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Iranian Kurds

**On Conditions for Iranian Kurdish Parties in Iran and KRI,
Activities in the Kurdish Area of Iran,
Conditions in Border Area and Situation of Returnees from KRI to Iran**

30 May to 9 June 2013



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Overview of Danish fact finding reports published in 2012 and 2013

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Front page photo:

Border point at Awisar resort on Halabja (Iraq)-Paveh (Iran) border. The photo is taken inside Iranian soil, spring 2013. *Photo by Fazel Hawramy of Kurdishblogger.com*

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ABBREVIATIONS

DIS	Danish Immigration Service
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party ('Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan')
KDPI	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran ('Hezbe Dêmokirate Kurdistanê Iran')
KDP-Iran	Kurdistan Democratic Party - Iran, ('Hezbe Demokrate Kurdistan')
KMMK	Kurdish Human Rights Committee in Europe
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KZK	Komala of Toilers of Kurdistan and the Komala Party of Kurdistan ('Komala Zahmatkeshane) Kurdistan')
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	Norwegian People's Aid
PJAK	Party of Free Life for Kurdistan ('Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê')
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party ('Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan')
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SKHKI	The Kurdish Organization of the Communist Party of Iran ('Sazmane Kurdistanê Hezbe Kommuniste Iran')
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction and methodology

This report is the product of a joint fact-finding mission conducted by the Country of Origin Information Division, Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) to Erbil and Sulaimania, Iraq from 30 May to 9 June 2013.

In addition, the report contains information from a meeting which two members of the delegation from DIS held with the representation of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Representative Abroad, Paris, on 27 November 2012, and a meeting with an Iran scholar specialized in ethnic minorities in Iran on 13 November 2012. The information obtained through these two meetings originally constitutes a memorandum produced by DIS on 21 March 2013 for use by officials involved in asylum determination process. However, as the information from these sources was relevant and supplemented statements from sources consulted during the mission, the delegation decided to include it in the report. Both KDPI representative in Paris and the Iranian scholar have granted their consent to their statements being used in this report.

As regards the situation in the Kurdish area of Iran, this report is a follow-up of the fact finding report *Iran – On Conversion to Christianity, Issues concerning Kurds and Post-2009 Election Protestors as well as Legal Issues and Exit Procedures* (February 2013) by DIS, Landinfo and DRC. During the mission to Iran in November 2012, it was proven particularly difficult to gain insight into the situation in the Kurdish areas of Iran as access to these areas for many is restricted by the Iranian authorities. At the same time, the delegation that went to Iran was told that information on the situation of Iranian Kurds could be obtained from sources in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). For this reason, it was decided to undertake a fact finding mission to KRI. The report focuses on the situation of the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties which includes two fractions of KDPI, three fractions of Komala and PJAK. Moreover, the report includes information on non-political activities in the Kurdish area of Iran, conditions in the border area between Iran and KRI as well as return of different groups of Iranian Kurds, including former refugees, from Northern Iraq to Iran.

The terms of reference were drawn up by DIS in consultation with DRC as well as the Danish Refugee Appeals Board. The terms of reference are included as Annex 1. The information provided in this report is the information of most direct relevance to typical asylum claims made in Denmark. The report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all issues covered.

In the scope of compiling this report, the delegation consulted 19 sources during the mission to KRI. The sources consulted during the mission comprised representatives from Iranian Kurdish opposition parties, international organizations, NGOs, journalists, an analyst, a Western diplomat, and KRG authorities. The selection of sources, which took place prior to the mission, was based on sources known to the delegation as well as information from other COI Offices in Europe. Via these sources, the delegation succeeded in finding other interlocutors that are mainly based in

Sulaimania. A complete list of sources consulted is included at the end of this report. For the sake of discretion and upholding tolerable working conditions, three sources consulted in Iraq wished to remain undisclosed. Consequently in these cases, the delegation has in cooperation with the source made a descriptive reference that to the extent possible reflects the nature of the source's knowledge and operation.

The sources consulted were informed about the purpose of the mission and that their statements would be included in a public report. All interviews were conducted orally in either English or Kurdish language in a semi-structured manner and were recorded in writing by the delegation. Most of the interviews were carried out through a Kurdish interpreter. The notes from a given interview were subsequently forwarded to the interlocutor in question for approval, giving the source a chance to amend, comment or correct his or her statements. The delegation had used the same method of collecting approved information in connection with interviews with KDPI's representative in Paris and the Iran scholar specialized in ethnic minorities in Iran.

In the report, care is taken to present the views of the various interlocutors as accurately and transparently as possible. It is inevitable that the report will contain some contradictory statements. However, it should be noted that the report has been produced to accurately reflect, to the extent possible, the information communicated to the delegation in the various meetings and does not contain any opinions or policies held by DIS or DRC.

The delegation of this mission and editorial team comprised Regional Adviser Majid Behbahani, Regional Adviser Rikke Blaaberg Jensen, both Danish Immigration Service, and Senior Legal Adviser Dorte Smed, Danish Refugee Council. The delegation would like to express its gratitude for the assistance and extensive support provided by the DRC Office in Erbil during its preparations for the visit and during the mission.

This report is available on the DIS's website www.newtodenmark.dk (refer to publications) and the website of the DRC www.drc.dk (refer to publications). Any comments regarding this report are very welcome and should be submitted to the DIS and DRC addresses/e-mail addresses on the front page of this report.

1) Kurdish political parties in the Kurdish area of Iran

1.1. Status and repute of Kurdish parties among Kurds in the Kurdish areas of Iran

When asked about the current status of the KDPI among the Kurds in Iran, an Iran scholar specialised in ethnic minorities in Iran, informed the delegation that KDPI enjoys a high degree of legitimacy and respect among parts of the Kurdish population in Iran for historic reasons. Firstly, due to KDPI's attempt in the late 1940s to establish an autonomous Kurdish state and secondly, because of the party's military resistance against the central government at the time when the Islamic Republic's government tried to crush the Kurdish uprising in the beginning of 1980s.

Moreover, according to the Iran scholar specialised in ethnic minorities in Iran, many Kurds are frustrated because of the systematic neglect of the Kurdish region by the central government, i.e. the poor educational system, the weak infrastructure as well as a lack of cultural rights. In addition, the widespread smuggling business in the Kurdish area gives the Iranian authorities an excuse to persecute those whom they suspect of being politically active Kurds under the pretext that they are smugglers. For these reasons, many Kurds believe that they are discriminated by the government in Teheran due to their ethnic and cultural affiliation. Thus, a large number of Kurds are inclined to join whatever protest that arises, regardless of who is behind it, or if the protest is spontaneous in nature.

The Iran scholar specialised in Iranian minorities informed the delegation that KDPI is able to take leadership of certain events and involve many Kurds with no affiliation to the party in its activities. These events could be recurrent anniversaries of historical days of the Kurdish history or arrests of local activists as well as ad hoc events such as protests against the government's interruption of gas lines in the Kurdish areas. As a result, it is often difficult to distinguish between the activities conducted by Kurds who are KDPI members and sympathizers and Kurds who are not. An example of such events in which KDPI took the leadership of a general protest is the riot in 2005 where the party encouraged Kurds to protest against the government's killing of a Kurdish activist.¹

The Iran scholar stated that it is particularly the Sunni part of the Kurdish population who are involved in KDPI's activities in Iran.

The Iran scholar pointed out that a new generation of Kurds who considers the old parties such as KDPI and their ideology to be outdated and old-fashioned, is coming up in Iran. This new

¹ In July 2005, Iran's North-western region of Kurdistan faced the largest protests since the 1979 Islamic revolution. The "unrest erupted after security forces killed Shivan Qaderi on July 9 in the city of Mahabad. Pictures of the young man's body suggested he had been tortured, and were widely distributed and broadcast on satellite television channels. The government said Mr. Qaderi was a hooligan and accused him of moral and financial violations. The Kurds said he was a political activist. Human Rights Watch, citing reports from Kurdish groups, said Mr. Qaderi was shot in public; the government has not commented on the circumstances surrounding the death.' The New York Times, August 14, 2005 http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/14/international/middleeast/14kurds.html?_r=0

generation would rather be active through grassroots organizations, human rights groups, environment NGO's etc., and do not want to be bound in their activities by the old parties.

When asked about the repute of the Kurdish political parties among Kurds in Iran, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil explained that the Kurdish population is not as zealous about the Kurdish parties as they are about charismatic Kurdish political leaders such as Barzani, Sharafkandi etc. According to the diplomat, one should not think that once the Kurdish political parties decide to mobilize a mass demonstration, the Kurds in Iran will immediately go to the streets to protest. However, it was added, due to a lack of an alternative political opposition, these parties enjoy a certain level of mobilization and organization capacity and support in the Kurdish area in Iran.

Asked about the repute of the Kurdish political parties, Reza Menuchehri, Kurdish Human Rights Committee in Europe (KMMK), stressed that these are all underground parties and it is therefore not possible to provide exact information and statistics about these. The source assessed that in general, the parties have a tendency to exaggerate regarding their activities and number of members and sympathizers. The source was of the opinion that PJAK is probably the most popular party and people seem to talk more about PJAK compared to the other parties, especially the educated Iranians. The reason behind the popularity of PJAK is not only the fact that they have defeated the Iranian border forces in the Qandil Mountains in the years before the ceasefire that was signed in 2011 between PJAK and the Iranian government, but also because PJAK has the largest number of political prisoners compared to other Kurdish political parties and most of the Kurdish prisoners sentenced to death are affiliated with PJAK. The active presence of PJAK's members and activists in the Iranian Kurdish area additionally contributes to its popularity among Kurds in Iran.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) said that KDPI and Komala are not strongly present in the Kurdish area of Iran, their activities are limited and their organization in Iran is weak. However, there is a strong potential support to these parties among Kurds in Iran. If KDPI changes strategy towards armed struggle, the Kurdish population will strongly back this. The regime fears this situation and does a lot to prevent it from becoming reality.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that KDPI is more popular in Iranian Kurdistan than the other parties for two reasons. Firstly KDPI has existed for a long period and it has fought against the regime. Secondly, it has had two charismatic leaders, Sharafkandi and Ghasemloo. Komala is mainly popular in the cities such as Sanandaj and Bukan. The source emphasized that the popularity of KDPI and Komala is limited to the Sunni areas. In recent years, PJAK's popularity has increased.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that PJAK is the first Kurdish party to gain influence in the Shiite areas within the Iranian Kurdish region which implies that Shiite Kurds have started focusing on their ethnicity as Kurds. The source added that the influence

of PJAK among Shia Kurds is not only caused by PJAK's own work but also due to the fact that Shia Kurds in Iraq have been supporting the autonomous Kurdish rule in KRI in the last decade.

Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger stated that KDPI and Komala are fairly respected by the Kurdish population in Iran. According to the source, people's respect for these parties is mainly due to their role as opposition parties fighting against the oppressive Iranian regime. Besides, there is a great passion for charismatic Kurdish political figures from these parties such as Ghasemlou and Sharafkandi. The source added that in the 1980s the Kurdish civilian population overwhelmingly supported the armed struggle of Komala and KDPI and it is possible, although it is difficult to say with certainty, that the civilian population in the future may support such an uprising similar to the 1980s. In Iraqi Kurdistan despite the fact that PUK and KDP (Iraq) fought a bitter civil war in mid 1990s where hundreds of young Kurdish fighters were killed and many disappeared, the civilian population stood behind these two parties in 2003 when they fought against the Saddam regime during the 2003 Iraq war. However, Fazel Hawramy stressed that it is difficult to say how many Kurds practically support these parties. In addition, there is a sense of resentment among some Kurds towards these parties caused by their inner splits, i.e. KDPI is split into two and Komala is split into three fractions.

Asked whether the older generation in the Kurdish region of Iran is more engaged in KDPI and Komala than the younger generation, Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger, answered that there is some truth to that assumption. However, Fazel Hawrami stated that KDPI, Komala and PJAK are the only established channels through which Kurds in Iran can oppose the Iranian regime, and the only organized Kurdish actors who can help people if they want to go out of Iran to be trained militarily.

Sardar Mohammad, Chief editor, and Asos Hardi, Chairman of the board of directors, Awene Newspaper, informed the delegation that KDPI and Komala still have a good reputation and enjoys sympathy and support from the Kurds in Iran. After 25 years in exile, people still come to join them in KRI. However PJAK is a strong competitor when it comes to popularity, not least among the young people.

According to Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) more and more Kurds support PJAK compared to KDPI and Komala, particularly in the Badini speaking areas north of the Iranian Kurdistan province near the city of Orumiyeh close to PJAK's headquarters. PJAK has their base in the Qandil Mountains, which according to the source has never been controlled by any state. The source explained that one of the reasons for increasing support to PJAK is the fact that they are more present and more active in Iran compared to KDPI and Komala which for years have been isolated in KRI. The occasional fighting against the Iranian Revolutionary Guard adds to PJAK's popularity.

When asked about the repute of KDPI and Komala among the Kurdish population in Iran, Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, stated that all Kurdish political parties enjoy wide and

strong popular support among Kurds in Iran. However, it was added that while other Kurdish parties are most popular in the Sunni part of the Kurdish area in Iran, PJAK mainly enjoys the support of Kurds from the Shia populated areas in Kurdistan, Kermanshah, Ilam and Lorestan provinces.

According to Ammar Goli, the Kurdish people in Iran consider PJAK a freedom seeking national force for Kurds in Iran. When PJAK invites people to a demonstration, a large number of people go to the streets and participate in that demonstration. Due to PJAK's pressure on the Iranian government, the regime has eased its pressure on the Kurdish area a bit in recent years in order to stop the Kurds' increasing support to PJAK.

Shamal Bishir, Head of Foreign Affairs, Party of Free Life for Kurdistan (PJAK), informed the delegation that unlike other Kurdish political parties who traditionally have been active only in the Sunni areas of the Iranian Kurdistan, PJAK is mostly present in the Shia populated Kurdish areas in Iran. The source added that the first flyers from PJAK were distributed at the university in Ilam which is a Shia city. According to the source, each year on the anniversary of Ashura which is one of Shia Muslims' holiest days of mourning, PJAK makes statements expressing its condolences to the Shia population in Iran. Shamal Bishir (PJAK) stressed, however, that PJAK is not only active among the Shia Kurdish population in Iran but also among Kurdish religious minorities such as Yarasan (Ahl-e-Haq).

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) said that apart from KDPI, Komala and PJAK, Salafist groups have gained influence in the Kurdistan region of Iran in recent years with support from the Iranian regime. Even though the Salafists are not Shia muslims, the Iranian regime seems to be using religion to keep away Kurdish nationalism which increasingly is seen as a threat to the regime due to the improved situation of the Kurds in Iraq and in Turkey. The source explained how the Salafists operate in the Kurdish area by saying that if a person in the Kurdish area wants to publish a book about a Kurdish issue, the Salafists will beat up this person or stab him with a knife or report him to the regime. According to the source, the Salafist groups have started recruiting Kurds in Iran to become suicide-bombers in Afghanistan or other countries.

When asked whether the Kurdish youth in Iran would rather be active in grassroots or civil society organizations instead of the political parties, Mustafa Moloudi, Deputy of Secretary General, Kurdistan Democratic Party - Iran (KDP-Iran), stated that it was not true that the Kurdish youth do not want to be involved in political activities. According to Mustafa Moloudi, some young people in the Kurdish area of Iran use NGO activities as a cover for political activities since it is highly dangerous to be involved in political activities in Iran. The source emphasized that KDP-Iran is indirectly in contact with environmentalists and NGO activists. One of the party members who were present in the meeting with the delegation confirmed the source's statement by saying that when he was in Iran, he joined a culture and literature organization and used it as a cover for political activities.

Confronted with the statement from scholars that Komala as well as other exiled Kurdish political parties are still enjoying the support from the Kurdish youth in Iran, Omar Elkhanizade, Secretary General of the Komala of Toilers of Kurdistan and the Komala Party of Kurdistan (KZK) stressed that being politically active against a regime such as the Iranian is not easy. Since being a member of a Kurdish political party is a crime in Iran, a great number of people prefer to be active in NGOs which is regarded as less of a crime. Omar Elkhanizade further mentioned that a large number of NGO activists and writers who have been punished for their activities, have in fact secretly been affiliated to the political parties.

1.2. Activities of Kurdish political parties in Iran

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that the presence of the Kurdish Iranian opposition parties in Iran is based on sympathizers rather than real members. There have been a few cases in which members of KDPI and Komala have been arrested but in general, they are not strongly represented by members in Iran.

According to analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine), KDPI and Komala originally had guerilla forces, i.e. peshmargas, inside Iran. After they stopped their military activities during the 1990's, they were unable to change their activities into civil activities and as a result they lost most of their power and influence in the Kurdish area in Iran.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) explained that KDPI and Komala originated in the Sunni areas in the Kurdish region of Iran while only half of the Kurdish population in Iran are sunnis. Thus, even though these parties ideologically are not based on religion, their influence is highest in the Sunni areas. In general, there is a very tight security control in Iran and even more so in the Kurdish area which limits the activities of KDPI and Komala. Taking all these factors into consideration, Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) concluded that KDPI and Komala have a weak or non-existing organization in Iran and their activities are to a large extent limited to those of their sympathizers.

