

# MEK Factsheet

The Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) seeks to be removed from the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, which would enable the group to raise money in the U.S. and even receive direct U.S. government funding and support.

- The [State Department reports](#) the MEK is a terrorist group that has murdered innocent Americans and maintains “the will and capacity” to commit terrorist attacks within the U.S. and beyond.<sup>1</sup>
- The MEK claims to have renounced terrorism in 2001, but a [2004 FBI report](#) states “the MEK is currently actively involved in planning and executing acts of terrorism.”<sup>2</sup>
- [RAND](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) have reported that the MEK is a cult that abuses its own members.<sup>3 4</sup>
- MEK has no popular support in Iran and has been [denounced by the Green Movement](#), Iran’s peaceful democratic opposition movement.<sup>5</sup>

## Delisting MEK: Disastrous Repercussions

**The MEK is opposed by the Iranian people due to its history of terrorist attacks against civilians in Iran and its close alliance with Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war.**

1. The greatest beneficiaries of delisting MEK would be Ahmadinejad and Iranian hardliners who seek to link the U.S. and the Green Movement to MEK.
2. U.S. support for MEK would be used as a propaganda tool by hardliners to delegitimize and destroy Iran’s true democracy movement.
3. American credibility among the Iranian people would be ruined if the U.S. supported this group.

## Iran’s Opposition Green Movement Rejects the MEK

- The leaders of the Green Movement, Iran’s true popular opposition movement, have denounced the MEK and warned that the Iranian government seeks to discredit Iran’s opposition by associating it with the MEK:
  - “The Iranian Government is trying to connect those who truly love their country (the Greens) with the MEK to revive this hypocritical dead organization.” – [Mehdi Karroubi](#), Green Movement leader.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2006, available at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) Criminal Investigation, November 29, 2004, available at: [http://www.niacouncil.org/site/DocServer/FBI\\_Report.pdf?docID=921](http://www.niacouncil.org/site/DocServer/FBI_Report.pdf?docID=921)

<sup>3</sup> RAND Corporation, The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq: A Policy Conundrum, available at: [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG871.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG871.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch, *No Exit: Human Rights Abuses Inside the Mojahedin Khalq Camps*, May 18, 2005, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/45d085002.html>

<sup>5</sup> Mohsen Kadivar and Ahmad Sadri, *Salon.com*, “Hillary Clinton’s Crucial Choice on Iran,” March 26, 2011, available at: [http://www.salon.com/news/politics/war\\_room/2011/03/26/iran\\_green\\_movement/index.html](http://www.salon.com/news/politics/war_room/2011/03/26/iran_green_movement/index.html)

<sup>6</sup> Tony Karon, *Time*, “Why Are Some U.S. Politicians Trying to Remove an Iranian ‘Cult’ From the Terror List?” March 4, 2011, available at: <http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2011/03/04/why-are-some-u-s-politicians-trying-to-remove-an-iranian-cult-from-the-terror-list/>.

Original quote in Farsi available at: <http://www.pevkeiran.com/Content.aspx?ID=11802>

- “The MEK can't be part of the Green Movement. This bankrupt political group is now making some laughable claims, but the Green Movement and the MEK have a wall between them and all of us, including myself, Mr. Mousavi, Mr. Khatami, and Mr. Karroubi.” – [Zahra Rahnavard](#), Women's rights activist and wife of Green Movement leader Mir Hossein Mousavi<sup>7</sup>

### **Iraqi National Congress Redux?**

- The MEK claims it is “the main opposition in Iran,” yet similar to Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress that helped bring the United States into war with Iraq, the MEK is an exiled organization that has [no popular support within Iran](#).<sup>8</sup>
- RAND reports that the MEK are “skilled manipulators of public opinion.” The MEK has a global support network with active lobbying and propaganda efforts in major Western capitals.<sup>9</sup>
- Members of Congress have been deceived and misinformed into supporting this terrorist organization:
  - In 2002, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen led efforts for the U.S. to support the group, prompting then-Chairman and the Ranking Member of the House International Affairs Committee, Henry Hyde and Tom Lantos, to send a [Dear Colleague](#) warning against supporting the MEK. They cautioned that many Members had been “embarrassed when confronted with accurate information about the MEK.”<sup>10</sup>
  - In the current Congress, Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA) have each introduced resolutions calling for MEK to be removed from the Foreign Terrorist Organization list.

