

UNCLASSIFIED

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BEGINNING OF MESSAGE TEXT

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/FO NEA/I, NEA/IR

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TAGS: PTER, PREF, PINR, IR, IZ

SUBJECT: MEK DEFECTORS ON LIFE IN ASHRAF AND RESETTLEMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR

FOR REASONS

1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. [] SUMMARY: [

SEVERAL RECENT DEFECTORS FROM THE MUJAHIDEEN-E-KHALQ (MEK) ORGANIZATION []

EXPRESSED FRUSTRATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE ABSENCE OF RESETTLEMENT OPTIONS AND THE ALLEGED INDIFFERENCE OF WESTERN NATIONS FOR THEIR WELFARE AS REFUGEES. MANY REVEALED

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL HARM EXPERIENCED AT THE HANDS OF THE MEK AND REAFFIRMED EXISTING PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEK AS A CULT-LIKE ORGANIZATION THAT THRIVES ON MAINTAINING CONTROL OF ITS MEMBERS AND THOSE LURED TO ASHRAF UNDER FALSE PRETENSES. THE DEFECTORS []

URGED GREATER ACTION BY THE UN AND THIRD-COUNTRIES TO RELIEVE THEM OF THEIR STATE OF LEGAL AND PHYSICAL UNCERTAINTY IN IRAQ. THEY CAUTIONED THAT FAILURE TO DO SO WOULD DISCOURAGE OTHER ASHRAF RESIDENTS FROM DEFECTING. END SUMMARY

FRUSTRATIONS MOUNT

2. []

] MEK DEFECTORS []

] TO DISCUSS THEIR CURRENT SITUATION AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED THEM TO ASHRAF. []

3. [] THE DEFECTORS RANGE IN AGE BETWEEN 25 AND 60. ON AVERAGE, MOST HAVE SPENT 10-15 YEARS IN ASHRAF, EITHER AS COMMITTED MEK SUPPORTERS OR CAPTIVES ALLEGEDLY LURED TO ASHRAF ON FALSE PRETENSES OF EMPLOYMENT, STUDY ABROAD, OR TRANSIT ENROUTE TO RESETTLEMENT IN EUROPE. THE DEFECTORS CONFIRMED THAT THIS WAS THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH ANY FOREIGN MISSION AND WELCOMED FUTURE VISITS.

4. []

] THE DEFECTORS WERE ALL UNIFIED IN THEIR DESIRE TO LEAVE IRAQ AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR RESETTLEMENT/REPATRIATION IN EUROPE, IRAN, THE UNITED STATES OR CANADA. MANY ACCURATELY POINTED OUT THAT THEIR FAILED RESETTLEMENT HAS OFFERED LITTLE INCENTIVE FOR OTHER RESIDENTS TO LEAVE ASHRAF, FEARING SIMILAR HOPELESSNESS AND "PURGATORY" IN IRAQI HOTELS. MANY ALSO EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRY FOR REFUSING TO ACCEPT THEM AS REFUGEES. ONE MAN QUESTIONED WHY, AFTER RENOUNCING THEIR TIES WITH THE MEK, THEY WERE STILL TREATED AS TERRORISTS AND REFUSED

RESETTLEMENT [

5. []

] OTHERS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE WELFARE OF FRIENDS OR RELATIVES LEFT BEHIND IN ASHRAF. IN EXPLAINING THEIR MOTIVATIONS FOR LEAVING ASHRAF, NEARLY ALL THE DEFECTIONERS FELT BETRAYED BY THE MEK AND DISMAYED BY THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL DEGRADATION AT THE HANDS OF THE ORGANIZATION. ONE [] ASKED FOR HELP IN RETRIEVING [] CONFISCATED PAPERS AND OTHER PERSONAL DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING PASSPORT AND IRANIAN IDENTIFICATION QDOCUMENTS, INCLUDING PASSPORT AND IRANIAN IDENTIFICATION CARDS, FROM ASHRAF.

PREFERENCE FOR RESETTLEMENT IN THE WEST

6. [] WHEN ASKED [] ABOUT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO RETURN TO IRAN, ONLY FOUR EXPRESSED AN INTEREST WHILE OTHERS VOICED A PREFERENCE "TO LIVE IN FREEDOM IN AN OPEN SOCIETY, PREFERABLY IN THE WEST." [] SAID THAT LIFE IN PRESENT-DAY IRAN WOULD BE TOO ALIEN [] GIVEN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES FOLLOWING THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION. []

7. (C) []

DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE MEK

8. [] MANY OF THE DEFECTIONERS ALLEGED PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL HARM AT THE HANDS OF THE MEK, INCLUDING SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN MEK JAILS IN ASHRAF. ONE [] SPOKE PASSIONATELY ABOUT HOW THE MEK "CRUSHED OUR PERSONALITIES" AND THREATENED TO TURN THEM OVER TO THE SADDAM REGIME IF THEY REFUSED TO JOIN THE ORGANIZATION. []

9. []

] NEARLY ALL SAID THAT THEY HAD GROWN DISILLUSIONED WITH THE MEK AND/OR LIFE AT ASHRAF, AND ANXIOUS TO SECURE

THEIR FREEDOM. [

] BELOW IS A SAMPLING OF THEIR

ANSWERS:

--SIX-YEAR RESIDENT [] RESIDENT
SINCE 2003; LURED FROM IRAN WITH PROMISES OF STUDY ABROAD
OPPORTUNITIES; NO IDEOLOGICAL OR POLITICAL SYMPATHIES WITH
THE MEK.

--NINETEEN-YEAR RESIDENT, [] FORMER IRANIAN POW
CAPTURED BY THE IRAQIS; MEK CONFISCATED HIS DOCUMENTS AND
PROMISED TO FACILITATE HIS RETURN HOME OR RESETTLEMENT
ABROAD;

--NINE-YEAR RESIDENT; DECEIVED BY OFFERS OF TRAVEL ABROAD;
LURED TO ASHRAF [] WITH "LAISSEZ PASSER" DOCUMENTS
UNDER NEW NAME.

--NINE-YEAR RESIDENT; FORMER MEK RECRUITER [] LURED
TO ASHRAF [] BUT IMPRISONED
FOR QUESTIONABLE LOYALTY.

--EIGHTEEN-YEAR RESIDENT; BELIEVED MEK WAS A POLITICAL VICE
TERRORIST ORGANIZATION; ESCAPED [] AFTER
SEVERAL FAILED ATTEMPTS. []

--TWENTY-YEAR RESIDENT; MEK MEMBER WHO WAS PREVENTED BY
LEADERSHIP FROM LEAVING BUT MANAGED TO DO SO []

--TWENTY-YEAR RESIDENT; SELF-DECLARED FREEDOM FIGHTER OPPOSED
TO IRAN'S THEOCRACY; LEFT MEK AFTER "THEIR LIES WERE
REVEALED"; CONSIDERS MEK "THE MOST DISGUSTING AND DEVIIOUS
ORGANIZATION IN THE WORLD."

--EIGHT-YEAR RESIDENT; DECEIVED WITH RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE
[] PAID MEK 13,000 USD TO FACILITATE RESETTLEMENT;
FOUND HIMSELF TRAPPED IN ASHRAF.

COMMENT

10. [] THE DEFECTORS, []
] ARE CLEARLY (AND UNDERSTANDABLY) FRUSTRATED WITH
THEIR SITUATION AND THE LACK OF CLOSURE REGARDING POSSIBLE
RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES. []

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