

Subject: Timmerman/Washington Times: Human Rights Emergency in Iran

Dear friends,

IN an oped piece in today's Washington Times, I put into perspective the campaign by the Iranian regime to go after Kurdish and Balouchi dissidents, and reveal that the Islamic Republic is now using Interpol to go after dissidents, an outrageous development.

Interpol is not obligated to accept "red notice" requests from member states. **I urge our friends in Congress to block U.S. funding of Interpol until this stops.**

Best,

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TIMMERMAN: Human rights emergency

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Kenneth R. Timmerman

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/mar/27/the-iranian-regime-thinks-it-is-on-a-roll-without/>

The Iranian regime thinks it is on a roll. Without so much as a whimper from the United States or Europe, it succeeded in brutally suppressing the Green movement during the latest round of protests on the anniversary of the revolution on Feb. 11. Now it sees an opportunity to roll up its opponents outside Iran as well.

In recent show trials, Tehran cynically has tried dozens of opposition demonstrators as "mohareb" (one who wages war against God). The crime carries the death sentence and has been used periodically by the regime as a means of eliminating its opponents.

On Feb. 23, the Iranians nabbed a prominent guerrilla leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, who had been living in Pakistan. Just days later, they released an obviously staged videotaped "confession" in which Mr. Rigi said that his Baluchi rebel group, Jundollah, had been offered arms, money and training by the CIA - charges the U.S. government dismissed as "ludicrous."

Mr. Rigi's group has launched a series of spectacular raids against the Iranian security forces. The deadliest of these attacks was also the most recent. On Oct. 18, a Jundollah suicide bomber blew himself up near the town of Pishin, Iran, while an official government delegation was visiting the Baluchistan region. The attack killed at least 43 people, including 15 top Revolutionary Guard officers.

Now the regime has won new allies in its effort to crush the opposition: the governments of Belgium and Germany, and Interpol, the International police organization based in Lyons, France.

On March 6, the German government exercised a dubious arrest warrant issued by Belgium and stormed the Cologne apartment of Rahman Haj Ahmadi, the secretary-general of the Free Life Party of Iranian Kurdistan.

According to the German-language warrant, which was not shown to Mr. Ahmadi at the time of his arrest, he was wanted because he "is said to have attended" a meeting of a pan-Kurdish Congress, the KCK, and to have gone to training camps run by his own organization in northern Iraq "wearing a PJAK uniform, which resembles the uniforms of the PKK."

This is literally death by association because the United States and some governments in Europe have recognized the Turkish PKK as a terrorist organization. The only problem is, PJAK is not the PKK, and its training camps are located in a very different part of Iraq's rugged northern mountains from those operated by the PKK. I know, because I visited the PJAK bases in October 2007.

PJAK is primarily a political organization that seeks to "change the culture" of Iranian Kurdistan and promote a broad-based secular democratic movement in Iran, according to Mr. Ahmadi. PJAK activists played a central role in the

post-election protests in Tehran and other cities and have been arrested and tried in large numbers. Some have been executed already.

The president of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Larijani, boasted on March 8 that his government has issued an official request to extradite Mr. Ahmadi to Iran, where he will face certain execution. The Germans released him after holding him incommunicado over the weekend, but he has been barred from leaving the country.

The Iranian regime has a strong motivation to crush the long-simmering ethnic rebellions in the Kurdish and Baluchi regions of the country. Both groups operate in predominantly Sunni Muslim areas along the country's eastern and western borders and appealed to non-Persian minorities, who have been repressed systematically by the Tehran regime.

Making this situation even more absurd and outrageous is an international arrest warrant - known as a "red notice" - issued by Interpol on March 6 for Shahram Homayoun, an Iranian broadcaster who runs a satellite TV station in Los Angeles.

The Interpol warrant cites as justification a judgment by a court in Shiraz, Iran, condemning Mr. Homayoun as a "terrorist." Mr. Homayoun tells me he was unaware of any court proceeding against him in Shiraz, but he makes no bones about his opposition to the regime. Before the June elections, he used his satellite television network to call on Iranians to carry out peaceful protests using the slogan "Ma Hastim" - we exist.

Mr. Homayoun is a legal U.S. resident and says he has received reassuring calls from the local FBI field office. "But of course, the punishment for terrorism is execution," he told me. "So this arrest warrant is an execution order."

Interpol has issued 50 red notices for Iranian opposition activists, mainly on terrorism-related charges. A key government witness in the Mykonos trial in Germany - which resulted in convictions against top Iranian leaders for the murder of a Kurdish dissident in Berlin in 1992 - is also wanted by Interpol at Iran's request on fraud charges.

It is a travesty of justice and the whole notion of international police cooperation for Interpol to allow itself to be used as an enforcement arm of the Iranian regime to track down and destroy peaceful opponents living overseas. American taxpayers fund a good chunk of Interpol's operating budget. **Congress should withhold funds from Interpol until this outrageous manipulation of international police cooperation is rescinded.**

The role of Germany and Belgium in the farce of Mr. Ahmadi's arrest sets a dangerous precedent and will certainly encourage the Iranian regime to pursue other dissidents. Interpol's complicity only adds to this.

With no opposition from the U.S. and the collusion of European governments, every Iranian dissident - whether living as a political refugee or not - is in danger. Worse, that danger comes not just from Iran, but from European governments and possibly the U.S. government as well.

The Obama administration has said it does not want to "interfere" in Iran's domestic political disputes. But since when is standing up for internationally recognized standards of human rights considered interference by responsible U.S. leaders? U.S. presidents since Jimmy Carter have raised human rights cases with leaders of the Soviet Union, China, Poland and other states. Is the Islamic Republic of Iran the only exception?

The Iranian regime's behavior constitutes a human rights emergency. Without immediate action by Belgium and Germany to rescind the arrest warrant of the PJAK leader and strong measures from the United States to guarantee the security of Iranian dissidents in this country, it's going to be open season on Iran's freedom fighters - no matter where they live.

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