According to Reza Menuchehri (KMMK), Komala, KDPI and PJAK are all active in Kurdish society. However, it was added that while Komala and KDPI are merely focusing on the use of media, such as magazines, newspapers, TV and radio, PJAK has up to 2011 carried out an armed struggle against the government forces. Although PJAK agreed on a ceasefire (2011) with the Iranian government 18 months ago, they have defended their strongholds when these, on a few occasions, have been under attack from the Iranian forces. Komala and KDPI have stopped all their military activities against the Iranian regime which has been a precondition for being permitted by KRG to stay in and have their camps in KRI. The source emphasized, however, that in recent years, KDPI, KDP-Iran, all Komala parties as well as PJAK have increasingly focused on civil society activities and building civil society organizations by for instance working in NGOs.

According to Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine), a large part of sympathizers of political parties work independently and only a small number of them distribute flyers, write slogans on walls or other things with instruction from the parties. Since these independent people are under pressure from the regime, they cannot do much apart from meeting in secrecy and discussing politics, and it is only to a very limited extent that they will be able to download and distribute magazines and leaflets from the internet.

Regarding the types of political activities in Iran conducted by Kurdish political parties, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil stated that these parties' activities are mostly printing and distributing of political materials, broadcasting radio and TV programmes, conveying messages through internet etc.

Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin (a city in Suleimania Province, located 15 km from the border to Iran), explained that except for the military wing of Pjak, none of the Kurdish oppositional political parties, including KDPI and Komala, are engaged in military activities against the Iranian forces in the border areas.

Regarding the activities of the Kurdish parties, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) stated that these are limited. Activities are mostly seen around the different anniversaries such as International Worker's Day or the anniversary of the assassination of the former leader of KDPI, Abdulrahman Ghasemloo.

Asked about the parties' mode of conveying their messages to Kurds in Iran, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) replied that magazines and press releases are published and distributed, and flyers are prevalent. Regarding using posters, it was said that it is easier to distribute flyers and pamphlets than to put up a poster. Sometimes, the parties also call on people to boycott an election or vote for a given candidate. These calls could be transmitted via TV. The source emphasized that the parties are able to convey their messages to the Kurds in Iran. The source pointed to the fact that the Iranian government is not popular at all in the Kurdish area of Iran, due to the government being Shia while the Kurds are mostly Sunni and due to the government's unequal treatment of the Kurds as a minority.

When asked whether political activists use writing on walls as a way of communicating messages, Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger stated that he has seen on Komala TV and their affiliated websites that their members write slogans on the walls of houses in the cities.

When asked whether political parties use writing on walls and distribution of CDs, leaflets and video clips as a way of conveying political messages to Kurds in Iran, Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) stated that all parties use these means. Video clips could contain pictures of peshmarga training, party conferences and speeches by party leaders.

Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, informed the delegation that PJAK's ideology and activities differ from those of other Kurdish political parties. While KDPI's and Komala's presence in the Kurdish area of Iran is limited to their sympathizers and their activities, PJAK has members and soldiers in Iran. The source added that Komala, KZK, has tried to send members to Iran between 2008 and 2010, but all these attempts have failed. In one of these attempts, six Komala members were killed after they reached Iran. Later, small groups of three, five and eight persons were killed and two were executed after being arrested. In total, 13 Komala members were arrested and executed. The source added that in 1996, KDPI and Komala had signed an agreement with the Iranian government (Iranian Revolutionary Guards) stipulating that the parties should stop their attempts of sending members into Iran and that the Iranian government should stop the bombardment of the party camps in KRI. The source further added that between 1994 and 1998, 282 people in KRI, especially in Sulaimania, were assassinated by the Iranian regime.

1.3. Consequences of conducting activities for the Kurdish political parties

A Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil explained that there is no tolerance on the Iranian regime's side for any kind of activities with connection to the Kurdish political parties and any affiliation with one of these parties would be reason for arrest. The main reason for this is that these parties' ultimate goal, despite their non-violent opposition, is a change in the regime of Iran which is much worse than support for the Green Movement which aims for reforms within the existing system.

The Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil informed the delegation that the execution rate is high among Kurds in Iran. A large part of these executions are based on accusation of drug smuggling. The source pointed out that sometimes political activists are executed under the pretext of being drug smugglers.

However, the Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil emphasized that being a Kurd in Iran does not necessarily mean getting into trouble with the authorities as has been the case in Syria. Troubles will start as soon as a person gets involved in political activities.

With regard to PJAK, UNHCR Erbil said that the Iranian regime treats members and supporters of the organization in the same harsh way as members and supporters of Komala.

According to Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine), the Iranian regime is highly sensitive to the Kurdish population in Iran, and the regime always reacts disproportionately towards activities conducted by Kurds. As a result, if the Iranian regime for instance catches a sympathizer carrying out an activity against the government, the consequences for him and his family will be serious.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) stated that anything related to KDPI, even talking about the Kurdish people and their rights could create a problem. Someone who talks directly about KDPI is, in the eyes of the regime, affiliated with KDPI, and a person speaking about Kurdish rights is seen as a general threat. According to the source, Kurdish patriotism that has spread

throughout the Middle East in recent years, may also reach Iran, and this is exactly what the regime in Iran fears.

Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, stated that people work secretly for PJAK as they will be in grave danger if their activities are revealed to the authorities.

Badria Ibrahim Rashid, Norwegian People's Aid - Iraq (NPA-Iraq), stated that the Iranian regime occasionally uses the accusation of being drug dealer as a pretext to arrest and punish persons whom they suspect of conducting political activities, but whom they do not have any evidence against.

Ebrahim Alizadeh, General Secretary of the Kurdistan Organization of the Communist Party of Iran, Komala (Komala, SKHKI) mentioned that if the authorities in Iran cannot find evidence against a person whom they perceive to be a threat and thus cannot prosecute him, they may terrorize or even assassinate him.

1.3.1. Consequences for party members

According to UNHCR in Erbil, persons with a high political profile as well as human rights activists are targeted. UNHCR Erbil explained that their knowledge on the situation in the Kurdish region of Iran basically stems from the general feedback from the Iranian Kurdish asylum seekers.

UNHCR said that members of KDPI will get approximately two to ten years of prison if they are arrested by the Iranian authorities. Based on information from asylum seekers, UNHCR Erbil stated that KDPI members will be tortured during pre-trial detention in order to confess and disclose names of other KDPI members. The duration of the detention will typically be from one to six months depending on the level of the detainee's engagement. The sentence which is imprisonment will depend on the level of the engagement of the person and the evidence that are presented against him.

Regarding punishment for being a member of Komala, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) told the delegation that if a Komala cell member is arrested by the Iranian regime, he will be tortured, imprisoned for life or even executed. As regards the consequences for the cell member's family, Alizadeh explained that his family members may be arrested, but they will be freed on bail after a while.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) explained that some of the party members who had been conducting secret activities in Iran were caught by the regime. While some of them were executed and some were freed after a period of detention, others were exchanged. However, those who were freed lost their public jobs, for instance if they were working as teacher, and they were not allowed to work anymore in the public sector.

Shamal Bishir (PJAK) pointed to the fact that during the 1990s, there were many political executions in Iran: in 2006, there was a new wave of executions; in 2006 PJAK member Hikmat

Hassin Demir was executed and in 2010 two professional PJAK members and two semi-professional member was executed in Evin Prison. According to the source, some PJAK members were given 15 years of prison or lifelong imprisonment and currently, 16 PJAK professional and semi-professional members are awaiting death penalty.

Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, stated that at the moment, there are 200 cases involving persons arrested by the Iranian regime accused of being members or sympathizers of PJAK. In reality, many of these persons are not affiliated with PJAK, but are rather student activists, human rights activists, cultural activists etc. Since 2006, there have been 25 cases of persons sentenced to death accused of being connected to PJAK. Six out of these 25 persons have been executed. While three of them were PJAK members, the other three had no connection to PJAK. These were according to the source a teacher, a government employee and a Turkish citizen who was arrested in the border area between Iran and Turkey. The source emphasized that if PJAK members are sentenced to death, the party will make public statements about that. According to the source, the government knows that these people have no connection to PJAK but it uses the allegation of affiliation with PJAK as an excuse to eliminate people whom it considers a threat.

1.3.2. Consequences for party sympathizers

Regarding the sympathizers, UNHCR added that if a person who actively assists and supports KDPI is arrested by the authorities, the person will face serious difficulties. UNHCR Erbil further stated that low profile supporters of KDPI will be taken to detention and be kept there for few days. Sometimes, they are tortured during the interrogation to confess. Later on they will be taken to court and they sign a statement indicating that they will not be involved in any political parties in the future. The source added that members of Komala, that are Marxist and for this reason seen as a bigger threat to the regime, will get a harsher sentence ranging from years in prison to execution. If someone is caught with a weapon, he or she will be sentenced to 10 years in prison or execution.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that the consequences for low-profiled PJAK activists, if caught, are some months' imprisonment, which is a common punishment in Iran especially for the Kurds, as well as imposing travel bans. In addition, the regime will monitor them when freed. The source stressed that this relatively 'mild' punishment is due to the current ceasefire between PJAK and the Iranian government.

Asked to elaborate about the typical consequences for sympathizers caught while for instance distributing leaflets Mohemed Sahebi, Member of Central Committee (KDPI) told the delegation that it does not make any difference whether a person is a sympathizer or a member, the consequences can be imprisonment and torture. If a person believes in freedom and performs activities in this regard he or she will be under pressure and the consequences can be harsh. Mohammed Sahabi (KDPI) added that many prisons in the Kurdish areas of Iran are hidden and humanitarian organisations have no access and are thus not able to monitor these facilities.

Asked about the punishment of a Komala sympathizer arrested by the Iranian security forces, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that the punishment depends on the activity of the sympathizer. If the sympathizer gets caught carrying political materials, he may be sentenced to about two years imprisonment. The sources added that the law is arbitrarily enforced and the authorities will sometimes take decisions contrary to the law. However, the source emphasized that if the person caught is a member of the party, the punishment will be much harsher which means 10-15 years imprisonment or even execution.

Regarding party sympathizers, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) mentioned that there have been a high number of cases where sympathizers have been caught due to their lack of experience. If caught, the punishment is harsh regardless of whether the person caught is a party member or a sympathizer, which means that he may be prosecuted and sentenced to up to 20 years imprisonment. The source pointed to the particular harsh measures in the Kurdish area of Iran against any kind of criticism against the government.

With regard to the sympathizers, Siamak Modarresi, Head of Political Bureau, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, explained that if a person in the Kurdish area of Iran is sympathetic towards Komala and this inclination is well-known, this does not necessarily pose a danger for him or her. However, having direct links or carrying out activities for the party can be dangerous. The source added that he has a relative who was active in Iran for years and then migrated. The family is now known in Iran as a 'Komala family'. However, the consequences of being sympathizers or relatives to an active party member in KRI may be to be put under pressure. The pressure could comprise of deprivation of certain privileges such as access to higher education as well as access to jobs in the public sector.

Regarding the party sympathizers, Siamak Modarresi added that most of the asylum seekers in Europe claiming to have conducted activities for Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan are sympathizers. If a party sympathizer in Iran faces any danger, he may come to KRI. In some cases, the party may advise the sympathizer who is facing danger in Iran, to go to Europe instead of going to KRI as coming to the camp may reveal his connection to the party and thereby expose them to further danger.

1.3.3. Consequences of carrying and distributing political materials, particularly flyers

UNHCR Erbil explained that the penalty for a person who is caught with a political flyer varies. If the person involved in the activity is of Kurdish ethnicity, there is a risk of a heavier penalty and a higher risk of torture. UNHCR Erbil further explained that supporters of KDPI will get a lesser sentence compared to marxist parties such as Komala. In case a KDPI supporter is caught with a single flyer he may be punished by a fine and he must sign a paper by which he states that he will not conduct any activity against the regime. He will then probably be monitored by the authorities for a while. However, UNHCR emphasized the arbitrariness of the Iranian court system and stated

that detention without trial or harassment could also be the consequences of being caught with political materials.

Ziryar Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) explained that if the regime catches someone with a flyer, they could imprison him and if he is connected to the opposition parties, he could end up being executed. The source gave an example of Farzad Kamangar who attended a ten days training course in politics and ideology with one of the Kurdish opposition parties for which reason he was executed in 2010.

According to Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger, the authorities' treatment of someone who was caught by the regime carrying a flyer depends on several factors, for instance on the current political situation of the country, or on whether the arrested person has relatives with a political record. According to Fazel Hawramy, the authorities will try in the first place to find out the origin of the flyer by interrogating the arrestee. If the arrested person gives a saying that he will not do any oppositional work again, then he in the best case scenario will be free to go but he will be under constant surveillance even though he has had no political record up until that point and the price of his freedom may be to work as spy for the regime. In the worst case scenario, the arrested person will be imprisoned for years and his family will be under pressure for a long time.

Asked about the consequences of being caught with a flyer from one of the Kurdish parties, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) replied that being caught working for the political parties is very dangerous since it will be considered as an act against the regime. The source assumed that even if a person is caught with a single flyer, he can be accused of distribution since the logic of the regime tends to be that the arrestee is guilty – in distributing flyers – unless the opposite is proved.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) replied that if a low profile person is caught with a single flyer, he will be taken in for investigation and can be detained from two to six months depending on whether he confesses and on the extent to which he cooperates with the authorities. During investigations, there are usually two officers present: one officer carries out the investigation while the other has a monitoring role. The monitoring officer tends to be the harshest one which means that while for instance the investigator tells the detainee that he can expect six months imprisonment, the monitoring officer will put the detainee under pressure by saying that he is dangerous and should be imprisoned for five years. The investigation is harsh and the person is subjected to torture during the investigation, however, the form and the harshness of torture inflicted is different from person to person. The investigation will result in a file, which will be sent to the court. The judge will then issue a verdict based on the investigation report, possible prior reports, the Islamic penalty code and the judge's mood and knowledge. The result could be as follows: If it is the first time the person is arrested, and if he cooperates with the authorities, confesses, fills out and sign a formula of regret ('Toubeh Nameh' in Persian) promising not to engage in further activities, he

will in most cases be sentenced to up to a year's probation and then released on bail. If he is arrested again, the probation will be enforced, and the bail will be much higher this time (a house or a shop title, large amount of money etc.).

According to Reza Menuchehri (KMMK), if the detainee does not cooperate with the authorities during the investigation, he may be held in detention for a longer period. He will then be sentenced to imprisonment and may in some cases be sent into exile or be imprisoned in other cities or areas.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) further explained that if a person is caught distributing flyers, the authorities will perceive him as part of a large network and connected to a party organization in which case the detention will be between six months to one year. Sometimes, the family of the detainee may not know where the person is detained. The detainee may be held in solitary confinement during the investigation, and he will be under huge pressure in order to make him disclose the identity of other political activists with whom he has been connected. Long-term imprisonment, i.e. five to 10 years or even longer, and displacement are among expected consequences in such cases. If the person is accused of "being enemy to God" ("Mohareb" in Persian), the punishment could be execution. There have been cases where families to a person being involved in distribution of flyers have been deprived of access to employment in government offices.

According to Reza Menuchehri (KMMK), in all cases mentioned above – that is regardless of whether a person is caught carrying a single flyer or distributing flyers – the person will most likely be deprived of access to employment in the public offices and he would lose his job if he were already employed in the public sector. Another common consequence in all the above-mentioned cases would also be that if a protest or a demonstration takes place in the area, persons with a record would be among the first people whom the authorities call in for investigation even if these persons have not participated in the protest in question.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) added that there are many activists and sympathizers and many leaflets and flyers in the Kurdish areas of Iran and that obviously not everybody holding a leaflet is arrested. Reza Menuchehri estimated that if for instance 5,000 leaflets are distributed, there may be four persons who get arrested.

Omar Elkhazade (Komala, KZK) stated that punishment for carrying leaflets or a CD is harsh. However, the punishment differs from case to case depending on the number of flyers. If a person only carries a single leaflet, he or she might be able to convince the authorities that this was just found on the street and the penalty will be of a lesser degree. On the other hand, if a person is caught publishing or carrying a whole bunch of leaflets, there is no way of denying one's involvement in the distribution. This will be considered a crime and the punishment will be severe.

Asked about the consequences for a person carrying a single flyer or a CD from KDPI, Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) stated that this could be detention up to a year without a trial. During the detention the person could be subjected to torture and some people have even died from torture in detention. When prosecuted, the person could sometimes be sentenced to eight to 10 years imprisonment. If a student is caught with a single flyer or a CD, he will at least be dismissed from the university and if he is a teacher, he will lose his job. There have also been cases of displacement where people have been called to the security office and told to leave their home town and move to remote areas. The source knew of a case in which a teacher was forced to move to another town. Such decrees will be passed to the person orally as anything in writing could lead to activism and public protests.

Asked what the consequences would be if someone is caught distributing flyers, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, said that it is difficult to say and that it depends on whether the distribution is organized by the parties. The Iranian regime will definitely interrogate this person in order to uncover whether he has carried out other activities and whether the distribution is organized. If the flyers are part of a coordinated Komala campaign, the arrested person may be sentenced to between five and six years imprisonment. However, if the distribution has been carried out on the arrestee's own initiative, he or she will be imprisoned for one to three years.

When asked what punishment a person is likely to receive if he has been caught carrying a single flyer from PJAK, Shamal Bishir (PJAK) answered that the punishment has been five to 15 years prison.

