

IRN32264.E 9 July 1999

Subject: »Iran«: Treatment by Iranian authorities of relatives of persons who have left »Iran« and claimed refugee status and, in particular, those persons who are/were members and/or supporters of the Bureau of National Security and Intelligence (SAVAK) or a Fedayeen organization (1990 - July 1999)

Regional Office: 5

From: Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

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According to a document provided by an official of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), to a 24 February 1998 Information Session on Country Conditions in »Iran«, CIC officials in »Iran«

have seen no evidence that failed claimants, persons who have illegally exited »Iran«, or deportees face any significant problem upon return to »Iran«. Several times in the recent past, senior government officials have declared that all Iranians living abroad are welcome to return home without fear of reprisal. ... and the Foreign Ministry's Consular Department has confirmed that applying for asylum abroad is not an offence in »Iran«.

According to a researcher with the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris who specializes on »Iran«, including human rights issues, and who has contact with members of the opposition in »Iran«, family members in »Iran« of persons who claim refugee status outside of »Iran«, do not experience any unusual treatment (9 July 1999). While stating that it would be difficult for Iranian authorities to know who has claimed refugee status outside of »Iran«, he said that he knew of no instances where government authorities had taken any actions against a person as a consequence of a relative having made a claim for refugee status.

During a 9 July 1999 telephone interview a representative of the Centre for Arab and Iranian Studies (CAIS) in London, United Kingdom, who is an editor with *al-Moujez an »Iran«*, a political scientist by training, and a member of the Association of Iranian Writers in Exile, stated that family members of persons who claim refugee status outside »Iran« do not face any unusual treatment in »Iran«. He stated that he considers himself a prominent critic of the Iranian government, but that many of his family members continue to live in »Iran« without experiencing any adverse treatment. He said that they are free to come and visit him in the United Kingdom and that the only action the government ever took was shortly after he left »Iran« in 1982 when they approached different members of his family and asked them to include in their letters to him a request for him to be less critical of the government. However, he said that only happened for a short period after he left and that they have not been bothered by government authorities since that time. He claimed that the Iranian government's non-interference with the relatives of its external critics is one of the factors that distinguishes it from Iraq, where he claims relatives are closely watched.

The only exception to this, he stated, might be persons who are extremely critical and/or advocate the overthrow of the government through the use of force; he named the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization as an example. The representative stated that family members of these persons could face difficulties leaving the country, but added that the son of Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the Mujahedin, lives in Iran and goes to university there.

When asked if the fact that the refugee claimant were a member of a fedayeen group would make any difference in regard to the government's treatment of family members of refugee claimants, the representative said no. He said there are two main fedayeen factions: Majority and Minority. He said that the Majority has abandoned the armed struggle and is now more akin to a political party that is seeking to go back to Iran. As such, the representative said the government would not be interested in its supporters' family members. As for the Minority faction, the representative said that it is split into many small groups, the largest of which has about 20 members. Consequently, the government does not treat them seriously and pays little regard to the relatives of its members.

In contrast to this opinion, a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Iranian Writers in Exile stated in a 8 July 1999 telephone interview, that relatives of high profile refugee claimants outside Iran could face some difficulties. He claimed that in these instances the family members are visited and asked to publicly denounce the asylum seeker. If they refuse, he said they could lose their job if they work for the government, their children could be refused access to post-secondary education, and they could be refused permission to leave the country. He stated that in his own case he advised his daughters to denounce him so that they could attend university. He also said that government authorities open the mail of the relatives of high profile refugee claimants and that there is "constant surveillance."

In regard to the treatment of the relatives of fedayeen members, the member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Iranian Writers in Exile said that he knew of one case in the early 1990s. He said that a fedayeen member claimed asylum in the United Kingdom and that his son was subsequently arrested in Iran. According to the member of the Executive Committee the son was tortured and only released "when they were satisfied they couldn't reach the father through the son."

He stated that he had not heard of any cases of unusual treatment of the relatives of SAVAK members. It was his understanding that many SAVAK members are once again working for the government and are treated as normal citizens. However, he did say that if there were still high profile SAVAK members who have claimed refugee status outside Iran, then their relatives could also be placed under "pressure" to denounce them.

No mention of the treatment by Iranian authorities, of family members of fedayeen supporters and/ or members, could be found on the Websites of several fedayeen groups or in the other sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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member of the Executive Committee.

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