

# NEWS ON IRAN

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## DOMESTIC

### Taxi, minibus drivers strike

NCR statement, Apr. 7 - Reports from Iran say that following tremendous increases in the prices of basic commodities, especially after the new Iranian year that began on March 21, popular protests throughout the country have escalated.

On April 2, 3 and 4, taxi drivers in Malayer, 400 km southwest of Tehran, staged a city-wide strike to protest the price increases, particularly gasoline prices. They also demanded a hike in taxi fares.

Subsequently, minibus drivers operating between Malayer and Nahavand, and Malayer and Boroujerd, stopped working and called for increases in minibus fares.

Despite intervention by local authorities, drivers have refused to resume work and the situation in the city is described as very tense.

In a related development, President of Malayer's Payame Nour University resigned in protest to the lack of attention to the university's problems and insufficient facilities for the students. The university has been the scene of four-month-long strike in protest to these shortages. Instead of meeting the students' demands, officials plan to close down the university.

### Election results in five cities nullified

*Iran Zamin*, Apr. 8 - The Council of Guardians canceled election results in five Iranian cities, Isfahan, Malayer, Miyandowab, Najaf-Abad and Na'in. The cancellations come amid internal feuding among the regime's different factions. While Isfahan's Friday prayer leader called the move unjustified, Ahmad Jannati, the Council's secretary, defended the action, saying the decision is irreversible.

### Crackdown in Bonab continues

*Iran Zamin*, Apr. 8 - Following the antigovernment demonstration in this northwestern city on March 8th over election fraud, the regime has imposed a three-year ban on candidates from the city.

The weekly *Rasad*, published in the nearby town of Maragheh, was shut down and its publisher arrested for protesting the suppression of the unrest in Bonab.

The weekly had reported that at least six people were killed and 120 wounded as revolutionary guards opened fire on peaceful demonstrators.

### Crisis of legitimacy

*NRC Handelsblad*, Apr. 2 - The Iranian regime is facing a growing crisis of legitimacy. There is no way out of the current economic crisis and public discontent is continuing to rise. In the last two years, officials used

the *bassijis* to violently suppress uprisings and protests against the appalling economic conditions. A number of these riots broke out in Qazvin, Islam-shahr and Akbar-Abad. The *bassijis* are armed with G-3 rifles and wear a red headband which reflects their fanaticism and cruelty. A *bassiji* said: On the weekends, we either converge in ceremonies or roam the streets to enforce observance of "Islamic precepts." We attack women and men who walk together. We arrest women who are improperly veiled or who have put on make up.

### Concern about the future?

Tehran radio, Apr. 5 - Speaking at Tehran's Friday prayers, Ahmad Jannati, the secretary for the Council of Guardians warned government authorities of the bleak prospects that loom.

Referring to rampant bureaucratic corruption, Jannati said: "We are not so concerned about the present juncture; our concern is about the future. Sparks we see here and there are warning bells. You must open your eyes. These sparks should not spread to the heap.

"While still at the start of the current, we can stop the water with a shovel. But, if we fail now, we cannot stop the flood which will drown all of us."

### New nuclear reactor

*Iran Zamin*, Apr. 8 - London's *Sunday Express* reported that Iran is building a large nuclear reactor in the Nekka region, near the Caspian sea. The reactor will enable the regime to produce an atomic bomb...

Nuclear experts say that if the reactor in Nekka continues its operation, Iran will soon be the first extremist country to possess an atomic bomb, the paper wrote.

### Price hikes continue

*Salaam*, Apr. 3 - The cost of motor oil has increased three-fold since two weeks ago. The price of potatoes also rose 350%. Impoverished families can no longer afford buying Potatoes. The prices of onions and tomatoes have also gone up dramatically, exerting tremendous pressure on low-income families.

*Kayhan*, Apr. 4 - Cost of mail has increased 15% since the start of the new Iranian year. The Ministry of Economy and Finance announced that taxes on the buying and selling automobiles will also rise.

*Salaam*, Apr. 4 - A reader: "These gentlemen who govern have become more Catholic than the Pope. Why do they not alleviate unemployment. Out of work, I sold everything I owned in order to prevent my starvation. I sold my last piece of equipment today." Another reader: "Please tell the government how can a mere approval of

plans resolve the problems? Who is to be held accountable for a 60% increase in bus or taxi fares?"

## FOREIGN

### Troika Tehran mission fails

AP, Apr. 5 - A European Union delegation pressing Iran to take a strong stand against terrorism and for Middle East peace had a "very frank" talk in Tehran this week but announced no results, France said Friday...

"This meeting produced very frank, very frank discussions," Foreign Ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt emphatically told a daily news briefing in response to a reporter's question.

The so-called "troika" from Italy, Spain and Ireland "transmitted its message and its message is: the Europeans wish that Iran adopts a clear position on terrorism and a constructive one on the peace process in the Middle East," Rummelhardt said, reading a statement.