1.3.4. Risks to family members of persons associated with a Kurdish party

Asked how the regime treats the family of someone who has been caught with a flyer, UNHCR Erbil answered that the family will be harassed until the wanted person shows up. The regime will sometimes detain a family member and interrogate him for a few hours and then release him; or the regime will hold one of the family members in detention. When asked in which cases family members will be harshly or mildly punished, UNHCR Erbil answered that there is no basis in the Iranian law to detain a family member to a person whom the authorities has failed to arrest. However, in practice once the authorities find out that a person who has actively been working against the government has escaped from them, they would interrogate the family members and sometimes detain them for a while and use torture to make them confess about the whereabouts of the wanted person.

As regards pressure on the families of Kurdish political activists and Kurdish political party members, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran Erbil informed the delegation that the Iranian authorities put the families under pressure. This can be done by removing them from their positions in the public sector, frequently calling them in and asking them questions, calling the

families to threaten them with imprisonment and with depriving them of access to higher education or employment in public positions, investigating their computers, etc.

Ziryar Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) stated that if the regime knows that a person has a relative who is a member of the Kurdish opposition parties, they will put this person under pressure for instance by calling him in for questioning about his relative. If he leaves the country, they will ask him upon return where he has been. Additionally, he will be excluded from getting a job in the government sector. If the regime finds out that he is carrying out politically related activities, he could be imprisoned and prosecuted.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) mentioned that people are sometimes under pressure from the Iranian government to bring back their children or other family members, who are involved in oppositional activities, to Iran. If the family wants to refuse this by saying that they cannot afford to go to KRI, the regime will support them financially. Another way to put the family under pressure is to let them understand that their access to university depends on whether or not the family member who is part of the opposition in KRI returns to Iran.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that the authorities in Iran may put families of the party activists under pressure for instance by asking them to report frequently to authorities, displace them to other cities, cut their benefits or by threatening families coming to a prison to ask about their arrested family members.

With regard to the risk for family members of people who carry out political activities, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, said that the regime will harass these family members or even jail them. As an example it was mentioned that among the party leadership in the camp, there is a member who has a brother in Iran who is imprisoned because of the political activities of the brother living in KRI.

Family members to KDPI members and sympathizers are, according to Mohamed Sahebi (KDPI), harassed and at risk of imprisonment. As an example, he mentioned that if a party member is arrested, his family might not be given information on his arrest and place of detention.

KDPI's representative in Paris explained that family members are also under pressure depending on the profile of the member; the higher the profile, the more family members are under pressure. As an example, KDPI's representative in Paris mentioned a KDPI member visiting the office in Paris. This member explained that he had a brother living in Kurdish Iran who has been pressured by the authorities to ask his brother abroad to cooperate with the authorities.

Shamal Bishir (PJAK) stated that in the beginning, the pressure was high on the families of people affiliated with PJAK. The pressure reached its peak in 2011 where the revolutionary guard in the cities of Piranshahr, Sardasht, Naqhadah, and Mariwan asked the families to go to the Qandil Mountains and try to convince their PJAK family members to come down and stop their activities.

However, the families resisted and as their resistance gained sympathy among the local Kurdish population the regime put an end to its pressure on families. However, the source stated that family members, especially relatives of party leaders, are under government surveillance through the telephone network and email. The source stated that the mere fact that his email address and some PJAK books were found at his cousins' house caused this cousin a punishment of four and a half years of imprisonment (he was arrested in 2008).

1.4. Extent and ways of monitoring by the Iranian authorities

When asked about the ways the Iranian intelligence service monitor the party's activities, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) replied that monitoring is conducted through wiretapping of phones and internet connections, through hidden surveillance cameras in public places such as cafés as well as through local informers and spies.

Regarding the monitoring and surveillance of Komala, KZK, by the Iranian regime, Omar Elkhanizade stated that due to 40 years of experience, the party is capable of tackling the regime's attempt to monitor its activities. Elkhanizade mentioned that in order to control the activities of Komala, KZK, the regime sends spies into the NGOs and they also spy on students. Sometimes they have even sent spies to peshmarga training to gather information on the party.

According to KDPI's representative in Paris, the Iranian authorities monitor the Kurds whom they suspect of being politically active in different ways, including through hacking of e-mails, telephones and mobile phones as well as by using paid informants. In addition, the Iranian authorities put persons who are affiliated with KDPI under pressure by offering them large sums of money to become informants or by forcing the arrested members to carry out activities for the authorities.

KDPI's representative in Paris stated that KDPI is strictly monitored by the Iranian authorities, especially during the weeks before each of the anniversaries due to the fact that the party becomes more active on such occasions. During these weeks, the Iranian authorities send out disturbances to interrupt TV, radio as well as telephone signals. As a result of the intense monitoring of the party's activities in connection with the anniversaries, the party members are under the biggest threat in these periods. It was added that monitoring has been particularly intensified on the anniversaries of 13 July and 17 September.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) informed the delegation that Kurds who are working for or are cooperating with the Revolutionary Guard, the intelligence service, the national army or Basij are called "Jash" by the Kurdish population in Iran. "Jash" is a highly condescending word figuratively meaning traitor. It was stressed that "Jash" only includes Kurds working for or cooperating with these organizations and not people working in civil government offices.

1.5. Occurrence of non-Kurds supporting the Kurdish parties

Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger did not believe that one can find many Iranians of non-kurdish origin among members and supporters of the Kurdish political parties. An obvious reason for this, according to the source, is that these parties have the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region in Iran as their ultimate goal, and this is not what the majority non-Kurdish part of the population in Iran are interested in. However, Fazel Hawramy stated that the Iranian Kurdish parties in KRI have in recent years assisted a number of dissidents of non-Kurdish origin in fleeing the regime and coming to KRI which means that the parties have started having support also from non-Kurds.

Asked if also non-Kurds are members of Komala, KZK, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) answered that the number of non-Kurdish members is low but that many non-Kurds support the party and its activities. He further mentioned that non-Kurds who have had to flee Iran due to their support for Komala, have also at times been protected in the Komala Camp in KRI, and the party has helped them to go to Europe.

Answering to the question on recruitment of non-kurds to KDPI, Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) stated that the general rule is that non-Kurds cannot be full members of KDPI, but they can be sympathizers and friends if they believe in the ideas of KDPI. However, the source added, a few non-Kurds have been accepted as members after having worked extensively for the party for a long period of time. Sometimes non-Kurds take part in activities. Mohemed Sahabi (KDPI) believed that non-Kurds had occasionally supported the party financially.

1.6. Access to internet in the big cities in the Kurdish area of Iran

Regarding access to internet in the Kurdish area in Iran, an Iran Scholar specialised in Iranian minorities explained that there is access to internet, particularly in big cities like Mahabad and Sanandaj where a significant number of people of the middle class have computer and internet connection, as do students through internet cafés and university facilities. It was added that although the Iranian government tries to restrict access to internet through filtering, the youth tend to break through the internet censorship by exchanging technical know-how and required tools. However, the source pointed out that many people in the rural areas do not have access to internet for which reason political information is more often spread by word of mouth or by flyers and 'night letters'. An example of a situation where flyers have been used to convey a political message was when the Kurdish youth in 2005 printed and distributed the picture of the dead body of a Kurdish activist killed by the authorities.

According to Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger, low speed and the risk of being monitored and tracked by the authorities are two main barriers for using the internet in Iran. Fazel Hawramy explained that it is risky to visit political websites in case the computer is taken in by the regime for investigation. Nevertheless, an increasing upload of photos and comments on Facebook in recent years indicates that Facebook is widely used by people in the Kurdish region in Iran. In

addition, the Iranian people know how to bypass the filters set up by the regime by using code breakers and programmes made for this purpose. The source added that TV is also widely used and people tend to watch satellite TV channels transmitted from abroad such as Voice of America (VOA) and BBC Persian. The Kurdish channels from KRI are also watched by Kurds in Iran but due to their low quality people tend to watch them only for their news.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) informed the delegation that people in the Kurdish area of Iran have more or less access to Internet. However the internet runs at slow speed and it can be censored and monitored by the regime. The regime is also able to monitor the population by telephone tapping.

2) KDPI and KDP-Iran

2.1. KDPI

2.1. 1. Party organisation of KDPI

When asked whether KDPI has representatives or a party organization in Iran, an Iran Scholar specialized in ethnic minorities in Iran, explained that a large part of the party's organization is outside Iran, and that the party's organizational presence in Iran is rather rudimentary.

When asked about different types of affiliation with KDPI, Mohemed Sahebi, Member of the Central Committee (KDPI), explained about three groups: members, sympathizers and 'friends':

Members have several responsibilities and maintain a close relationship to KDPI and work by specific guidelines made by the party. Some members work alone and no one else other than the party leadership knows about them and their activities, but most of the members work in cells ('Hasteh' in Persian) consisting of three, five, seven, nine or even 11 persons.

Sympathizers have fewer responsibilities. They support the party and accept its policies but are not bound by guidelines. They listen to KDPI radio and watch its TV and they have no direct relationship with KDPI. The sympathizers' knowledge of KDPI will vary depending on the person's background; e.g. a professor will know more about the party than a farmer. A sympathizer's knowledge will also depend on how much the person listens to KDPI radio, watch its TV, has access to and read the party's materials etc.

According to Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI), 'friends' have no connection to KDPI and no responsibilities towards the party. However, they listen to radio and sometimes support KDPI by their own independent actions, and when needed many of them, just like sympathizers, take part in activities and demonstrations organized by the party.

Mohammad Nazif Qadiri, Member of Political Bureau, Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), stated that all KDPI sympathizers in the Kurdish area of Iran are organized and are active in the party cells. The organization of the party cells and the sympathizers takes place in accordance with the specific situation in the local area, and the number of sympathizers in a party cell depends on that situation. The party cells and sympathizers act according to instructions from the higher levels in the party organization.

Concerning the organization of members of KDPI in Iran, KDPI's representative in Paris informed the delegation that there are three categories of persons affiliated with KDPI: members, sympathizers and 'friends'.

As regards how members are organized KDPI's representative in Paris explained that they are organized in cells. Each cell consists of one or more members.

KDPI's representative in Paris further said that if the identity of a party member in Iran is revealed to the authorities, KDPI will tell this so called 'red member' to leave the country immediately for security reasons. Most KPDI members who leave Iran are typically settling in KRI or in Europe. With regards to high profiled members who leave Iran due to their identity being revealed to the Iranian authorities, they will mostly go to Europe.

As regards the party's sympathizers, KDPI's representative in Paris stated that the party's sympathizers in Iran are all connected to a party cell in their area. The identity of KDPI's sympathizers in Iran is only known to their respective local cells. Normally, the authorities do not know of the individual sympathizers of the party. In case a person is revealed as a sympathizer, he or she must leave the country for security reasons.

Apart from members and sympathizers, KDPI's representative in Paris described a third category of people connected to the party as 'friends'. KDPI's friends are characterized as ones who participate in different activities that are encouraged by the party, such as participating in demonstrations, closing their shops during announced strikes, or writing articles about the situation of the Kurds in Iran in newspapers. The KDPI friends are not in all cases of Kurdish ethnicity.

Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) stated that KDPI strives to keep their members inside Iran to work for Kurdish rights. However, if they face a life threatening situation, they are forced to leave and apply for asylum outside of Iran.

2.1.2. Activities by KDPI

When asked whether KDPI carries out military operations in Iran, an Iran scholar specialized in ethnic minorities in Iran, stated that although the party has stopped its military activities within Iran during the last decades, it does not mean that they do not have weapons any more. In addition, it is not always clear which groups or individuals are in possession of weapons and conduct military operations. This is one of the main reasons why the central government brutally cracks down on any kind of political activity in the Kurdish provinces in Iran regardless of how peaceful these activities may be.

According to KDPI's representative in Paris, KDPI in Iran mainly carries out awareness raising activities. These activities include calling for civil disobedience as well as encouraging Iranian Kurds to participate in political protests and manifestations such as demonstrations and strikes. For instance, when a strike is to be set in motion, it requires approximately two months of preparation most of which is to prepare the public opinion and encourage people to participate in that strike.

KDPI's representative in Paris stressed that KDPI does not carry out military activities. High profiled members living in the party's headquarters in Khoysanjak, KRI, occasionally go to Iran to undertake certain activities. In these instances, they carry a weapon in case they are trapped and need to

defend themselves. However, weapons have not been used even for this purpose during the last five years.

Mohemed Sahebi, Member of the Central Committee, KDPI informed that sympathizers are generally not allowed to attend the party's secret cell meetings in Iran. However, the source knew examples where this had happened, for instance when organising strikes and larger activities.

KDPI's representative in Paris informed the delegation that the party leadership in the party's headquarters in Khoysanjak, KRI recommends that the anniversaries of certain events in the history of Iranian Kurds are marked. However, it is up to the local party cell in Iran to decide whether to mark an occasion and how an activity (i.e. a demonstration, the distribution of flyers etc.) is to be executed depending on the cell's assessment of the local security situation. KDPI's representative in Paris further explained that it generally takes some time to prepare an activity in Iran. Some of the important anniversaries during which the KDPI encourages Kurds to be politically active are:

- 30 March – the execution of Qazi Muhammad, the founder of the KDPI, in 1947
- 13 July – Assassination of Abdul Rahman Ghassmlou, former party chairman in Vienna in 1989.
- 16 August – Formation of KDPI in the city of Mahabad, in Iranian Kurdistan, in 1945.
- 17 August – Khomeini's declaration of jihad (holy war) against Kurdish opposition groups in Iranian Kurdistan in 1979 followed by sending troops to the region to crush the Kurdish rebels.
- 17 September – Assassination of Dr. Sadeq Sharafkandi, the former Secretary-General of the KDPI, at Mykonos Restaurant in Berlin in 1992.
- 16 December – Peshmarga Day

2.1.2.1 Democratic Youth Union of Iranian Kurdistan

Regarding 'Democratic Youth Union of Iranian Kurdistan' ('Ettihadie demokratike Javanane Kurdistanane Iran' in Persian, Yeketi lawani demokrati Kurdistanani Eran, in Kurdish), Lawan, which is the Youth Organisation of KDPI, Foad Khagi Beigi, General Secretary of Lawan, informed the delegation that Lawan is a kind of NGO and its members are between 13 and 30 years of age. The source added that Lawan has a range of different activities. Firstly, Lawan is secretly present and active in Iran. Besides, Lawan communicate to the Kurdish youth through its magazine 'Lawan', its website, Lawan Radio Station and through its own programme called 'Lawan' on the KDPI's satellite TV. The members of the organization and the leadership coordinate activities with the KDPI and take part in the party's activities when needed. Lawan also carries out campaigns against for example drugs and other social issues that Kurdish youth face.

2.1.2.2. Communication means used by KDPI, use, production, storage and distribution of flyers by KDPI

In relation to KDPI's activities in Iran, KDPI's representative in Paris stated that flyers are used in the Kurdish area in Iran. In connection with the party's many anniversaries, the party cells hand out different tasks to the sympathizers, including distributing flyers. A sympathizer could for instance be asked to go to the shops in a specific street to deliver the messages orally. In case the shop owner's loyalty is questionable, a flyer will be pushed under the iron grid of the shop during closing hours. Another task could be to distribute flyers in a specific neighbourhood.

KDPI's representative in Paris stated that KDPI flyers are produced in Iran by the party cells and distributed by sympathizers. The content of the flyers is decided by the KDPI leadership in Khoysanjak, KRI. The messages on the flyers are sent through the internet, using USB sticks as well as through other unspecified/secret communication means. The same messages are spread via flyers all over Kurdish Iran.

When asked why KDPI's TV and radio stations are not used for conveying messages from KDPI to the Kurds in Iran instead of flyers, KDPI's representative in Paris explained that a powerful signal interruption tool is set up by the Iranian government which implies that the signal becomes unclear to the viewers and listeners. This is, according to KDPI's representative in Paris, the reason why TV and radio are not used to send important messages to the Kurds in Iran.

KDPI's representative in Paris mentioned other occasions when flyers are distributed such as when an activist or an ordinary Kurd is ill-treated or murdered by the authorities and the party cells want people to protest against that particular episode. In these cases, the party cells ask the party leadership whether or not they will accept that flyers are being distributed for this particular reason. Moreover, the party's opinion on different issues such as the central government's attempts to obtain nuclear power can be spread out via flyers.

As regards the messages conveyed through flyers, KDPI's representative in Paris informed the delegation that the wording is mostly quite short, for instance "We condemn the murder of the ex-leaders of our party' or "The murder by the Islamic Republic of x persons is condemned' or "26 Azar (16 December), Peshmarga Day, is the day of freedom and the wish for freedom' or "26 Aar is the symbol of the new life'. The languages used on the flyers are mostly both Kurdish and Farsi, but sometimes flyers are only in one of these languages, for instance flyers in Kermanshah will only be distributed in Farsi.

KDPI's representative in Paris presented an example of a flyer to the delegation: KDPI's logo was placed on the upper part of the flyer; on its background there was a yellow sun in a red sky and the written letters were blue. KDPI's representative in Paris explained that each batch of flyers was different in appearance from occasion to occasion. The batch of flyers distributed in connection with a certain event will have the same wording, colour and even the same font throughout the

whole region. When asked about the size of the flyer, KDPI's representative in Paris answered that they could be 15 cm x 15 cm in size.