### **A Capacity and Will to Commit Terrorist Acts in the U.S. & Beyond**

- The [Bush administration determined in 2007](#) that “MEK leadership and members across the world maintain the capacity and will to commit terrorist acts in Europe, the Middle East, the United States, Canada, and beyond.”<sup>11</sup>
- The [Canadian](#) and [Australian](#) governments have also designated the MEK as a terrorist organization. The Canadian government just reaffirmed its designation in December.<sup>12 13</sup>
- An EU court removed the MEK from its list of terrorist organizations, but [only due to procedural reasons](#). According to a spokesperson for the Council of the European Union, the EU court “did not enter into the question of defining or not the PMOI [MEK] as a terrorist organization.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Patrick Disney, *Foreign Policy Magazine: Middle East Channel*, “Congressional backers look to exiled Iranian group for regime change,” September 22, 2010,

[http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/22/congressional\\_backers\\_look\\_to\\_exiled\\_iranian\\_group\\_for\\_regime\\_change](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/09/22/congressional_backers_look_to_exiled_iranian_group_for_regime_change)

<sup>8</sup> Jason Rezaian, *Foreign Policy Magazine: Middle East Channel*, “Washington's dangerous (and deluded) support for the MEK,” March 1, 2011, available at: [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/24/washingtons\\_dangerous\\_and\\_deluded\\_support\\_for\\_the\\_mek](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/24/washingtons_dangerous_and_deluded_support_for_the_mek)

<sup>9</sup> RAND Corporation, *The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq: A Policy Conundrum*, Pages 39-40, available at:

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG871.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG871.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Sam Dealey, *The Hill*, “Rep. Ros-Lehtinen defends Iranian group labeled terrorist front for Saddam Hussein,” April 8, 2003, available at: <http://replay.web.archive.org/20040619065636/http://www.thehill.com/news/040803/roslehtinen.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006*, available at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Canadian Department of Public Safety, “Currently Listed Entities,” December 22, 2010, available at:

<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/ns/le/cle-eng.aspx#MEK>

<sup>13</sup> Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/globalissues/terrorism.html>. See Australia's sanctioned terrorist list at [http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/regulation8\\_consolidated.xls](http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/regulation8_consolidated.xls)

## **Saddam Hussein's Terrorist Militia**

- The MEK received all of its military assistance and most of its financial support from Saddam Hussein, including funds illegally siphoned from the UN Oil-for-Food Program, until 2003.<sup>15</sup>
- The MEK helped execute Saddam's bloody crackdown on Iraqi Shia and Kurds. Maryam Rajavi, the MEK's permanent leader, instructed her followers to "[take the Kurds under your tanks](#)."<sup>16</sup>

## **A Cult That Abuses Its Own Members**

- [Human Rights Watch](#) reports that MEK commits extensive human rights abuses against its own members at Camp Ashraf, including "torture that in two cases led to death."<sup>17</sup>
- A [RAND report](#) commissioned by DOD found that the MEK is a cult that utilizes practices such as mandatory divorce, celibacy, authoritarian control, forced labor, sleep deprivation, physical abuse, confiscation of assets, emotional isolation, and the imprisonment of dissident members.<sup>18</sup>
- RAND concluded that up to 70% of the MEK members at their Camp Ashraf headquarters were likely recruited through deception and are kept there against their will.<sup>19</sup>
- The [FBI reports](#) that the MEK's "NLA [National Liberation Army] fighters are separated from their children who are sent to Europe and brought up by the MEK's Support Network. [...] These children are then returned to the NLA to be used as fighters upon coming of age. Interviews also revealed that some of these children were told that their parents would be harmed if the children did not cooperate with the MEK."<sup>20</sup>

## **A History of Anti-Americanism**

- One of the founding ideologies of the MEK is anti-Americanism—the MEK is responsible for murdering American businessmen, military personnel, and [even a senior American diplomat](#).<sup>21</sup>
- The MEK strongly supported the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979, vigorously opposed their eventual release, and chastised the government [for not executing the hostages](#).<sup>22</sup>

## **The MEK was Not "Added" to the FTO List as a Goodwill Gesture to Iran**

- The MEK has been a designated terrorist group since the State Department [established the FTO list October 8, 1997](#).<sup>23</sup> MEK was also listed in the [Patterns on Global Terrorism](#) report prior to 1997.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> CNN, "Iran condemns EU for delisting terror group," January 27, 2009, available at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/01/27/iran.eu.terror.group/>

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2009, available at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/140900.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Rubin, *New York Times Magazine*, "The Cult of Rajavi," July 13, 2003, available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/13/magazine/the-cult-of-rajavi.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch, *No Exit: Human Rights Abuses Inside the Mojahedin Khalq Camps*, May 18, 2005, available at:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/45d085002.html>

<sup>18</sup> RAND Corporation, *The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq: A Policy Conundrum*, Page 3, available at:

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG871.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG871.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> RAND Corporation, *The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq: A Policy Conundrum*, Page 74, available at:

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG871.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG871.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) Criminal Investigation*, November 29, 2004, available at:

[http://www.niacouncil.org/site/DocServer/FBI\\_Report.pdf?docID=921](http://www.niacouncil.org/site/DocServer/FBI_Report.pdf?docID=921)

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2009, available at: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/140900.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs to Congressman Lee Hamilton, Congressional Record Page E2263 in the 103rd Congress, available at [http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1993\\_cr/h930929-terror-pmoi.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/1993_cr/h930929-terror-pmoi.htm)

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 1997, available at:

<http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1997Report/backg.html>

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Patterns on Global Terrorism*. See, for instance, the 1994 report, available at

[http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror\\_94/append.html](http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror_94/append.html)