Call on Council of Europe to Save the Lives of Ashraf Hostages

During her visit to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on September 30, Maryam Rajavi met with Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (1). The President-elect of the Iranian Resistance is welcomed by parliamentarians and personalities in PACE where she participated in a conference (2) organized by the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom. Mrs. Rajavi also spoke at a meeting of the EPP-CD group, alongside its president, Senator Pedro Agramunt (3). She pleaded for the release of seven Ashraf hostages held by the Iraqi government since September 1st. She asked the European Parliament to secure an independent UN investigation into the killing of 52 Iranian refugees in Camp Ashraf on September 1 by Iraqi forces and protect the Camp Liberty residents with the presence of the UN Blue Helmets. She called on European countries to admit the Iranian refugees, the ill and the wounded residents of Liberty.

- UN and U.S. know very well that Maliki has made this attack on Ashraf and holds the hostages – Maryam Rajavi
- We call on the Iraqi government to release the hostages immediately – Pedro Agramunt, President of the EPP
- All our governments did was to condemn the massacre instead of taking measures – Brian Binley, British MP
- Iran once again plays the decoy – Jean-Pierre Michel, French Senator
- It is a failure of the international community that failed to protect those under its protection – Tiny Kox, President of the GUE group
- EU should seriously reconsider its relations with Iraq if the hostages are not released – Kimmo Sasi, Finnish MP
- I call on my government to suspend all foreign aid to Iraq as hostages are not released – Patrick Kennedy, former US Congressman

EPP/CD Group Statement on the 7 hostages from Camp Ashraf

Strasbourg / 1 October 2013- The Group of the European People’s Party of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (EPP/CD) strongly condemns the massacre carried out at Camp Ashraf on 1 September 2013 by Iraqi forces. The execution of 52 unarmed and defenseless Iranian dissidents, many handcuffed, is evidence of a crime against humanity. We are gravely concerned about the fate of seven PMOI members who were abducted during the attack.

Baroness Ashton wrote on 19 September that “we have reason to believe that up to seven camp residents are being held near Baghdad and there is a significant risk, they could be sent to Iran.” She added “I have spoken with Iraqi Foreign Minister to urge authorities to ensure the release of the hostages and to impress on them the need to avoid any further violence.” Similar statements by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have expressed great concerns about these 7 hostages in Iraq.

We, urge the UN, EU and USA to demand the immediate release of the hostages and to take necessary measures including among others reconsidering the bilateral relations if the hostages are not released by Iraq. We further call on all member states of the Council of Europe to demand from UN to station a monitoring team round the clock at Camp Liberty with UN peacekeepers until all residents are resettled outside Iraq.
To constantly move them around in such a way that when the address of one prison is revealed and the UN demands to visit it, that prison would be clear of the hostages. The UN and the U.S. know quite well that Maliki has carried out the attack on Ashraf and he holds the hostages. We have given them precise and detailed information in this regard. If they were to hold Maliki accountable and obligate him to fulfill his international commitments, the hostages would be expeditiously released or will be handed over to a European country. Nevertheless, the U.S. and the UN remain silent and choose inaction, and the European governments and institutions showed no serious reaction. Watching in silence is tantamount to approving the crime.

Rouhani is in charge of looking good in order to have the sanctions lifted.
Jean-Pierre Michel

I am visibly moved every time I hear the tragedies happening. I want to assure everyone that there is a strong feeling in Britain for the restoration of justice. I must admit that we have not done enough in the past. We will redouble our efforts in the British Parliament in the future to try to get justice against the murderous regime.
I give you my personal assurance that efforts will be redoubled to the Council of Europe and that we have the right in humanitarian terms of ensuring justice is done for the families of those who have suffered.
Today I give you the solid commitment of myself and my precious colleagues to work this to the end.
return against their will to Iran. These seven opponents are recognized by the UNHCR as asylum seekers. We all must stand with you Madam Rajavi and in charge of Camp Ashraf.

We all know what happened on September 1. This is a crime. Those responsible must be brought to justice if human rights and the rule of law have any meaning for us. Not only is it a crime, but it is also a failure of the international community unable to protect those under its protection. There can be no excuse.

It is a great shame for the international community, because if we cannot protect the ones we put in our care, how can we protect the rule of law and human rights worldwide.

I do my best at the office of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly to see what we can offer regardless of our policies and positions vis-à-vis Iran to propose a statement in which we condemn what happened on September 1, and where we will ask for guarantees that it is not repeated.

Patrick Kennedy, Former US Congressman

These MEK members, 7 of whom are still in captivity held by the country of Iraq that the US was so instrumental in supporting and creating. This is not only a moral outrage but a challenge legally to the world and it is also a national security issue. We have a large state-sponsor of terrorism dedicated to creating nuclear weapons, at the same time they are exporting terrorism and supporting Syria in their brutal assault of Syrian people, they are executing people in Iran and executing people in other countries like the MEK in Camp Ashraf.

We all must stand with you Madam Rajavi by ensuring the safe release of those 7 hostages. I call on my own government to suspend any foreign aid to Iraq while these 7 hostages remain in prison by the Iraqi government. 52 additional martyrs, we must all be their brothers and sisters and never let their memory die. We are stronger than ever before and instead of killing the message of Ashraf which is hope for liberty in Iran, they reignited a passion of those who want to see a free Iran.