The troika, led by Incisa di Camarana, subsecretary of state for Italian foreign affairs, met with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and other officials, Rummelhardt said.

### Britain may call off critical dialogue

*Daily Telegraph*, Apr. 4 - Britain was last night considering whether to break off its "critical dialogue" with Iran, following the failure of a European Union mission hoping to persuade Tehran to condemn the use of terrorism to hamper progress towards peace in the Middle East...

France and Germany, backed reluctantly by Britain, have favored a policy of constructive engagement with the Iranian regime. This policy may now be about to change.

### NCR calls for arms, oil embargo

NCR statement, Apr. 3 - Prior to their visit to Tehran, European Union officials had made it clear that if the clerical regime did not change its position, the continuation of critical dialogue could not be justified.

With the insistence of the mullahs' religious, terrorist dictatorship on the export of terrorism and fundamentalism and opposition to Middle East peace, adopting a decisive policy in place of critical dialogue becomes necessary. The Iranian Resistance calls for a comprehensive arms, oil and technological embargo against the Tehran regime.

Any effort to ignore the regime's defiant position is tantamount to sacrificing the most fundamental ethical principles before petty economic interests. It will only embolden the mullahs to intensify their terrorist crimes.

### Mullahs' bloody trail

*Die Welt*, Apr. 4 - Ibrahim Zakeri, chairman of NCR's committee on counter-terrorism finds some Western

democracies' embracing of the clerical regime with soft gloves as being preposterous.

What France and Germany have persuaded others to follow, namely critical dialogue which the European Union adopted in December 1992 due to economic attachments is a mistake, Zakeri said in Paris.

Zakeri insisted that all of the regime's terrorist activities are directed by Tehran's embassy in Bonn and that some action must be taken against Iran's diplomats.

Out of all terrorist assaults against Iranian exiles, 31% occurred during Khomeini's reign since 61% happened when Rafsanjani took office. For this reason, the Europeans must pursue not critical dialogue but a decisive approach, Zakeri said.

### Saudis warn against mischief

Reuters, Apr. 5 - Saudi Arabia on Friday warned pilgrims they risked severe punishment if they carried political material on the Moslem pilgrimage.

Iran meanwhile urged its pilgrims to hold an anti-US rally at the hajj.

An Interior Ministry statement said violators of the ban would "be severely punished according to Saudi rules without leniency," the official Saudi Press Agency said.

In Tehran, Iran's hajj supervisor Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri said: "Proclaiming to the world the cry of the oppressed and also voicing fury against the arrogant ones (the West) are among the main responsibilities of Iranian hajj pilgrims..."

Iranian media said last year thousands of pilgrims defied the Saudi ban to chant slogans against the United States and Israel in two rallies outside the holy city of Mecca.

Iran boycotted the hajj for three years after Saudi troops clashed in Mecca in 1987 with an Iranian-led rally, killing about 400 people, mainly Iranians.

## FEATURE

*"Iranian dissidents urge end to critical dialogue, point to mullahs' terror campaign abroad,"* BBC World Service, April 1, 1996.

By: Caroline Wyatt.

The Iranian Intelligence Minister, Ali Fallahian, has denounced last month's decision by a German court to issue a warrant for his arrest, on suspicion of four counts of murder and attempted murder, in connection with the killing of four exiled Kurdish activists in Berlin in 1992. In his first public reaction, Fallahian said the warrant was illegal and had been issued because of Israeli and American pressure.

However, on the eve of a European Union visit to Iran, the National Council of Resistance, a dissident group based in Paris, has accused the Iranian leadership of launching a new campaign of violent intimidation against Iranian exiles in Europe, particularly in Germany.

The issuing of an arrest warrant by Germany for Iran's Intelligence Minister, Ali Fallahian, has undoubtedly soured relations between Iran and its main trading partner, despite the German government's attempts to limit the damage.

Unable to prevent the independent judiciary from issuing the warrant, the foreign ministry in Bonn insists it remains keen to pursue the official European Union policy of a critical dialogue with Tehran. However, pressure on Germany to take a tougher line is growing both at home and abroad.

America, in particular, is keen to isolate Iran because of its support for Hamas, the militant group behind the recent bombings in Israel.

Meanwhile, exiled Iranian opposition leaders say the Iranian intelligence services are conducting a renewed campaign of violent intimidation aimed at silencing Iranian dissidents based in Europe and Turkey.

According to Shahin Gobadi, a spokesman for the National Council of Resistance of Iran, at least 3,000

Iranian expatriates in Germany have been threatened in recent months. Earlier this year, an Iranian asylum-seeker was kidnapped from his home near Bonn, and tortured by four men believed to be Iranian agents.

The NCR says that the Iranian embassy in Bonn is continuing to act as Iran's intelligence headquarters in Europe. Iranian dissidents in Germany, France and Britain are now urging the European Union to drop its critical dialogue with Tehran and instead impose a complete embargo.