When asked about the procedure for production of flyers, KDPI's representative in Paris replied that firstly, the KDPI leadership in Khoysanjak conveys the message to the party cells in Iran. Secondly, the party cells print the flyers and the sympathizers as well as party friends distribute them.

KDPI's representative in Paris stated that flyers are usually distributed or posted in busy places like bazaars, public gatherings, workplaces, or educational institutions such as secondary schools. Moreover, flyers can also be distributed among houses in a neighbourhood. The identity of those producing and printing flyers is often not known to those who distribute them. In a school, for instance, a student distributing flyers may not know that the flyers distributed are produced by his own teacher.

When asked about storage of flyers, KDPI's representative in Paris replied that normally flyers are not stored. They are distributed as soon as they are printed due to the high risk of being persecuted by the authorities in case the flyers are found in a home. The flyers are also posted in crowded places such as a town square, on walls, cars, and touristic sites.

Regarding publication and distribution of flyers, Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) informed the delegation that whenever the party's headquarters in KRI decides to publish and distribute flyers, it will contact experienced members who through their connections in Iran will arrange the publication and distribution of flyers. Once the flyers are printed, sympathizers may take part in the distribution of the flyers without having been involved in or knowing anything about the prior processes. There is no official contact between the members and the sympathizers, but in the smaller communities they manage to connect. The source emphasized that distribution of political materials (flyers, CDs, etc.) by the sympathizers takes place on a voluntary basis, i.e. the sympathizers are not obliged to distribute flyers. Sometimes sympathizers or the party's friends print out flyers from the internet and distribute them on their own initiative for instance on the anniversary of assassination of the former party leader, Dr. Ghasemloo. Mohemed Sahebi pointed out that the party normally conveys its messages through its satellite TV channel, but sometimes the party asks its cells to communicate the message through flyers. The source elaborated that using flyers is a more direct way to disseminate information and to get a confirmation that the information has reached the intended individuals or groups.

2.1.3. Recruitment to and membership of KDPI

Asked about the profile of persons admitted as members of the KDPI, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) explained that individuals who believe in and call for the rights of the Kurds, and believe that the Kurds in Iran are suppressed, can become members. About the procedure for becoming a member, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri further explained that there is a six months' probation period. During this period, the person is investigated to make sure that he or she is a pacifist and has a

pure belief about Kurdish rights. A part of the inquiry will be that the party members in Iran will carry out a secret investigation of the person. The individual also undergoes physical tests and participates in social events. After having passed these tests, the person is admitted as a member.

Asked if there are different types of memberships within KDPI, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) explained that once a member is admitted to the party, he or she will receive a training course and will be assigned different duties in different sections according to his or her qualifications. This could be political work, NGO, media, administration, women's rights etc. In KDPI all members have the same rights but their responsibilities are different. Members of the KDPI start as fourth degree cadres, and will typically be promoted to third degree cadres after three years of training and different activities. A third degree cadre member can take on responsibilities in different commissions. After another three years and several courses, the member is promoted to second degree cadre. When having stayed for many years in the camp it is possible to be promoted as a first degree member. First degree members can be elected as a member of the central committee and re-elected after four years. Members of the party's Political Bureau, which is the highest organ of the party, are chosen among the members of the central committee. People who are only supportive of KDPI do not have a specific degree, but can be active in one of the KDPI's NGOs such as the women's union, the student union, youth union and Center for Education of Children.

Asked about persons becoming members outside of KRI, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) explained that a person can become a member of KDPI and take on responsibilities in different countries. A Kurd from Iran can become a member even if he is in Denmark. If a Kurd in Denmark wants to become a member the political committee in Denmark will investigate the person. The person must have a legal residency which excludes people with a pending asylum application and he may not have violated any laws in Denmark. To avoid infiltration KDPI members in Iran will check up on the person's family etc. If a person stays outside KRI he or she is not required to come to KRI for training. A member in Europe will usually come to KRI maybe every two or three years and receive training for three months.

Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) stated that KDPI has a wide variety of members in Iran – men, women, young and old. In order to be recruited into KDPI in Iran, Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) explained that there are filters which a person has to go through and this process is long. The person will be under close scrutiny for between six months and a year before he or she can join a secret cell. After having joined a cell, the person will carry out activities corresponding to his or her qualifications; a professor or a student might be assigned to educational activities and teach people how the regime works and what KDPI's policies are. Others might contribute to arranging protests and demonstrations.

According to Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI), it happens quite rarely that a member in Iran contacts the party in KRI individually. This is due to the harsh security apparatus set up by the Iranian

government. Often, cell members will get together and establish contact to the party in KRI by telephone or e-mail or a person will be sent across the border for direct personal contact.

Regarding recruitment of new members to KDPI, Mohamed Sahebi (KDPI) informed the delegation that the minimum age for becoming a KDPI member is 18, and if a person is under below 18, he or she can become member of Lawan (Youth Organisation of KDPI). According to Mohamed Sahebi, if a person in Iran wishes to become member of KDPI, he may contact the local party cell and ask for it. The source did not wish to go further into details on the recruitment of party members in Iran due to the party's security precautions.

Foad Khagi Beigi, General Secretary of Lawan, KDPI stated that anybody between the age of 13 and 30 in Iran, KRI, Europe or elsewhere can become member of Lawan. The requirements for membership are that two members must be well-acquainted with and recommend the person, he must not be addicted to drugs and he must believe in democracy and freedom.

2.1.4. Membership cards issued by KDPI

Regarding membership cards, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) explained that these are issued to members after the peshmarga training which takes three months. It is against the party rules to keep a membership card when leaving KRI. Nevertheless, there are members or former members who do not hand in their membership cards when leaving KRI for which reason these cards should not be considered as a strong evidence of membership of the KDPI. The source added that it is very easy to make a fraudulent copy of the membership card. He pointed out that KDPI membership cards do not have a fixed layout.

Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) stated that KDPI normally does not issue ID cards and certainly not to members in Iran. ID cards will be issued only in special cases by the party's headquarter in Khoysanjak Camp in KRI, for instance when a member moves from one city to another and the holder of the card may need to be identified as a KDPI member. However, the party demands that the ID card must be returned to the KDPI office in KRI when the holder for instance, travels to Europe. However, this is not always done and the card holders have sometimes kept the card (which is against the KDPI rules). Consequently, ID cards are only issued in exceptional cases after a long and controlled process. When asked about the appearance of the ID card, KDPI's representative in Paris described it to be 5 cm x 8 cm in size with a stamp of the KDPI political and military council on its background. According to KDPI's representative in Paris, many forged ID cards have been delivered to the authorities in Europe by the asylum seekers claiming to be KDPI members.

2.1.5. Letters of recommendation issued by KDPI

Regarding letters of recommendation, KDPI's representative in Paris informed the delegation that when the representation in Paris is requested to verify whether a person is a party member or sympathizer, it will ask the party's headquarters in Khoysanjak Camp in KRI to investigate the case. Upon receiving the answer from Khoysanjak, the representation in Paris will issue a letter of

recommendation. In the letter, in addition to the name of the person in question, it is stated in French whether the recommended person is a KDPI member or a sympathizer. The letter of recommendation, which is signed by KDPI's representative in Paris, will be sent by fax directly to the asylum administration in the country in question; it will never be handed to the recommended person himself. If the given asylum administration requests the original letter, the KDPI representation in Paris will send the letter by post directly to that asylum administration. In the event the letter of recommendation is sent from another KDPI representative or elsewhere, KDPI in Paris cannot take responsibility. KDPI's representative in Paris added that if an asylum court needs KDPI's testimony in an asylum case, it is the KDPI representation in Paris that should appoint possible witnesses in such a case. Thus, KDPI will likewise not take responsibility if the witness is not appointed by the office in Paris.

KDPI's representative in Paris has seen many forged versions of the letter of recommendation delivered to asylum administrations in European countries.

KDPI's representative in Paris pointed out that KDPI is concerned about forged documents in relation to asylum applications particularly as the Iranian government may send undercover agents to Europe to apply for asylum in KDPI's name.

Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI), Member of Political Bureau, KDPI stated repeatedly that the KDPI office in Paris is responsible for processing hearings on whether a person is a member or a sympathizer of the party. KDPI is concerned about fraud and has told their members to address the office in Paris in order to have their memberships confirmed. Upon request the Paris office will contact the headquarters in Koysanjaq who either confirms or denies the membership or status as sympathizer of the party.

According to Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI), only the party's representation office in Paris or the headquarters in Koysanjaq can confirm a person's membership of KDPI. Mohammad Nazif Qadiri encouraged asylum authorities in Europe to cooperate with the KDPI office in Paris in order to avoid fraud. He stressed that a letter of recommendation proving a person's membership of KDPI will not be handed over to the KDPI member him- or herself, but it will be sent directly to the relevant asylum authorities in Europe from the Paris office. KDPI in KRI will sometimes issue letters of recommendation regarding members in KRI. These letters of recommendation will be passed to UNHCR directly and not to the member.

2.1.6. Recruitment and training of peshmargas by KDPI

KDPI's representative in Paris explained that before the peshmarga training, KDPI members are to participate in a preparatory training on party discipline called 'Pazireshe' ('reception', Kurdish language). KDPI's representative in Paris stated that both Pazireshe and peshmarga training take place in Khoysanjak camp in Northern Iraq.

KDPI's representative in Paris added that the duration of Paziresh training depends on the individual participant's knowledge, experience and proven loyalty to the party. When a KDPI member comes from Iran to Iraq, he or she must attend the Paziresh training, regardless of his or her background, knowledge and experience. It is exclusively members of KDPI who attend the training. Sympathizers cannot attend this training. The Paziresh training camp is financed by the party.

KDPI's representative in Paris emphasized that since 1995, there has been no practical military training within KDPI. However, during peshmarga training, participants are taught basic theoretical military knowledge. Moreover, the members are trained to live under harsh conditions. This training takes place during a period of three to four months. After the peshmarga training, the participants take on different types of tasks within the party according to their qualifications, i.e. administration, intelligence work and social work.

KDPI's representative in Paris further informed the delegation that during the peshmarga training, the participants are not allowed to leave the camp. Moreover, no document is issued for the participants upon completion of training. When a KDPI member has completed the peshmarga training, he can choose to stay in KRI and work for the party as long as he wishes, or he can leave KRI for a third country. Usually, those who leave KRI for a third country have completed peshmarga training and their reasons for departure are endorsed by the party.

Besides the main camp in Khoysanjak, KDPI's representative in Paris added, there are other camps in KRI such as Degala camp and Jeshnika camp which are however typically accommodation camps. Each camp accommodates KDPI members from a specific area in Iran. For instance, while Degala camp covers KDPI members from the city of Saghez and the areas further south, Jeshnika camp accommodates members from Piranshahr and the areas further north in Kurdish Iran. These camps exclusively accommodate party members and their families. The residents are allowed to receive guests from outside the camp but the length of the visit should not exceed a few days.

Regarding the content of peshmarga training, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) stated that the training includes teaching in the policies and ideologies of the party, the principles of democracy, women's rights, how to educate the youth to stay away from drugs and terrorist groups, problem solving skills, Kurdish culture and language, the question of federalism, international law and relation, human rights etc. Social events and competitions are also included. Mohammad Nazif Qadiri stressed that the goal of the courses is to prepare for the fall of the current regime. A part of the training is also practical military training which will enable the peshmargas to defend themselves against terrorist groups and the Iranian military.

Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) explained that during the peshmarga course, the attendants are not allowed to leave the training camp as they are considered to be immature and not ready. After having finalized the training they are assigned to different tasks in different areas under different commissions. Usually, groups of 15 and 25 persons will attend peshmarga training during which

sports activities such as chess and football also takes place. About the profile of women attending the peshmarga training, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri explained that these have often been students or women who had been active in women's rights in Iran, who had come to KRI due to problems with the regime. It could also be women coming to KRI together with their fleeing husbands. Regarding the profile of persons attending peshmarga training, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri further stated that any Iranian Kurd who believes in KDPI's policies can attend, and even non-Kurds, e.g. Arabs and Azari people can attend. The source added that there were people of Azari origin with high ranks in KDPI.

Asked if a person is allowed to take pictures from peshmarga training, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) answered that even if a person had such a photo, this would not be a sufficient proof that he or she was a KDPI member since such a photo could be false or the person could have been dismissed during or after peshmarga training.

Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) informed the delegation that the camp in Koysanjaq is the main camp where all military training takes place. There are other camps in the area, but these are for administration.

2.2. KDP-Iran

2.2.1. Party organization of KDP-Iran

Mustafa Moloudi, Deputy of Secretary General, KDP-Iran added that the party's secret members in Iran are usually ordinary members, but some of them may be promoted to the forth degree cadre (regarding promotion to higher cadres see chapter 2.2.3). Sometimes an ordinary secret member in Iran is promoted but has to remain in Iran under cover.

2.2.2. Activities by KDP-Iran

According to Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran), the party has secret members in Iran who carry out whatever mission they are asked to undertake by the party and report the result to the party. Sometimes they deliver political messages from the party's headquarters in Iraq to Iran or secretly publish flyers and newspapers in Iran on different occasions and distribute them during the night.

2.2.2.1. Communication means used by KDP-Iran

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) informed the delegation that KDP-Iran communicates its messages to the Kurdish people in Iran mostly by using CDs, DVDs and written materials. Written materials, CDs and DVDs are distributed during the night by the party members and sympathizers. The party also uses internet, social media such as facebook and sometimes text messages for that purpose.

Regarding CDs and DVDs Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) explained that these could contain a speech or a video footage or pictures from a meeting.

2.2.2.2. Use, production, storage and distribution of flyers by KDP-Iran

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that flyers are produced on specific occasions for instance the

Kurdish anniversaries such as Nowrooz, the establishment of KDPI, the memorial day for the people killed during the regime's attack on Kurdistan in 1980, or for encouraging Kurds to boycott elections held by the regime. In these occasions, messages are not only distributed through flyers, but also by TV, by posting posters on public places or by writing on the walls.

According to Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran), flyers are produced in KRI and sent digitally to Iran where they are printed shortly before distribution, i.e. sometimes a day or two before and sometimes three-four days in advance. The printing takes place in secret locations by using a small printer that can easily be hidden. With regard to the question on storage of political material, the source explained that the party members usually try to distribute the materials immediately after printing, but sometimes they are not able to distribute it and have to store it for some time. Digital version of flyers can also be stored in computers waiting to be printed. There have been cases where people have been caught by the security agents because of stored political materials. The source added that members sometimes due to their passion for the party and its messages keep a copy of a leaflet or archive newspaper articles.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that flyers can be distributed by trusted party members or by sympathizers. When asked whether distribution of flyers are performed by sympathizers well-known to the party, the source replied that the loyalty of sympathizers is not thoroughly tested by the party as most Kurds are assumed to support the Kurdish case, including the Kurdish parties. Distribution of flyers could be the main task of a sympathizer.

2.2.3. Recruitment to and membership of KDP-Iran

According to Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran), the requirements for people who want to become members of the party are first of all that they adhere to the goals and principles of the party, secondly that they have reached the age of 18, thirdly that they are of Iranian Kurdish origin, fourthly that they are recommended by two party members and finally that they must pay a monthly membership fee paid by all members.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) further explained that there are two types of membership of KDP-Iran: ordinary members and professional or full time members. A person who wants to become a party member must go through two months of training in the party's training center in KRI. During these two months, aspirants are being taught about the party program and ideology and they also receive practical military training. During the whole period they will go through physical training.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that most of the high ranking professional members are living in the camp near Khoysanjaq, KRI, which is the party's headquarters and the party is being managed from there. The source added that some of the members living in the party's camp in KRI, particularly high ranking members, are known to the Iranian government by name and the city they originate from.

When asked how an ordinary KDP-Iran member can become a professional member, Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) replied that after being peshmarga and ordinary member for some years, for instance three years, the person will participate in another training course called “Basic Political-Organizational course’ which usually takes from 45 days to two months. After the person has passed this course and a certificate is issued by the party’s training commission, if he works full time for the party for about one year, he will be promoted to the fourth grade cadre by the party’s political-military commission. After some time, the person will again attend a new training course which will also take about two months, and he can be promoted to the third grade cadre by the party’s political-military commission after having passed the training course and worked for the party for some time. The procedure will be the same when the member is promoted from the third to the second grade cadre. The only difference is that it is the party’s Political Bureau – and not the party’s political-military commission – who decides whether a third grade cadre member should be promoted to the second grade cadre. A member is promoted to the first grade cadre, which is the highest level of party membership, when he is elected by the party congress to serve in the party’s Central Committee. Also replaceable members of the Central Committee are first grade cadre members.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) explained the process of recruitment of new members in Iran by saying that potential recruits are watched by the party members for a while. If a person is assessed to be a qualified and trustworthy candidate, then he will be approached by the party member watching him and asked if he is interested to join the party. If the candidate accepts to join the party and if the party finds it necessary, he will be sent to KRI to receive training. The source emphasized that recruitment of new members in Iran is not an easy task, and the involved party members will face a number of difficulties in this process, particularly due to the difficult security situation in Iran. Regarding the profile of the recruited, the source stated that the party focuses on recruitment of young people, particularly university students and educated men and women. The source stressed that the procedure for being recruited to the party is the same for men and women.

