 - Fishermen Bandar Turkman, northern Iran, clashed with government agents in Shilat Fishing Company and inflicted damages on the building. The fishermen are angry over a state contract with Japan, allowing them to fish, by spreading fishing nets, in the coasts of the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran. This, they say, will seriously damage local fishing. The government receives 70 million rials for each round of fishing. One million will go to Shilat and the rest will be deposited to the government treasury. The contract has led to a number of similar clashes so far.

Iran Zamin, Jan. 8 - Workers at Isfahan's Aali brick factory have continued their strike which began in October over the non-payment of their wages. Having serious difficulties to obtain the necessary raw material, and pay the workers' salaries and bonuses, the factory is virtually shut down.

Salaam, Jan. 4 - Tehran's 13th district postal workers have stopped working in protest to their work conditions.

Suppression

AFP, Jan. 6 - The Supreme Judicial Council upheld the executions of five men convicted of espionage for the United States and Iraq.

Kazem Afkhami Moqaddam Tabrizi, Jalil Showqi, and Mohammad Abbas Zadeh are said to have been arrested in 1992 for spying for the U.S. Their arrests had not been previously made public.

Sohrab Hosseini and Ali Madad Karami were incriminated for "spying for Iraq" and "taking part in operations against the Iranian economic and military installations."

Agence France Presse, Jan. 4 - Eight persons, including a woman, convicted in the Islamic court for smuggling drugs and theft, were executed in Kerman province. Press reports said they belonged to a 24-member network active in the province. The other members were given six to 11 year jail terms.

Reuters, Jan. 3, - Drug smugglers, addicts and thieves -- 70,000 of them -- are crowding Iranian prisons and creating chronic shortages of space, an Iranian official said on Wednesday.

Assadollah Lajevardi, the official in charge of Iran's prisons, said on Wednesday that 70 percent of Iran's total 100,000 civilian inmates were convicted of drug trafficking, drug addiction or theft and that lack of space was a major problem, the Iranian news agency reported.

The figures apparently did not include prisoners convicted by military courts or by special courts dealing with violations by Islamic clerics.

Kayhan, Jan. 3 - The country's security, law and order, and western border problems were discussed in a special session of the Council for the Western Borders Security on Jan. 2. The Interior Minister, Ali Mohammad Besharati, chaired the meeting held in at the Interior Ministry with the provincial governors of Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, Kermanshah and military and security commanders. "Iran is not intervening in others countries' affairs. While observing good neighborly relations, she will give a decisive and mighty response to any attempts of aggression on Iran," Besharati announced.

Tehran radio, Jan. 2 - The regime has imposed new restrictions on illegal money dealers in downtown Tehran. Some 150 money dealers were reportedly arrested last week on Ferdowsi Avenue.

Jomhouri Islami, Dec. 31 - Iran's Police destroyed some 30 "pornography" networks in Kermanshah, western Iran, and arrested dozens of people. A physician, several teachers and a government employee also belonged to these networks, discovered in March near the Iraqi border.

They took pictures from nude young women to force them into prostitution. The girls were illegally sent abroad and offered to Arab sheikhs. Several young women in these networks had committed suicide due to inhuman treatment.

Internal feuding

Jan. 4 - Ahmad Azari Qomi, the well-known ex-general prosecutor of the Islamic courts and the former publisher of semi-official *Ressalat* newspaper, wrote a 28-page open letter announcing that he does not recognize the mullahs' leader, Khamenei, as the supreme leader and that he does not follow his methods.

Mehdi Ha'eri, an expert on Islam based in Germany, released the news, saying that Intelligence Ministry agents had raided Azari's residence and put him under house arrest.

In his letter, Azari lambasted the conduct of the office of Khamenei and the policies of Rafsanjani's government. He expressed grave dissatisfaction at the persecution of the clergy who defy instructions dictated from the top. He declared that he will not in any way cooperate with the present government, the Majlis and the Judiciary. He resigned his seat at the Assembly of Experts and announced to the nation that no organ or leadership body ever listened to his grievances. For 16 years, I tried to improve the situation but encountered the Intelligence Ministry every time. I can no longer do anything, he complained.

Poverty

Press conference, Tehran, Jan. 1 - A Khomeini regime's official revealed that 80 percent of the government owned hospitals do not have enough budget to observe the sanitary regulations. This was disclosed by Pazouki, an adviser for the department of health at the Ministry of Medicine and Health.

Appointments

Tehran radio, Jan. 3 - Khamenei issued separate decrees appointing Hassan Rowhani and Mohammad Javad Larijani as his representatives to the Supreme National Security Council for two more years.