Eric Voruz, Swiss federal MP

In Geneva on September 24, two UN agencies called again on the Iraqi government to give news of seven Iranian dissidents detainees in Iraq and enable the High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva to see them. According to precise information reaching UNHCR, missing persons are held somewhere in Iraq and run the risk of being returned against their will to Iran, which would be a serious violation of international law. These seven opponents are recognized by the UNHCR as asylum seekers. We join the UNHCR and others calling on the government of Iraq to do everything possible to clarify the situation regarding these seven and ensure their safety and prevent their return against their will to Iran.

Tahar Boumedra, Former UN official and in charge of Camp Ashraf

I would not believe that a member state representative in Baghdad doesn’t know and some believe the US embassy in Baghdad doesn’t know what has happened in 1st of September. I used to go through Camp Ashraf every week and I know it is impossible for anybody to reach a point of the camp without being detected. There are three divisions of the Iraqi army. Two divisions of the Iraqi intervention forces, one battalion of the police, and I remember the watch towers around the camp which make it absolutely impossible for anybody to penetrate the camp without being detected.

Why have they repeated the attacks against Ashrafis? It is because first of all there is some complete silence from international community, they did it once, they did it twice, they got away with it and now they did it a third time and if we keep quiet they will get away with it.

It is a responsibility of your member state representatives in Baghdad to speak out because they know the realities and also the US knows in details what happened. To keep quiet is covering up crime against humanity.

Jean-Pierre Muller, General Counsel of the Val d’Oise, Mayor of Magny-en-Vexin

What we can gather that may be the common denominator is that we are all for the residents. We are all of the residents, we’re all friends of democracy, and we will not grieve, and we now come to account. Because I truly paraphrase, as you know very well: they executed in horror to account. Because I truly paraphrase because they know the realities and also the US knows in details what happened. To keep quiet is covering up crime against humanity.

Jordi Xucla, Spanish MP

On September 1st, the Iraqi Prime Minister sent his SWAT and military unit to Camp Ashraf, massacring 52 men and women and taking seven hostages. Maliki must have the hostages released immediately and it is incumbent on the international community to make a firm and comprehensive representation to the government of Iraq that every action has consequences we have zero tolerance for this atrocity. The Iranian regime is terrified of the People Mojahedin organization of Iran. Why else do they order execution of these unarmed and defenseless residents? With regard to the role of the UN, I am sick and tired of those inactions and excuses when it comes to the fate of residents of Camp Ashraf and Camp Liberty. We need Blue helmets on the ground at Camp Liberty, plain and simple.
Meeting of the European People’s Party (EPP-CD)

In his opening remarks, before handing over the podium to Maryam Rajavi, Senator Pedro Agramunt, President of the group declared: “We are delighted to welcome Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, President-elect of the NCRI. I attended several meetings in Paris. The last time, in late June, it was a huge rally with tens of thousands of people. It is very clear that the mullahs’ regime is very much afraid of her and her resistance opposition. For several years she led a successful campaign against inclusion of her movement in blacklists. She has now focused her attention to save the lives of over 3000 of her colleagues in Iraq who were in Camp Ashraf and now in Camp Liberty.

“We were shocked that at the beginning of this month Iraqi forces attacked Camp Ashraf and massacred 52 defenseless residents. We extend our condolences to Mrs. Rajavi for this. Also, seven residents including six women had been taken hostage. We believe that these seven have been on hunger strike for one month now and maybe will be extradited to Iran. We call on Iraqi government to release them immediately. We also urge the UN to provide security for the people in Camp Liberty, especially because 1,000 of the total 3,000 refugees are women and we are very worried about their situation.”

Maryam Rajavi at the parliamentary assembly of EPP Group:

Allow me to reiterate here the minimum measures expected to be taken by the European Council and member states, and I urge all of you, as the representatives of the European people who have always been on our side, to make efforts to ensure that these measures are adopted:

1. Pressure the Iraqi government to release the hostages and warn that if the hostages are not released, EU aid to Iraq would be suspended.
2. Demand from the United Nations, the UN Secretary General and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to post a UN monitoring team accompanied by a unit of Blue Helmet forces at Camp Liberty to guarantee protection. Protective requirements for Camp Liberty must be met as soon as possible.
3. The residents of Liberty are all considered refugee-seekers, and therefore as a first step, those with refugee status in European countries, those who are sick and those who are injured must be accepted.
4. Call on the UN Secretary General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to launch an independent investigation into the crimes committed on September 1 and bring the perpetrators to justice.

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October 1, 2013

A call at the Council of Europe for seven missing Iranians

During the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg yesterday, a call was made for the release of seven Iranian hostages unaccounted for since a month ago. Yesterday in Strasbourg, Maryam Rajavi, President of the Iranian Resistance in exile called on Europeans to pressure Iraq to release the six Iranians abducted on September 1. Their disappearance coincided with the attack on Camp Ashraf near Baghdad, where the Iranians in exile opposed to the mullahs’ regime, should have been provided security. But on September 1, six women and one man disappeared while 52 people were killed by a commando force… She said that the election of Iranian President Rouhani could not be regarded as a positive change unless the release of political prisoners, freedom of political parties, freedom of expression and the end of nuclear weapons project are provided, which is not the case.

Demonstrations outside the Council of Europe for the release of hostages

Patrick Kennedy (bottom left), Emile Blessig, former MP and mayor of Saverne, Jean-Philippe Maurer, general counsel of the lower Rhine, and Jean-Pierre Muller, General Councilor of Val d’Oise showed their solidarity with demonstrators waiting for practical measures from Europe for the release of seven Ashraf hostages.