Regarding persons who want to become member of the party in Iran, Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that they do not need to go to the party training center in KRI as they are trained by people from the party organization inside Iran. However, it sometimes happens that these aspirants secretly are brought to the party training center in KRI and trained there.

With regard to the party members working secretly in Iran, Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that some of these members come to the camp in KRI to receive training on how to deal with their secret work and how they should act in case their activities are revealed to the authorities in Iran, e.g. how to defend themselves, or what they should do in case they are imprisoned.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) informed the delegation that if a person wishes to work professionally and full time for KDP-Iran in the party’s camp in KRI, he is required to become peshmarga first. The

source added that the party camp of KDP-Iran is like a small city state in which all tasks are carried out by the party itself which for instance means that the peshmergas guard as well as clean the camp.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that the party camp has its own TV channel named 'Kurd Kanal' and its own newspaper and website. The party has special cadres inside the camp working on different issues: women, children, the youth, students and political prisoners. The source also mentioned that the party has set up a commission for household and services, another commission for security and intelligence and a commission for political organization of peshmerga. If the party in the future has to conduct military operation in Iran, it will be the political-military commission which will be responsible for this.

2.2.4. Membership cards issued by KDP-Iran

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) informed the delegation that all party members in KRI are holders of a membership card. The membership card is of the size of a credit card and it has text on both sides. The membership cards issued to the full time professional members is of a pale blue color while the membership card issued to the ordinary members is of a pale yellow color. The party members living outside the party camp have the same pale yellow ID card as the ordinary members. The party's peshmargas are also issued the pale yellow ID card for up to one year and after that they will hold the same cards as the high level professional members. Secret members living in Iran do not hold a membership card for security reasons. Within the party camp, there is a social committee that issues marriage certificates and birth certificates since the local government in KRI does not issue these documents to Iranian Kurds.

2.2.5. Letters of recommendation issued by KDP-Iran

Mustafa Moloudi, (KDP-Iran) informed the delegation that the headquarters of the party in Khoysanjac, KRI issues letters of recommendation to members going abroad to seek asylum. Since all members have their names listed in the headquarters, it is possible to identify each one of them. The party issues letters of recommendation, but the source emphasized that letters of recommendation are not delivered to asylum seekers and they will only be issued directly to the asylum authorities or the asylum seekers' lawyers in Europe. Every member has a written file within the headquarters which forms the basis of the description of the situation of the asylum seeker in the letter of recommendation. If a party member for instance goes to Denmark to seek asylum, he or she must address the local party committee that will then ask the headquarters to issue a letter of recommendation. The party's sympathizers can also get a letter of recommendation if the KDP-Iran is certain that the person asking for the letter had to flee due to political activism. In such case it will be stated in the letter that he or she is a party sympathizer and not a member.

2.2.6. Recruitment and training of peshmargas by KDP-Iran

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) informed the delegation that during the training of KDP-Iran peshmargas, they are not allowed to leave the training camp. This is due to the fact that the trainees should dedicate all their time to their training. Besides, the party camp is a protected and secure area which the new members should not leave as long as they have not received the necessary training to tackle the security issues outside the camp.

The party issues a certificate to the peshmargas upon completion of training. The result will be indicated with a mark ranging from 0 to 20 corresponding to the skills and capabilities demonstrated during the training. The certificate which is of the size of an A4 sheet will not be handed over to the person, but will be kept in the archive of the party's political-military commission.

3) KOMALA parties

3.1. Komala, SKHKI

3.1.1. Party organisation of Komala, SKHKI

Regarding the party's mode of organization in Iran, Ebrahim Alizadeh, General Secretary of the Kurdistan Organization of the Communist Party of Iran, Komala (Komala, SKHKI) explained that Komala members in Iran are either individuals having no connection to other members and reporting directly to Komala SKHKI in KRI, or they are organized in cells where each cell comprises three to five members. In the cells, members divide the work between them and only one member has direct contact to Komala SKHKI in KRI. According to Alizadeh, besides party members, there are party sympathizers who are Kurds active for Komala without being members or without having any direct connection to the party. These people listen to the party's radio programs and watch Komala TV and conduct the activities which Komala encourages Kurds to do through these programmes.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), Komala party cells in Iran act as an umbrella which covers a large number of sympathizers (even up to 100). The sympathizers and the members come into contact and are acquainted with one another through different collective activities. The sympathizers usually do not know who members are as the members never present themselves as such. However, through these collective activities, the members get to know the best and the most active persons among sympathizers. Later on, the members will establish closer connections with these sympathizers encouraging them to become engaged in organized party activities including establishing parallel cells.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), the party's secret activities in Iran are organized by a party unit in KRI called "Takesh".

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) informed the delegation that Komala SKHKI does not allow its members in Iran to get together in groups of more than two to three persons.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that every second year the party holds its congress in KRI. Sometimes secret members in groups of two or three from Iran participate in the congress.

3.1.2. Activities by Komala, SKHKI

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), his party conducts two types of activities in Iran: secret and public activities.

As regards public activities Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that his party is active through different non-governmental organizations such as labour unions, environmental NGOs etc. Alizadeh pointed out that these NGOs and organizations are not part of the party. The party only contributes to the NGO's capacity building and to strengthening of cooperation between the

organizations and the party activities in Iran. This contribution is not a financial support but rather an assistance with regard to know-how conveyed through open channels such as the party's radio and TV channels and written materials. The NGOs follow Komala's policy in practice, however not officially.

When asked about the party members' secret activities, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) replied that these activities comprise recruiting new members and being in active contact with Kurdish communities in different parts of the Kurdistan region of Iran.

Regarding meetings in party cells, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that members meet in their cell as need be. When asked whether sympathizers are allowed to attend these meetings, Alizadeh replied that these meetings which are held secretly are only for the party members and sympathizers are not allowed to participate.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) informed the delegation that the party has a large number of sympathizers in Iran. Komala sympathizers are people who are not in direct contact with Komala, but who autonomously conduct activities for the party in different ways. These activities could be NGO work, participating in protests on different occasions such as International Worker's Day or Women's Day, participating in general strikes, taking part in group excursions called 'Golgash't where a group of people get together and go to the country side to hike and discuss different issues etc.

3.1.2.1. Communication means used by Komala, SKHKI

Regarding Komala's ways of conveying political messages to Kurds in Iran, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) explained that the party communicates its messages by satellite TV and radio programmes, newspapers in Persian and Kurdish and by publishing and distributing flyers, leaflets and pamphlets. The written materials are designed and sent to Iran by USB or emails but they may even be printed in KRI. Sometimes the text is written in miniscule letters that can only be read under the magnifying glass. These materials are transported to Iran in different ways. One of the most common ways is through commodity trade across the border. Every day, a large number of goods are transported across the border either by trucks and cars carrying loads through official borders or by smugglers ('Kulbars') who transport goods by the illegal paths. This thriving trade across the border makes the difficult task of transporting political materials into Iran easier for Komala. The source stressed that Kulbars are not smugglers as commonly understood. Kulbars rather transport goods needed by the people on both sides of the border.

Regarding the use of Internet to convey political messages, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) explained that Komala also uploads flyers, magazines and other political materials on the internet which Kurds in Iran can download and use. The source added that Facebook and tweeter have been increasingly used by the Kurdish population in Iran in the last two years. Although the Iranian government constantly strives to control access to the internet, people in Iran tend to bypass

filters set up by the government by using code breakers and programmes made for this purpose. The source added that it is not possible for the Iranian government to monitor everything.

Asked about activities such as putting up posters or writing political slogans on the walls, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that these activities are mainly conducted by the party's sympathizers on their own initiatives. The general guidelines for conducting activities such as putting up posters are usually conveyed through the party's mass media. Sometimes, even cell members carry out such activities on their own initiative if they find it necessary. These activities have become a tradition on certain occasions for instance on International Worker's Day or Women's Day where sympathizers usually put up posters.

3.1.2.2. Use, production, storage and distribution of flyers by Komala, SKHKI

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) informed the delegation that the materials in Iran are distributed either by the party members or left in a pile during the night in places such as secondary schools, universities, factories, workshops, market etc. Regarding the latter way, the party sympathizers, who know this way of distributing materials, usually pass by these places and if there are packages left there, they will – after checking that no suspicious person is around – take the packages and distribute the materials in the same area. In some cases, however, the security agents take the materials before the sympathizers. The distribution mostly takes place during the night. However, if an area is considered to be highly supportive of the Kurdish case, distribution may even take place during the day. Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) further stated that sometimes people get arrested for storing political material for days, particularly young and inexperienced activists.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) in almost each city in the Kurdish region of Iran there are areas that the leftist Kurdish opposition calls 'the red neighbourhoods' in which the opposition against the Iranian regime is considerably strong. Consequently, the Iranian police and security forces do not dare to enter these neighbourhoods individually searching people's house or arresting people. As the government has no influence in these neighbourhoods and the security forces only occasionally and in massive groups come there, the party often produces its political materials in these parts of the cities. As an example the source mentioned that when the security forces come to 'a red neighbourhood' to collect dish antennas people reinstall them immediately. According to the source, a large number of Komala sympathizers live in 'the red neighbourhoods'.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), Komala publishes and distributes two types of flyers: those which encourage party members and sympathizers of the party to conduct a certain activity and flyers which aims at raising awareness among the general population in the Kurdish area of Iran.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) added that apart from flyers, the party publishes magazines, which deals with political, social or cultural issues for instance literature.

3.1.3. Recruitment to and membership of Komala, SKHK

Asked about recruitment of new members in Iran, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) replied that the recruitment process is long. During the process, which may take from one month to two years, the party carries out an investigation about the individual who wishes to become members.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) explained that recruitment either takes place by the party in KRI among those who are in contact with the party, including those coming to the party camp in KRI, or by the party cells inside Iran.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), it is possible to become member of Komala outside of Iran and KRI for instance in Denmark. Komala has a number of representation offices around the world through which people can become members of the party.

3.1.4. Membership cards issued by Komala, SKHKI

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) informed the delegation that the party issues three types of membership cards. For people living in the camp on a permanent basis, a blue card of a credit card size is issued. On the card is stated father's name, paternal grandfather's name, mother's name, gender, date of birth and place of birth. For people living in the camp on a temporary basis a beige card that is one and a half time bigger than a credit card is being issued. Finally, the party issues a special card for the peshmarga. The source further stated that if a member goes abroad, he or she must leave the membership card behind which they do not always do.

3.1.5. Letters of recommendation issued by Komala, SKHKI

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that Komala issues letters of recommendation which are sent from the party's official e-mail address directly to the asylum authorities. According to the same source, neither a party ID-card nor a letter of recommendation handed over by an asylum applicant is proof of his or her membership of Komala. Only letters of recommendation received directly from the party by the asylum authorities can be considered as valid proof of membership. The party also issues letters of recommendation for its sympathizers. The letters will be made on the basis of an investigation into the sympathizer's past activities. The source emphasized that the letter will only be issued for people who the party considers to be under threat.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) informed the delegation that the party has been contacted by a number of Iranian Kurdish asylum seekers in Denmark who asked for letters of recommendation. However, as they had not been politically active or under threat in Iran or KRI, the party will not issue letters of recommendation. At the moment, the party has a representation office in Sweden which issues letters of recommendation to countries all over the world.

3.1.6. Activities by Komala, SKHKI in KRI

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that a number of activities take place in the party's camp outside Suleimania in KRI. The camp is inhabited by less than 1000 people. According to Alizadeh, there is a peshmarga training center in the camp where the party's peshmargas are trained

through a course of two to three months duration. Among other main activities in the camp, Alizadeh mentioned transmission of global satellite TV channels and three radio channels that include Radio Freedom and Equality covering KRI, Komala Radio covering Iran and the rest of the Middle-East and Radio CPI. The first two radio channels are transmitted in Kurdish whereas Radio CPI is in Persian.

Regarding services provided in the camp, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that there is a medical centre in the camp offering medical treatment to the residents of the camp and the surrounding villages. There is one kindergarten in the camp run by Komala. The residents' children receive education in schools located in the village close to the camp. For higher education, the members and their families have to go to public universities in KRI.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) explained that one has to go through party checkpoints for entering the camp and the party's peshmargas are responsible for the camp's security.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that all Komala members residing in the camp work as full-time professionals for the party in the camp and they have no other jobs or other source of income. The party covers the material needs of its members residing in the camp in two ways: some of the members receive money from the party by which they can buy most of their needed goods at a non-profit shop in the camp. Others have all their needs covered collectively by the party and they only receive pocket money from the party. The party's source of income is funds from KRG, benefits from investments in Europe and Iraq, membership fees and financial support from Kurds in Iran. The funds from KRG are used for basic necessities for living such as food etc.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), it happens that Komala activists in Iran come to the party's camp in KRI to receive training and then go back to Iran. The training program consists of teaching in politics, modes of conduct, ways of handling the Iranian security police and interrogation in prison etc. They come to KRI legally as tourists or businessmen, and one also finds non-Kurds among this group.

3.1.7. Recruitment and training of peshmargas by Komala, SKHKI

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) explained that to become member of Komala, one is required to become peshmarga first. This procedure is contrary to that of most other Kurdish political parties where party membership is a precondition for being trained as peshmarga. However, it was added that Komala members in Iran do not receive peshmarga training in KRI.

3.2. Komala, KZK

3.2.1. Party organization of Komala, KZK

Asked about the organisation of Komala, KZK, Omar Elkhanizade, Secretary General of the Komala of Toilers of Kurdistan and the Komala Party of Kurdistan (Komala, KZK) stressed that the party is organized in two ways in Iran: hierarchically organized small cells, and individuals chain-linked to

each other. A cell usually consists of three to seven members, and a high number of sympathizers - sometimes even hundreds - are organized around each cell. No one in Iran knows who these members are. For instance, the chief editor of a newspaper in Iran was a member of the party, but nobody knew about that. Sometimes party members get arrested, but the regime cannot find any proof for their membership.

1.3.4. Activities by Komala, KZK

When asked whether the party is active through NGOs or other organizations in Iran, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) replied that the party members are active through NGO's, labour unions, women's groups and environmental organisations. These NGOs and organisations are, however, not part of Komala, KZK, and there are no formal links between these and the party as the party does not wish to mark these organizations with its name and thereby put them at risk. In each NGO, there are a couple of party members so not everyone working in the NGO is a party member. The Komala members work for the NGOs and organizations secretly together with independent activists or activists affiliated with other political parties. According to Elkhanizade, also sympathizers of Komala, KZK, work at NGOs and civil society organisations. By NGO work, the party aims at having an impact on society.

Omar Elkhanizade, (Komala, KZK) explained that sympathizers cannot attend the meetings held by the cells. The source added that sometimes sympathizers have their own meetings. The participants in these meetings are often young Kurds who due to their lack of experience are not aware of the dangers of participating in such meetings.

1.3.4.1. Communication means used by Komala, KZK

Regarding the means of communication used by Komala, KZK, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) stated the party has a wide range of channels of communication to the people: TV channel 'Asosat', the party's website 'Komala', Facebook, blogs, magazines, flyers, pamphlets and leaflets. As a means to interfere with communication via internet, the government of Iran has reduced internet speed and installed filters.

Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) informed the delegation that on special occasions such as Komala Day, Pesmerga Day, International Worker's Day, Women' Day etc., posters will sometimes be put on walls, streets will be spray painted with slogans or banners might be hung from the street lights. Especially the spray painting on streets is known to frustrate the regime.

1.3.4.2. Use, production, storage and distribution of flyers by Komala, KZK

Regarding the flyers, pamphlets and leaflets, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) explained that these are either designed in KRI and sent via internet or by a flash stick to Iran where it is printed and distributed, or they could be designed and printed by the members in Iran. Asked to elaborate on the use of flyers, the source explained that the party uses flyers on certain occasions, for instance if someone is imprisoned for no reason, flyers are used to inform people about that. Omar Elkhanizade pointed out that sometimes the cells themselves make the decision to publish flyers

and leaflets. The source gave an example of a Kurdish man in Mariwan who had recently been jailed and then forced to wear women's clothes and walk around in the streets. As it was seen as an offence against the Kurdish man, a party cell in Iran on its own initiative spread this news by using leaflets asking Kurdish men to wear Kurdish woman clothes. In the Komala camp in KRI, they got the news about the event four hours later. In general, in cases like this it may be party members in Iran who take the decision to make a flyer without the party in KRI being aware of this. The party does not issue guidelines for how to produce and distribute flyers.

According to Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) leaflets and other materials are usually distributed immediately after printing which can be done either in private houses, at a public printing facility and even by party infiltrators at government offices. Sometimes materials are printed a few weeks before certain occasions such as International Worker's Day in which case the materials might be stored before distribution. In such cases, each cell will decide where to store the material and how to distribute it. Sometimes materials are left on a designated spot where people will pick it up, for instance in the park or the picnic area.

3.2.2. Activities by Komala, KZK, in KRI

About the activities of Komala, KZK, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) informed the delegation that the party among other things carries out peshmarga training, run a satellite TV station and publish magazines.

3.2.3. Recruitment to and membership of Komala, KZK

According to Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK), the party has a special procedure for people coming to KRI to become peshmargas. The procedure consists of extensive questioning of the person, for instance, about whom he knows in his city of origin. Besides, investigations are carried out into the individual's background by the party's underground cells in Iran. Even if the person is a family member of a Komala member, investigations are still carried out. Everyone who comes to join the party is under close scrutiny, according to Omar Elkhanizade.