Nuclear Weapons

Tehran radio, Jan. 2 - Rafsanjani visited several ongoing projects by the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization,, among them, Bushehr's nuclear plant in south of the country. Rafsanjani said the correct and peaceful use of nuclear energy is an important step, politically, scientifically and economically.

Contrary to the efforts of the U.S. and those who do not wish to see the Islamic Republic in its suitable and worthy status, Rafsanjani said, Iran has been able to take crucial and reliable strides in its principled use of various sources of energy.

FOREIGN**Mullahs' New Conspiracy**

Iran Zamin, Jan. 8 - In a session chaired by Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on October 28, the mullahs' Supreme Security Council decided to launch a new series of military and terrorist conspiracies against the Iranian Resistance. In this session, the Ministry of Intelligence was assigned the task of carrying out the plots.

Militarily, the plot entails reinforcing terrorist activities to "strike the leadership" of the Iranian Resistance in France and on the Iran-Iraq border strip. The explosion of a car bomb near the Mojahedin's central office in Baghdad on November 26, and the terrorist attack on their base west of the city on December 22, are examples of the regime's terrorist attempts.

Politically, the Ministry of Intelligence instructed one of its agents in the United States, Nasser Khajeh Nouri, to travel to Europe last November and brief and prepare a number of the ministry's present collaborators for going to the U.S. to testify against the Mojahedin before political and human rights circles there.

In 1994, Khajeh Nouri submitted to human rights authorities an Intelligence Ministry list of 115 persons, whom he claimed had deserted the ranks of the Mojahedin or been tortured by them.

The Intelligence Ministry was also instructed to dispatch in coordination with the Foreign Ministry a number of such delegations disguised as "dissenters" to meet the special representatives of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, before the latter's probable visits to Iran, to testify against the Iranian Resistance

Relations with U.S.

Tehran radio, Dec. 31 - The Speaker of the Majlis proposed that the deputies specify and adopt a budget for encountering the United States' interventions, especially in the Islamic countries. Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri described the U.S. congressional decisions as irrational, biased and foolish, which violate all the international laws, principles and accords.

He said the recent decision by the U.S. Congress to allocate \$20 million for anti-regime initiatives shows that the United States is the source of terrorism in the world, and supports terrorists and terrorism.

Reuters, Jan. 2, Tehran - Demonstrators burned coffins and chanted "Death to America" in an anti-U.S. rally in Tehran to protest at moves in the U.S. Congress to fund covert activities against Iran.

About 2,000 Iranians, mostly young men, marched to the U.N. office in the north of the city where they set fire to two coffins wrapped in U.S. flags.

"It is the coffins of (U.S. President Bill) Clinton and (Newt) Gingrich we are burning," a rally organizer told the crowd, referring to press reports that House Majority Leader Gingrich was behind moves to allocate \$20 million for a covert action plan against Iran.

"The Iranian government is restricting us because they want to observe international laws. But once we are free we shall show Gingrich what it is to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries," Hassan Allahkarami, an Islamist student activist, told the crowd.

Intervention in Afghanistan

IRNA, Jan. 6 - The official delegation sent to Afghanistan for negotiations with Taliban forces, today left Qandhar. The news does not make any reference to the success or failure of the negotiations, but says the Islamic Republic will continue its efforts in the future to convince the Taliban. A Taliban spokesman said Iran cannot be an intermediary because it is not impartial and is looking for its own interests in this situation.

Meddling in Iraqi Kurdistan

Foreign Radio reports, Jan. 6 - The Islamic Republic's Foreign Ministry delegation to the Iraqi Kurdistan who traveled to that country despite vehement opposition of the Iraqi government, returned home. Informed sources in Iranian Kurdish organizations say the regime is trying to find a way for striking at the Iranian Kurdish groups residing in northern Iraq.

Okaz, Jan. 7 - The Saudi daily warned Tehran's clerics against any meddling in the internal affairs of Iraq. Baghdad government called the visit to the Kurdish area in northern Iraq as provocative and dangerous, saying that Iran is playing with fire.

Syria's Peace with Israel

News agencies, Jan. 6 - The Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said some time ago that Iran-Syrian relations were well but could deteriorate as Syria gets closer to Israel. AFP cited political circles in Tehran as

saying that Syria's peace with Israel will not only hurt Tehran-Damascus relations, but also deepen the regime's sense of isolation in the Islamic and Arab world. Another real concern of the Tehran regime is the future of Hezbollah and other fundamentalist groups in the Middle East.

Standing up to Terrorism

Agence France Presse, Jan. 4 - The ex-British Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Douglas Hurd,

said in Manama that Iran continues to be a constant threat to the world. Iran supports sabotage activities in the Middle East and Africa and takes advantage of religious sentiments for political ends, Hurd was quoted as saying. If there is no change in Iran's policy, it will continue to be a constant threat to the region.