3.2.4. Letters of recommendation issued by Komala, KZK

Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) mentioned that Komala, KZK, issues letters of recommendation to both members and sympathizers to support them in the asylum procedure. However, he stressed that these letters are sent directly to the immigration authorities.

Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) stated that an asylum seeker can contact Komala, KZK, and ask for a letter of recommendation. Elkhanizade further stated that Komala is able to investigate and establish if a person is a member or a sympathizer having performed activities for the party. Investigations about sympathizers and their activities will be carried out by the secret cells in Iran. If a person, for instance, has spent a few months in the Komala camp, the party will assess whether he or she will be at risk upon return to Iran. Only if Komala finds that the asylum seeker is threatened, it will issue a letter of recommendation. A letter of recommendation is send directly to the asylum authorities.

3.3. Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

3.3.1. Party organization of Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Siamak Modarresi, Head of Political Bureau, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, informed the delegation that the party has a clandestine organization inside Iran consisting of active members who secretly carry out activities either in cells or in related clandestine NGO. In addition, there are a larger number of sympathizers who are not organized in cells.

Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, stated that there is little or no contact between the members and the sympathizers. In small towns, members and sympathizers know of one another but this is not the case in bigger cities. The members keep their party affiliation secret even with regards to their own family members.

Asked about the organization of the members in Iran, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, explained that the members staying in Iran who have more than three years of membership take on certain responsibilities. However, the source stressed that the party inside Iran is not very organized. Siamak Modarresi added that the high level members live in the camp in KRI.

3.3.2. Activities by Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, stated that party members in Iran could gather to discuss general issues such as women's rights and environment. Asked why members discuss such general issues in their meetings, the source explained that this is due to lack of public forums in Iran where these issues can be addressed. Siamak Modarresi explained this by saying that there are few NGOs in Iran and many things in the Iranian society are controlled by the regime.

When asked whether it occurs that a family member to a party member participates in a secret party meeting, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, replied that it normally does not happen and that if it does, the family member may not know that the meeting in fact is a party meeting. The source explained that meetings held by the members are, as mentioned before, not necessarily about the party and its activities.

3.3.2.1. Communication means by Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, use, production, storage and distribution of flyers

When asked whether distribution of flyers is organized by the party or whether sympathizers publish and distribute flyers on their own initiative, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, replied that both occur. Sometimes, sympathizers distribute flyers and carry out other activities on their own initiative while the party leadership in KRI is unaware of this. The reason behind this is that being in contact with the Kurdish political parties in KRI can expose people to danger. However, distribution of flyers can also be organized from KRI as part of a campaign, for instance during elections when the party calls on people to boycott elections.

3.3.3. Recruitment to and membership of Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

As regards recruitment of persons who approach the party in KRI in order to obtain membership, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, said that an individual must complete one-two months of training while the party looks into the new recruit's background. If the investigation is complicated, for instance if the party does not know the individual's family, two party members must recommend the new recruit in order for him to be admitted. Once the person has been admitted to the party, he or she will participate in different tasks managed from the camp, such as broadcasting in the party's TV station, publishing or other administrative tasks.

When asked whether the party recruits members outside of Iran, Siamak Modarresi confirmed that this takes place. Asylum seekers with a pending case can also be admitted as a member once the applicant's knowledge of the party has reached an acceptable level.

3.3.4. Membership cards issued by Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, informed the delegation that peshmergas and people working in the camp have membership cards. Besides, the party issues membership cards to its members in Iran. However, it was added that members in Iran may not carry their membership cards due to security reasons. The party has a copy of all membership cards in its archive.

3.3.5. Letters of recommendation issued by Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, stated that party members who wish to seek asylum can go to the party representation in the country to which they have fled and ask the local secretary of the party for a letter of recommendation. The secretary will then address the party representation abroad, which is in Canada, who will ask the party camp in KRI to investigate the background of this person. If the asylum seeker is known to the party, the representation in Canada will issue the letter of recommendation and send it to the lawyer or the asylum court in the country in question. In some cases, a letter of recommendation can be issued directly from the camp. In the past, these letters were handed to the party member. This practice was however halted when it turned out that some letters of recommendation were fabricated. Today, the party does not hand over letters of recommendations directly to the asylum seeker. The source emphasized that if an asylum seeker delivers a letter of recommendation to the asylum authorities in Europe, the letter should be considered as fabricated.

3.3.6. Recruitment and training of peshmargas by Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan

Asked what courses the new peshmerga recruits complete during their training, Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, mentioned computer and language courses. The source added that these courses are highly appreciated in the camp, particularly the course in computer technology.

4) PJAK

4.1. Party organisation of PJAK

Shamal Bishir, Head of Foreign Affairs, Party of Free Life for Kurdistan (PJAK) stated that PJAK is an illegal organization in Iran. The party's headquarters is located in the Qandil Mountains from where there is a mass media section.

Shamal Bishir (PJAK) explained that there are two kinds of membership in the party. The first group consists of professional members who are unmarried and have dedicated their lives to the party. Since the beginning of 2000, the party has secretly sent professional members into Kurdish towns where they try to organize people and establish different committees and legal civil society organizations; a strategy that is still being used. The second group consists of semi-professional members who carry out political activities such as distribution of flyers and work in the mass media section of the party. To become a semi-professional member, one has to go through the educational program of the party. The semi-professional members act as regional leaders where they live. The semi-professional members are specifically trained to secretly conduct activities for the party while living a normal life with a family and a job. Unlike the professional members, the semi-professional members follow their personal ambitions in life while at the same time working part time for the party. The semi-professional members do not participate in military activities whereas the professional members are involved in both military and political activities. As a third level of affiliation with the party, the sympathizers were mentioned as a group that also distribute flyers and participate in demonstrations. Sympathizers are, however, not directly involved in organizing demonstrations and they do not have any connection to the party organization. The sympathizers work under the leadership of semi-professional members in the cities and villages.

Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, explained that there are two groups of PJAK members: professional members and local members.

Regarding the professional members, Ammar Goli stated that these are members who have received military training and carry arms and they are also ideologically well-trained. The professional members are mainly stationed at PJAK's headquarters in the Qandil Mountains, but they may go into the cities, conduct activities and then go back to the headquarters.

As regards the local members, Ammar Goli explained that these members live a normal life in the cities all over the Kurdish area of Iran. Sometimes, they secretly go to the mountains, receive ideological and political lessons for about one-two months and then go back to the city and live their lives without any problems. The source added that local members do not receive military training. The source emphasized that if their activities are revealed to the regime, they will face serious punishment. The local members are not real members of PJAK but rather high level sympathizers who are highly responsive to messages and instructions from PJAK.

Ammar Goli stated that there are also low level PJAK sympathizers among the Kurdish population in Iran. The low level sympathizers ideologically support PJAK and promote PJAK's ideology indirectly through working within a number of NGOs, for instance environmental NGOs or NGOs arranging cultural events. These sympathizers do usually not publish or distribute flyers or other political materials and there have been very few cases in which they have been involved in such activities. The local sympathizers may hold intellectual discussion meetings where they discuss and exchange their views on different issues.

4.2. Activities by PJAK

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) explained that PJAK organizes their party activities differently from the other Kurdish parties. PJAK operates in the way that they send a party member into a town in which the member will establish contact to sympathizers and together with them conduct activities such as distribution of flyers, recruitment, fund raising etc. PJAK's strategy is to be present and be in close contact to the people.

Concerning the presence of PJAK at the border, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil informed the delegation that the military wing of PJAK is conducting an armed struggle. The Iranian regime is still attacking PJAK's positions. The source added that KRG had to move villages that were located too close to PJAK's positions. Moreover, the source pointed to the fact that the highland where PJAK operates is important to many local people due to its fertile pastures.

Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, informed the delegation that PJAK's members usually go into the cities and conduct their activities, i.e. talking to other members, giving instructions to sympathizers, holding meetings, arranging demonstrations, distributing leaflets etc.

As regards the activities of PJAK's local members, Ammar Goli stated that the local members are involved in legal NGO work as well as illegal activities such as distributing flyers and CDs or arranging demonstrations. As regards NGO activities, PJAK members try to promote PJAK's views on social, cultural and political issues through their activities in these organizations. PJAK members' NGO activities are not necessarily based on instructions from the party and the members may take part in such activities on their own initiatives. It was stressed that if an NGO activist's connection to PJAK is revealed to the authorities, this will result in prosecution of that person, and he may face harsh punishment.

Asked about types of political activities conducted by PJAK, Ammar Goli stated that PJAK supports NGOs and Kurdish cultural ceremonies as well as tell their sympathizers to vote for certain city council candidates or Parliamentary candidates.

According to Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, PJAK enjoys a broad popular support particularly among high school and university students, even in universities outside of the Kurdish area such as Teheran University. The students are not directly involved in PJAK's activities and for instance do not distribute political materials. They rather support PJAK indirectly by writing articles

in magazines and newspapers promoting the party's ideology in an indirect way. As an example, the source mentioned that previously two newspapers were published at Teheran University, one of which was supportive of PJAK while the other supported Komala. Both newspapers were stopped and the editors were arrested or fled the country.

Regarding PJAK's military activities, Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, stated that PJAK's military activities are carried out by its professional members. The source pointed out that PJAK has a different military strategy compared to KDPI and Komala. Whereas KDPI and Komala declared in the 1980s that they wanted to overthrow the Iranian regime through military struggle, PJAK has never made such a declaration. According to the source, this is because PJAK is well-aware that it as a small group is not capable of overthrowing the Iranian regime and that this is the reason why the party concentrates on ideological issues.

4.2.1. The ceasefire between PJAK and the Iranian regime

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that during the first couple of years after the establishment of PJAK, the regime did not target the party. However when PJAK began its armed struggle, the regime started acting against the party. Due to the political situation in the region, a ceasefire between PJAK and the regime has been signed in 2011. For the time being, PJAKs activities mainly consist of sending political declarations and distribution of flyers.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) explained the reason behind the ceasefire between the Iranian regime and PJAK by pointing to the fact that PKK is currently on good terms with the regime in Iran. The purpose of this peaceful relation from the Iranian regime's side is to put pressure on Turkey who supports the Syrian opposition against Asad's regime who is a close ally to Iran in the region. A part of the agreement between PJAK and the Iranian government is stability in the Kurdish area i.e. to avoid guerrilla warfare. PJAK claims to be an independent party but in reality they are closely affiliated with PKK which is supporting PJAK with weapons and money etc.

According to analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty, the situation whereby PKK and the Iranian authorities are on good terms could rapidly change if PKK gets on better terms with the Turkish government. This would break the ceasefire between PJAK and the regime and guerrilla fighting could as a result reappear. In such a situation, the sympathizers would be at high risk. The source emphasized that torture is a common part of detention, particularly when the detainee is a Kurd. The source added that the Iranian Intelligence service can arrest and torture people for no given reason, primarily to create fear among the population.

4.2.2. Communication means used by PJAK

When asked how PJAK communicates with its members, Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, explained that there are two methods used by all Kurdish parties to communicate with their activists: the digital way, i.e. sending instructions by internet, and direct contact which in PJAK's case means sending members from mountains into towns to meet members and sympathizers. Although PJAK's headquarters is located in Qandil Mountains, one finds PJAK

members in all mountains surrounding the Kurdish cities in Iran from where they can quickly go into cities and be active.

Ammar Goli pointed out that PJAK uses walkie talkies and Russian wireless non-decipherable communication devices instead of communicating through telephones as the Iranian government has bought surveillance equipment from Nokia which enables the regime to tap phone conversations and even recognize people's voices.

Ammar Goli stated that PJAK communicates with its sympathizers in different ways such as Nowrooz TV, e-mail, sending members, PJAK satellite radio station, PJAK website etc. Regarding e-mail, the source pointed out that the party usually uses Gmail, Yahoo and MSN as they cannot be filtered by the Iranian regime. PJAK's sympathizers use code breaker application to bypass the filters set up by the regime. However, the Iranian intelligence service uses advanced equipment which makes it possible to monitor the code breakers.

4.2.3. Use, production, storage and distribution of flyers by PJAK

Shamal Bishir (PJAK) stated that distribution of flyers and magazines in the cities is important for PJAK in order to convey its messages. The source added that distribution of flyers, CDs and magazines are considered to be dangerous activities and are according to the source penalized with long time imprisonment. The distributed CDs are about PJAK's goals, activities, propaganda against Iranian regime and about those who have been killed by the Iranian regime.

Shamal Bishir (PJAK) informed the delegation that PJAK publishes a number of magazines, including 'The Free Homeland' ('Wilatî Azad') which is the official organ of PJAK published bimonthly, 'Alternative' published biweekly and a newspaper for women called 'Zilan'. The source added that besides magazines and newspapers, PJAK also publishes books. The source pointed to the intellectual platform of the party and mentioned that students from Tabriz University were the first group that joined PJAK.

4.3. Recruitment to and membership of PJAK

When asked about PJAK's activities in KRI, Shamal Bishir (PJAK) answered that PJAK is not allowed to have activities in KRI and that their members are not allowed to stay in KRI. The source stated that the party cannot accept to be placed in a camp in KRI as has been the case with KDPI and Komala and PJAK has therefore chosen to stay in Iran.

Regarding PJAK's organizational presence and activities in KRI, Ammar Goli, a well-informed Kurdish journalist, informed the delegation that the party does not have any organization in KRI, and its activities are limited to holding conferences and seminars, participating in arrangements organized by other parties or participating in TV programs. PJAK does not have a party camp in KRI and neither does it wish to have one as the party believes that it should not be isolated in a party camp but rather be in direct contact with the Kurdish population in Iran. On the other hand, KRG is not willing to recognize PJAK as a political party unless PJAK freezes its activities against the Iranian

regime which PJAK is not interested in. Ammar Goli stated that according to Rooj-Nameh Newspaper, the official organ of the Kurdish Movement for Change and Reform party (Goran), no. 565, KDPI, KDP-Iran and the three Komala parties receive each 4 mio Iraqi Dinars (approximately 40,000 USD) from KRG as financial support, but PJAK has refused this fund since they would have to stop their activities.

Asked about recruitment of new members, Shamal Bishir (PJAK) explained that PJAK strives to recruit young men and women and to get them to come to the mountains and become professional members. In order to become a professional member of PJAK, one must have reached the age of 18 and be in good health. The source stressed that both men and women can become professional members. The source added that PJAK welcomes members of other ethnicities than Kurds. New members receive theoretical training that includes the history of humanity, the history of Kurdistan, gender and the importance of women participation in the struggle, rhetoric, ecology and ecology awareness, military tactics and method. Besides theoretical training the member will practically go through military training too.

4.4. Membership cards issued by PJAK

Shamal Bishir (PJAK) said that PJAK does not issue membership cards.

4.5. Letters of recommendation issued by PJAK

As regards the issuance of letters of recommendation, Shamal Bishir (PJAK) stated that PJAK issues such letters when a person affiliated with the party seeks asylum abroad. The source emphasized that the letter of recommendation will be sent directly from PJAK's office in Sweden to the asylum authorities in the country in question or to the asylum seeker's lawyer. Shamal Bishir (PJAK) emphasized that PJAK has a policy to stop youth immigrating to Europe and the party tries to channelize the youth's ambition into struggle against the Iranian regime. It was added that there may be some persons affiliated with PJAK who go to Europe and ask for asylum but they do so on their own initiative. According to the source, there are PJAK people who have been sent to Europe by the party for organizational work but not many.

5) Iranian Kurdish political parties in Northern Iraq

A Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil stated that Iranian Kurdish parties and civic activists are tolerated and accepted by KRI though the rights granted are limited and they have been in a limbo for 30 years. The diplomat explained that non-Kurdish Iranian political and civic activists coming to KRI will face many difficulties if they do not have local connections and network.

5.1. Residence permit or other possible ways for party members to identify themselves in KRI

UNHCR Erbil informed the delegation that in order to obtain a temporary residence permit in KRI Iranian Kurds must present a supporting letter from either one of the Iranian opposition parties or for those without a link to political parties a supporting letter issued by UNHCR. The source added that according to the asylum seekers who present themselves at UNHCR, the residence permit is easily achieved. The source further added that those who enter KRI to join political parties do usually contact the parties directly and obtain the support letters from them. They will automatically acquire a residence permit and does not need a support letter from UNHCR. They do, however, approach UNHCR to acquire the asylum seeker status.² The residence permit in KRI gives access to health care, schools and universities. The residence permit is valid for 6 months and is renewable. UNHCR is, however, unclear on whether a support letter from the political parties would be of better value than the letter of recommendation from UNHCR.

Brigadier General, Yadgar A. Faraj, Erbil Residence Director, Directorate of Displacement and Migration, KRG, stated that no Iranian refugee, including members of Iranian Kurdish political parties residing in KRI, is permitted to stay in KRI without residence permit issued by KRG.

When asked whether members of Iranian Kurdish political parties who live in KRI can pass the checkpoints in KRI by showing their ID cards from their parties, Yadgar A. Faraj, Erbil Residence Director, KRG, replied that even if such cases have existed, members of these parties regardless of their position in their party still need residence permit in order to stay in and move around in KRI.

Yadgar A. Faraj, Erbil Residence Director, KRG, ruled out the possibility that members of Iranian Kurdish oppositional political parties in KRI could be registered with universities or other public institutions without a residence card issued by KRG. It was added that KRG's Directorate of Displacement and Migration is continuously in direct contact with Ministry of Education, and registration of non-Iraqi students with the institutions under Ministry of Education is coordinated with his directorate. The director emphasized the importance of the residence card and stated that people with no residence card are not able to do anything in KRI which involves the KRG authorities and public organizations.

² UNHCR Erbil informed the delegation that on a weekly basis, 10 to 15 Iranians are applying for asylum in KRI; 99 percent of them are Kurds.

Asked if members of Iranian Kurdish political parties in KRI can pass through check points only by showing their party ID card, an NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq replied that leaders and high level cadres may be able to identify themselves with their party ID card, but that this does not happen generally. The source added that party members should have a residence permit in order to be able to stay in KRI and it is easy for them to acquire it. The source further explained that in the 1990s, it was possible to study at university with no residence permit, but stressed that this does not happen today. The source emphasized that although a number of things are regulated in KRI by the Iraqi law today, there are still room for some flexibility in KRI towards Iranian and Turkish refugees.

Regarding residence permits in KRI, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri, Member of Political Bureau (KDPI) informed the delegation that their members have problems obtaining KRG ID cards and passports. Some members get a temporary residence permit valid for six months or a year. This depends on the Asayish (KRG's security forces). Asked if it was correct that a person would be able to go through checkpoints or attend university without a residence permit and a KRG ID card, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) answered that this is correct and explained that since KDPI is an old and well-respected political party, the party has managed to convince the Asayish that 'if you are not going to grant our people a residence permit, you must at least let them travel with their KDPI ID card'. The party gives students a supporting letter by which they can obtain a residence permit which is valid during their studies, but they cannot get a job after graduating since they have no residence permit.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that only a few members of Komala have been granted Iraqi citizenship. Alizadeh stated that those members who come back to KRI from Europe or other countries, are issued a temporary residence permit (photo card) by the KRG authorities which is valid from 15 days to one year. As regards Komala members inside and outside the camp, the cards issued by Komala are valid as residence permits.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) confirmed that the party members can go through the KRG checkpoints using their party ID-cards issued by Komala. According to Alizadeh, the possibility to go through checkpoints with party ID-cards also applies to other Iranian Kurdish parties in KRI.

According to Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI), Komala members can enrol their children and young family members in schools and universities by using their party ID-cards.

Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, stated that the party issues a card/letter to those who are affiliated with the party by which they can prove their connection to the party. With this card/letter, it is possible to go through the KRG checkpoints. This card/letter, which is not a membership card, is issued for a short period in the beginning, for instance one month, but the period may vary depending on the need of the holder, and it may be valid for four-five months.

5.2. Presence of Iranian intelligence in KRI

Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger informed the delegation that if the activists who flee to KRI are low profile, it is very unlikely that they are secretly taken back to Iran because the authorities in KRI would not appreciate such an act given that the opposition media in KRI will use this as a political tool to bash the government. However, what is important to state is that the authorities in Iran can take people back across the border secretly. They have that ability and power to do that. But it is difficult to assess who is low profile or high profile because it is very difficult if not impossible for anyone to know the mindset of the authorities running Iran.

An NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq stated that the Iranian intelligence agents are present in KRI, and they have good relations with some of the Iraqi Kurdish political parties in KRI. Formerly, the Iranian intelligence service assassinated Iranians living in KRI but since 2009 this has no longer taken place.

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) said that the Iranian intelligence service is present in KRI. The source further informed the delegation that between 400 and 500 persons have been assassinated in KRI/Sulaimania by Iranian secret service since 1992. Assassinations took place in different cities of KRI, especially Sulaimania, Erbil and towns around them. The source personally know people from Iran, for instance from Seqqiz who have been killed by Iranian intelligence services in Sulaimaniyah. It was added that assassinations are rare now. According to the source, Iranians are monitored in KRI; some have received threats by text messages and some have been spied on.

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) pointed to the strong presence of the Iranian intelligence in KRI and their ability to monitor Iranian nationals and their activities in the area. The source added that many Iranians residing in KRI have received threats from the Iranian intelligence service or have had their telephones tapped.

6) General situation in the Kurdish area of Iran

Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger, pointed to the fact that the Iranian regime works to create fear among the Kurdish population. As an example, Fazel Hawramy mentioned that Iranian TV or TV channels supported by the Iranian authorities such as Press TV have shown documentaries on terrorism made by professional filmmakers in which it is shown how KDPI and Komala have allegedly committed brutalities in the Kurdish area such as assassination of Kurds collaborating with the government. These documentaries are shown to the population to prevent people from going into politics and joining these parties. The source gave a related example from his childhood on how the regime for a long time has tried to create fear among Kurds in Iran: in 1986 where there was a paraded execution in the town of Paveh in the Iranian Kurdish area, Fazel Hawramy had seen that two dead bodies of Kurdish political fighters were being exposed on the back of a truck while teenage boys were hitting the bodies with sticks. The boys were relatives to people who were killed by these Kurdish political fighters. According to Fazel Hawramy, fear is also spread by the regime by showing public executions on prime time TV. Fazel Hawramy showed a TV clip from Iranian TV news in which a public execution took place. The reason given by the regime for the execution was sale of drugs.

Fazel Hawramy added that since the Iranian government has made almost no investments in the Kurdish area, the people remain poor and their livelihood depends on the regime. For instance, if a person is arrested, he or she needs to know how to sort his case with the authorities which could for example be done by joining a Kurdish militia affiliated with the regime.

A Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil explained that the regime manages to keep the Kurdish population at a low economic level which among other things implies that Kurds are not allowed to invest in projects above a certain level.

6.1. Non-political activities perceived by the Iranian authorities as a threat

UNHCR Erbil explained that some Iranian Kurds who come to UNHCR in KRI, state that they participated in Nowrooz celebrations and were caught on the cameras of the regime. According to UNHCR, if they were taken to court, they would be handed a short sentence. When asked about the size of the sentence, UNHCR Erbil replied that basically Nowrooz is allowed in Iran because it is a Persian feast as well. However, if Kurds express themselves against the Iranian regime during the celebrations and are caught on cameras, the sentence will be between three to 18 months imprisonment depending on the individual judge. Thus, the sentencing is very arbitrary. If they do not do anything during the celebrations, nothing will happen.

When asked about the situation of NGOs in the Kurdish area in Iran, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil replied that any effort to build civil society organisations and networks outside the control of the government may be perceived as a threat by the Iranian government.

Asked about the Iranian authorities' reaction towards non-political activities, such as NGOs working on the environment, conditions for women etc. in the Kurdish area of Iran, analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) explained that the regime wants control of everything that is going on and that it is not possible to be active as an NGO unless the regime is informed. However, some NGOs are a cover for political activities, particularly human rights NGOs which have sometimes been affiliated with Kurdish political parties. Even if these NGOs do not have a political purpose they will be under surveillance by the regime, and some NGOs will even work for the regime. During the reform period under president Khatami there were some independent organizations in the Kurdish area of Iran but they could not continue their activities when Ahmedinejad came to power.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that the presence of the Kurdish Iranian opposition parties in Iran is based on sympathizers rather than real members. In this respect, it would not be possible for KDPI and Komala to be active via NGOs.

When asked whether non-political organizations and NGOs are targeted by the Iranian regime, Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger, informed the delegation that he knew of people in Mariwan city who worked as environmentalists and who were targeted by the regime. Fazel Hawramy added that arrest of NGO activists are often based on political charges, such as having connections to family members who are members of KDPI or Komala or PJAK. According to Fazel Hawramy, the Iranian law says that an accused person cannot be punished if there is no evidence against him, but the authorities tend to press and torture people to make them confess and in this way finds an excuse to punish them.

Chief editor Sardar Mohammad and Chairman of the board of directors Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) believe that people working with environmental issues in the Kurdish region of Iran are not targeted by the Iranian regime. However, if an issue is considered political, the persons involved might face problems.

From their own line of work, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) knew of organizers of literature and poetry events who have been subjected to investigations by the authorities in Iran. According to the source, the Iranian regime in general tends to consider all Kurdish cultural activities as being political, particularly activities within the field of literature.

As regards NGOs in the Kurdish area in Iran, Badria Ibrahim Rashid (NPA-Iraq) said that it is difficult to establish and be active as an NGO. When asked whether there are NGOs who are affiliated with the Kurdish political parties, the source replied that there might be NGOs in the Kurdish area of Iran carrying out political activities under the pretext of doing NGO work.

Regarding the possibilities for NGOs to work in Iran, an NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq explained that since 2008 it has not been possible for new NGOs to register and work legally. Those few NGOs who are still working and have activities face numerous problems

with the Iranian security service. The source added that sometimes NGO activists have been imprisoned solely for speaking to the media.

According to an NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq, NGOs working with issues such as youth, literature, or music do not face difficulties, but those working with human rights, democracy, women or other political issues should expect problems. According to the source, anybody talking about human rights in Iran is at risk. Environmental issues can also be seen as political by the regime and activists working with these issues are thus targeted.

Regarding the situation of NGO's in the Kurdish areas of Iran, Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) informed the delegation that many of these are either dissolved or have had their activities frozen by the Iranian regime. Reza Menuchehri mentioned a Kurdish Human Rights organization whose leader, Mohammad Sadiq Kaboodvand, was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment. The majority of activists of this organisation were detained and tortured and later fled to Europe. The source also referred to the national campaign called One Million signatures in which three of the female activists involved have been some years in prison but have now been released. Most of the other activists involved in this campaign have left the country. According to the source, any kind of activity that is just remotely political is considered dangerous by the Iranian regime.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) provided information about an environmental organisation in the Kurdish areas of Iran. This organisation worked for the preservation of nature and wildlife and was active in fire fighting in forests. The authorities dissolved the organisation and five of the most active members, who were all university students, were detained for two and half months during which they were subjected to torture. They were arrested due to security charges and accusations of being in contact with foreign media. They were recently released on bail, but two of them were upon release displaced to universities in faraway cities. These five together with other activists were warned by the authorities not to pursue their prior activities and to stay away from any activities related to the upcoming elections (in June 2013). Regarding the less active members, the source stated that these were also at high risk, and imprisonment could happen any time. However, the strategy of the regime was, according to the source, that by getting to the most active members first, the organisation would be dissolved by itself. During imprisonment, the parents of the five environmental activists were denied access to see them and told not to mention the imprisonment under any circumstances. This was all done orally. The families were also contacted by third persons sent by officials and told that it would be better for their detained children if the families kept quiet.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) added that this environmental organization was both highly informative and very efficient and was for instance able to gather tens of persons by text-messages in a short time in order to extinguish fires in forests. All in all, hundreds were active in this organisation. Activists were not formal members but were simply called upon when for instance a fire broke out.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) informed the delegation that no matter which field an organisation works in, meetings are seen by the regime as highly problematic and conspiratorial. The more members or activists, the more problematic it will be, but even for small organisations, holding meetings is risky.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) stated that whenever people get together regardless of the reason, the authorities become suspicious, and it particularly applies to cultural activities. As an example, Reza Menuchehri mentioned that the regime might sabotage Kurdish festive gatherings if people have bonfires or dance the traditional Kurdish dance 'Rash Bâlak' where men and women dance hand in hand. In the past, people had been arrested on such occasions but lately there have not been cases of arrests. However, the source stated that the regime is still sensitive to Nowrooz festivities, and people may be threatened and arrested for celebrating Nowrooz by gathering and dancing. Usually, the Iranian riot police will come to the party in a truck and tell people to take everything into consideration and respect the Islamic background of the government and not to act against Islamic traditions.

According to Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) the government of Iran tries to monitor everything, including small organisations and groups as well as individual activities. However, it was emphasized that the higher the number of activists in an organization, the more sensitive the government will be.

Siamak Modarresi, Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, stated that regardless of what problems people discuss in public, it would be perceived as critical towards the government. Thus, if people gather to talk about unions or literature, the government suspects that the gathering is of a political nature. As a result, when there is a public meeting on politically acceptable issues like water supply, people take advantage of the situation to discuss politics. During election periods, some political discussions are allowed, but Komala activists have to be careful not to reveal their affiliation to Komala.

6.2. Grass root political activities

Asked about who organizes demonstrations in the Kurdish region in Iran, Fazel Hawramy said that it is difficult to say whether demonstrations are sparked off by the party activists or by the general population as the protests very often are organized and carried out on the basis of an ad hoc cooperation involving a large number of people across political parties, grass roots, NGOs, independent activists, journalists etc. working hand in hand. The source gave a recent example in which the regime hanged three Kurdish men in the city of Kermanshah. During the execution of the three men, an activist filmed the gruesome event of the execution of the three men and had it sent out of Iran to a human rights activist. The activist then notified the media about the event and some articles were then published about the incident in the international media including the Guardian, AFP.

Fazel Hawramy gave another example on how information is being spread: The authorities in the city of Mariwan dressed an offender in women clothing and then people protested and the

incident was covered by the international media and then the head of Iran police apologized to the Kurdish women for the incident and promised not to repeat it again. The story got out by activists but it is difficult to say who they were whether they were independent activists or political party activists.

Badria Ibrahim Rashid (NPA-Iraq) gave an example on how Kurdish people demonstrate: last month (May 2013) there was a case in Kurdish Iran in which the regime humiliated a man by dressing him in women's clothes. The event inspired many activists to dress out as women in solidarity with the oppressed Kurdish women.

7) Conditions in border areas between Iran and KRI

Regarding illegal transport of goods and people across the border between Iran and KRI, Yadgar A. Faraj, Erbil Residence Director, KRG confirmed that the volume of illegal traffic of goods and people is high and a large number of Iranian Kurds, including Iranian Kurdish political party activists, are using the illegal paths to come to KRI or go back to Iran. According to Erbil Residence Director, the volume of illegal traffic has however fallen in recent years due to the increasing control and monitoring of the borders by the KRG authorities.

Erbil Residence Director stated that a large number of Iranian visitors to KRI use the two legal borders between Iran and KRI, i.e. Haj Omran and Bashmakh border, and approximately five to six thousand persons cross each of these borders on a daily basis.

Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, stated that the Iranian Kurds who are in opposition to the Iranian regime often use illegal paths to come to KRI and go back to Iran. According to the mayor, it is generally not difficult for people of the opposition to cross the border in an illegal way in Penjwin area. However, in other areas where there are Iranian military bases along the border, it is more difficult – not only for the opposition groups but also for other people – to use the illegal paths. The mayor explained that Iranian authorities particularly watch for certain foodstuffs not being smuggled out of Iran. However, the mayor emphasized that there is a long and porous border between Iran and Iraq and even though both countries have armed forces in the border areas it is quite difficult for the Iranian authorities to control the illegal transport of goods and people across the border.

When asked whether it is possible for a person with connection to the Kurdish opposition parties to cross the official borders using his own passport, Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, replied that it is not easy for such a person to get a passport in Iran. And even if such a person is in possession of an Iranian passport, it will be quite risky to cross the border as he may be arrested by the authorities and his passport may be seized. The mayor added that although a person's passport does not indicate the political affiliation of its holder, the Iranian border authorities may have lists of people who are considered a threat to the regime.

Regarding barriers to illegal transport of goods and people between Iran and KRI, Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, mentioned barbed wires, unexploded mines from the Iran-Iraq war and natural barriers such as high mountains as the main challenges.

According to Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, Iranians who exit Iran illegally to come to Europe and ask for asylum often use the illegal paths along the border between Iran and Turkey, and this applies even to Iranians of Kurdish origin. The main reason for this is that coming to Turkey directly from Iran will be less costly as well as shorter in distance compared to coming to Turkey via KRI.

Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, informed the delegation that it would be difficult for the asylum authorities in Europe to distinguish between Kurds from Iran and KRI due to their common language and cultural background and their knowledge of each other's area. Against this background, it will not be difficult for an Iraqi Kurd to identify himself to the asylum authorities in Europe as an Iranian Kurd. The mayor stated that it also applied to Kurds living in neighbouring areas inside Iraq.

Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger stated that it is possible for an Iranian Kurd to go to KRI by illegal paths if he or she wishes to do so. The source pointed out that historically, the Kurdish people across borders have helped each other out. Even the local KRG border guards will help Iranians who flee their country. Although the Iranian Special Forces operating in the mountainous border are a barrier for people crossing the border illegally, it is extremely difficult for the Iranian forces to control the long, mountainous and porous border. Fazel Hawramy explained that it is not unusual to find Kurdish families from Iran meeting their family members, who have fled the country and are residing in KRI, in the border area. Fazel Hawramy showed photos from the border area where only a rock marked the border between Iran and KRI and there did not seem to be any barrier to stop people who wanted to cross. (See cover photo)

According to Fazel Hawramy, there is a large number of smugglers ('Kulbars' in Kurdish) crossing the border every day. As the Iranian authorities know that the people in the Kurdish area are poor and need a source of income, smugglers often cross the border without disturbance by the Iranian authorities unless there is a political emergency situation. However, there have been cases of smugglers being killed by the Iranian forces.

Badria Ibrahim Rashid, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA-Iraq) stated that Kurds on both sides of the border can easily cross the border by illegal paths. It was added that in some areas such as Awesar the border is practically absent and people can cross it without even noticing it. However, the source pointed out that smugglers ('Kulbars' in Kurdish) sometimes have been arrested by the border control.

Badria Ibrahim Rashid (NPA-Iraq) explained that Iranian Kurds who want to go to KRI to visit family, study and do business, can easily go to KRI and go back again through the official borders. The source added that in recent years, during the Kurdish New Year, Nowrooz, around 150.000 Iranian Kurds have come to KRI to celebrate Nowrooz and afterwards gone back to Iran, and many Iraqi Kurds have travelled to Tehran for medical treatment.

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) stated that the numbers of Iranians coming to KRI to work is increasing, and that persons travelling across the border might be questioned but not more than that. However, if a person has attempted to cross the border illegally and is caught, the consequences will be severe. In such a case, the person might be arrested, accused of having relations to the opposition parties and sentenced. What further happens to a person arrested on these grounds is not possible to say. If the family of the detainee

goes to the authorities and ask about the detainee, they may be told to go away and come tomorrow, a message bound to be repeated again and again.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) mentioned barbed wires, deep and wide canals and mines as some of the barriers against the illegal traffic of goods and people across the border between KRI and Iran. The source mentioned the mountains as a natural barrier at the border. However, he added that the locals know how to manage these barriers and although it is dangerous, there are a large number of people and smugglers who cross the border illegally. According to the source, due to the high unemployment rate in Iran, there are a great number of Kurds who are travelling back and forth across the border in order to earn money and the Iranian regime cannot control this traffic. The source added that people also cross the border legally and visit families under the pretext to do business.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that apart from smugglers ('Kulbars'), the illegal paths are also used by Iranians who do not hold passports. This group includes among others draft evaders and political activists who have been in jail and on whom the Iranian government has inflicted travel bans.

7.1. Ways of crossing the border by the Kurdish parties

Asked about the illegal traffic of people and goods across the border between Iran and Iraq, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil confirmed that it is quite difficult for the Iranian and the KRG authorities to control the long and porous border. Moreover, there are strong ties among Kurds on both sides of the border and one often finds intermarried families across the border. As the diplomat explained, people in the border areas often know how to cross the border illegally, and even if they do not know, it only requires a couple of connections before being capable of doing it. However, it was emphasized that although it is not difficult for the local Kurdish political parties, to transport people and goods across the border, it is still risky to do so. In addition, you must at least be a Kurd and have good knowledge of the local area before you are able to cross the border illegally. For a person coming from Tehran with no knowledge of the local area or the Kurdish language, it would be very difficult to cross the border illegally, according to the diplomat.

According to the Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil, Iranian Kurdish political parties have good ties to the Kurdish area in Iran and they are capable of transporting people and political materials through their well-established smuggling networks.

According to Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper), members of the Kurdish political parties cannot cross the border legally, but they can easily cross the border illegally.

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) considered it possible for Iranian Kurds to go back and forth across the official borders. The source pointed to the demographic nature of the Kurdish border area and stated that the fact that relatives live on both sides of the border, makes

it possible for the local people and the Kurdish political parties to cross the border illegally. According to the source, knowing people in the border area who can provide practical assistance makes it easy to cross the border by illegal paths. The political parties and oppositional activists are thereby able to transport political materials and people back and forth. The source added that a lot of smuggling of drugs, alcohol and TV dishes is going on across the border and that the smugglers are usually locals.

Asked how people affiliated with KDPI in Iran cross the border and come to KRI, Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) mentioned that crossing the border to KRI takes place either secretly or by using the official border showing a passport. As regards the illegal secret way, the sourced stated that the Iranian authorities do not know about the illegal paths used by the party activists to come to KRI. Regarding the official border, the source explained that people using the official border pretend to be tourists or businessmen. The source further explained that there are a large number of Iranian visitors who come to KRI on different occasions, and it is not easy for the Iranian authorities to impose strict control of the stream of visitors. To illustrate what the regime was up against regarding control at the border, Mohemed Sahebi added that at Nowrooz last year more than 25,000 persons had crossed one of the official border gates. Sometimes a KDPI member would cross the border illegally by foot and by pick-up truck or alternately just meet with KDPI members from KRI in a village close to the border. According to Mohemed Sahabi, the Iranian intelligence is very much present in the border areas, gathering intelligence and conducting surveillance. Mohemed Sahebi pointed out that due to the party's security precautions, he was not able to give the delegation more information on the transport of materials and people across the border.

About the situation in the border area, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) stated that the control of the border area is not very tight, and smuggling goods and people by illegal paths is thus not a difficult task. Elkhanizade stressed that as Komala, KZK, respects KRI's relations with Iran, the party does not transport weapons into Iran. However, if the party intended to transport weapon across the border, that would be possible. Komala Party of Kurdistan rarely transports printed material since written materials such as leaflets or flyers are usually sent by internet or stored on a flash stick which is easily transported across the border.

When asked whether the party uses smugglers ('Kulbars') to transport political materials into Iran, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) replied that the party only uses a small group of smugglers whom the party knows. Political materials are carried by these smugglers together with other smuggled goods. Asked how party members are smuggled across the border, the source stated that these are guided by people in the villages, by smugglers ('Kulbars') or by family members in the border area. Smugglers use many different paths into Iran and the Iranian regime cannot control them. However, sometimes the Iranian forces shoot at the smugglers and some of them have been killed.

Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) further stated that the party members know the villagers who assist the party when materials or persons are to be transported across the border. If a person is to cross the border, this can be done in several different ways: by taxi, by mule, by pick-up truck etc. The easiest and safest way to secretly get a person into Iran will often be to go to one of the villages in the mountains, stay a few days – maybe with family – and be picked up by car by secret members in Iran.

Asked about the possibility of crossing the border illegally, Shamal Bishir (PJAK) stated that PJAK's headquarters are within the Iranian territory and the party therefore does not need to cross the border. According to the source, the areas around the Qandil Mountains are under PJAK's control and no government has ever been able to control these impassable harsh mountainous areas.

7.2. Presence of Iranian intelligence in the border area

According to analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine), there is a strong presence of Iranian intelligence in the border area. However, it was added that any goods can be smuggled across the border from KRI to Iran, and the Iranian regime closes its eyes for several reasons. Firstly, in order to ease the economic pressure on poor Iranians, it is tolerated that they earn money by smuggling or go to KRI for employment. Secondly, smugglers can bring foreign currency into Iran which is badly needed due to the sanctions. The source added that goods are mainly smuggled from KRI to Iran rather than the other way. The source further added that Kurds on both sides know how to cross the border illegally.

When asked about presence of Iranian intelligence in the border area, Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger replied that the border area is monitored by the revolutionary guards who control the area fairly well. However, people who know the area can easily avoid the revolutionary guards and cross the border. The source added though that there are minefields in the area that sometimes kill people or cause loss of limbs. The sources also pointed out that the Iranian intelligence service is present in Suleimania province and can take a citizen back from Sulaimania to Iran if they want. When asked if there have been cases of kidnappings, the source answered that there have been reports of people being taken back to Iran such as the case of the editor of a magazine called Israel-Kurdistan in 2012.

Asked whether the Iranian intelligence service is present in the border area, Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that the intelligence service is mainly present at the official border checkpoints as well as in certain areas. Guarding the border area is the responsibility of the Iranian Gendarmerie Police force which has bases along the long border. The source further added that the border is in some places protected by barriers such as barbed wires, mines and canals.

Regarding the presence of the Iranian security agents in the border area, Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, stated that similar to KRG who has its own police forces and Asayish, Iranians

have their own military and security forces at the border. However, the mayor added that the Iranian security agents work quite secretly in the border areas.

7.3. Relatives visiting active political party members in Northern Iraq

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) informed the delegation that Iranians are sometimes given permission by the Iranian authorities to visit family members in the camps of the Kurdish political parties in KRI, but that they will be under surveillance.

Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, explained that there are a large number of Iranian Kurds who come to KRI, both legally and illegally, to visit their family members who are active for Iranian Kurdish opposition groups. When these people come to KRI through the legal borders, they mention tourism, participation in cultural events such as concerts or business as the main purpose of their visit to KRI to the Iranian border authorities.

An NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq considered it dangerous for the families of members of Iranian political parties residing in KRI to go back and forth since there are spies everywhere in Iran.

Asked if family members can come to KRI to visit relatives in the Komala camp and if they will face problems on return to Iran, Omar Elkhanizade (Komala, KZK) answered that it is not unusual that families to the party members come from Iran and visit their relatives. Families often come through the official borders, but it also happens that they come by illegal paths. If they come legally, they will most often not tell the authorities what they plan to do in KRI, and if the authorities already know about the purpose of their trip, they will tell the authorities that they are going to KRI to convince their relative to leave the camp and come back to Iran. The source only knew of few cases where family members have been harassed upon return to Iran after having visited relatives in KRI. He added that it is not easy for the regime to figure out what people intend to do in KRI. According to the source, most families come to KRI legally pretending to do business. Even if the Iranian authorities know that a person has relatives in the camps, they might do some investigations and ask questions but nothing more than that.

8) Return from Northern Iraq to Iran

UNHCR Erbil informed the delegation that the Iranian Kurds know the illegal paths across the border. If a Kurd who has left Iran illegally goes back, the consequences of his illegal exit will not be severe: If he was gone for less than six months, he would most likely be punished by a fine amounting to 80 USD and if he is gone for more than six months the fine will be 120 USD. A person who goes back to Iran will be interrogated and then released unless there is evidence found against him. When asked what happens if evidence is found, UNHCR Erbil answered that according to the asylum seekers whom UNHCR has talked to and according to some country of origin information, when someone who has had political affiliation in Iraq voluntarily returns to Iran, he will be taken to the intelligence department and he will go through few interrogations. The person will then be taken to the revolutionary court where his political affiliation in Iraq will be determined. He will here be given a chance to sign a statement by which he promises that he will not be involved in political activities any more. If the court presents solid evidence against the person which shows that he has been involved in military operation and armed struggle, he will be punished but the punishment differs from case to case. In most cases, the punishment will be imprisonment. In the next step, the person will be taken to the public court for his illegal departure, and he will be fined for his illegal exist. UNHCR Erbil added, however, that the Iranian authorities may suspect Kurds who have stayed in KRI for a while of having been in contact with the exiled political parties.

Asked about the situation for returnees, a Western diplomat and expert on Iran had never heard of any Iranian with political affiliations who went back to Iran. The source assumed that as long as a returnee has not been member of an oppositional political party or involved in political activities in other ways, she or he would not face problems upon return to Iran.

When asked about conditions for people who return to Iran from KRI, Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) explained that he saw a division of three groups of people going back.

The first group consists of people who decide to go back to Iran because they may have lost their political motivations and their hope for political change or because their families in Iran may be under pressure by the authorities. The return of such persons is not necessarily coordinated with the authorities in Iran. They go back and surrender themselves to the regime even though they have participated in political activities and the regime may have obtained compromising information on them. They regret their past political activities and promise to the authorities that they will not engage in any political activities any more. These people will be considered a threat by the regime, maybe because they have run a campaign against the Iranian regime in KRI or because they have participated in a demonstration against the regime. Persons from this group are required to frequently report their whereabouts to the authorities in the first one month to two years after their return. The investigation about these people will be intense, and the

authorities may even tell the person not to leave his or her own city or village during the investigation. During the investigation, the authorities will ask the person about his positions and titles in the party which the person has been active in. If he says that he has been a peshmarga, they will interrogate him in accordance with detailed maps and ask him to point to places relevant to his explanation. If the returnee says that as a peshmarga he guarded a specific place in KRI, the intelligence service may know whether or not there is a guard at that particular spot. The source added that since the Iranian intelligence has detailed information on members of oppositional political parties in KRI, the chances of lying one's way through the process are small. The source added that there are very few cases of members of oppositional groups who have resisted the torture under the investigation and have not confessed. People from this group may receive punishment depending on what they have done. The source said that this group consists of a low number of people.

The second group consists of people who due to their poor living condition in KRI decide to go back to Iran. In Iran, they confess and regret their past political activities and promise to the authorities that they will not engage in any political activities any more. Previously, this group were often seen among the returnees, but nowadays, there are not so many of them as before. When this group goes back to Iran, the government tends to receive them at the border and bring them home. These families may due to their poor economic conditions have to cooperate with the regime and give the authorities information on activities of the oppositional parties in KRI or on relatives who are politically active. Families that choose to cooperate with the government could, according to Reza Menuchehri (KMMK), be dangerous since they will sometimes exaggerate and fabricate stories to please the Iranian government. They may be asked to go back to KRI in order to infiltrate political parties and organisations and gather new information for the regime and to encourage other refugees in KRI to do the same as them. People from this group do not receive a high financial support from the government for their cooperation.

The third group consists of people who go back to Iran and surrender themselves to the regime and promise not to do any activities against the regime. What makes these people different from the second group is that these are people with a good financial situation and for that reason, they do not need to cooperate with the regime.

The source added that returnees in the second and the third group have in common that the regime does not have compromising information on them. If the investigation shows that people from these two groups have conducted activities which the regime considers a problem punishment may be inflicted.

Despite the distinction between the three above-mentioned groups of returnees, Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) emphasized that people in all these groups will face pressure upon return to Iran. As examples, the source mentioned that none of the returnees could be expected to have access to employment in public offices, that the officials may visit them at their homes which will

be devastating to their status in society, that they all will be investigated thoroughly about their time in KRI, that they will be monitored for some time (from five months up to two years) by the authorities, and that they will always be under suspicion.

About the investigation of the returnees, Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) explained that when a person returns to Iran, he or she will be given a blank sheet of paper by the regime and told to provide details on the returnee's stay in KRI. For instance, the regime will ask with whom he has been working, for how many years and how this work was carried out and why. If the statement given seems vague and unclear in any way, there will be further questioning.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) mentioned that when Iranians from KRI who are not involved in activities visit Iran, the government will sometimes arrest one or two of them just to signal that the authorities are capable of monitoring people's activities in KRI. In this way, they install fear among the people and demonstrate their power.

Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) stated that not possessing a valid ID card will generally not cause problems for a person returning to Iran. According to the source, all returnees from KRI will be subjected to investigations and if the investigations do not cause suspicion against the person, he will be granted new ID documents. If the investigations, on the other hand, make the authorities suspicious of the returnee, the lack of valid ID will become an issue. The officer might then - in order to cause the returnee problems – require him to prove that he is an Iranian national by for instance presenting some witnesses as he holds no ID. If the returnee can prove his Iranian nationality, he can obtain an Iranian ID. However, it was stressed that having proved one's Iranian nationality will not automatically mean that the person will be free to go, and if the authorities still consider the returnee a threat, he will face difficulties.

According to Fazel Hawramy, a Kurdish journalist and blogger, Iranian Kurdish returnees from KRI may be interrogated by the authorities in Iran about their possible politically active relatives in KRI, and they may be put under pressure by the regime. When asked whether there may happen anything else to the returnees, the source answered that this all depends on the status of that individual whether they are political or whether they have a relative in one of the opposition parties (KDP, Komala, PJAK). There are hundreds of Iranian Kurds and non-Kurds who come to work to the Kurdistan region of Iraq and it seems most of them have no problem. They come here to work due to the economic situation and sanctions.

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) personally knew a person who stayed in KRI and worked for Komala, but he later stopped his political activities and went back to Iran to start a normal life. After returning to Iran, he was investigated for a period and then could start a normal life, and he has not faced any difficulties since then. However, the source emphasized that if he some day comes into conflict with the authorities, his files will most probably be taken into consideration.

According to Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper), a person, who has come to KRI to work and to escape the economic situation in Iran, will not face any problems upon return. If a returnee does not hold any valid ID cards, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) assumed that this will cause problems; for instance if a person crosses the Iranian international border illegally, or leaves Iran without official permission or legal documents, he or she will be accused of having worked for enemies of revolution.

Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) stated that if a returnee has exceeded a time limit for his legal stay in KRI, he will be questioned by the Iranian authorities on return and possibly arrested. The same will according to the source happen if the Iranian authorities find any reason to be further suspicious. If questioning and investigation reveals any problematic issues, the consequences can be imprisonment.

According to Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper), a person who has never been involved in oppositional political activities in KRI might only be investigated upon return and they will then be free to go. The source added that there are many Iranian Kurds who live and work in KRI in the cities and not in Camps. Many of them have left Iran illegally in past years and have residency in KRI. If this kind of people would go back, they will be questioned and under investigation for an unknown period. They will be released only if they could prove that they did not have any relations with opposition parties. As regards Iranians who are politically active, the Iranian regime has information about their activities in KRI as they are under surveillance.

When asked about the consequences for people who have lived in the party camp and then decided to return to Iran to settle, Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) stated that it happens that low profile activists or family members who have been in the KDP-Iran party camp for a short time go back to Iran without facing serious dangers upon return, but those who have been in the camp for a long time will be in deep trouble upon their return to Iran, which means they risk being detained, tortured, prosecuted, imprisoned, sent to exile and/or deprived of a number of their social rights. They can even be put under pressure to join the party again and work as spy for the regime. According to the source, high ranking members of the party will never return to Iran; they will either stay in the camp or will go to Europe.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that there have been cases where Komala activists residing in KRI have returned to Iran promising the Iranian authorities not to conduct political activities anymore. The source knew of persons who were investigated upon their return and some of them were imprisoned, but in most cases they were free to go. In some cases people were imprisoned based on false charges. Alizadeh, Komala, SKHKI added that during the last three decades, 15,000 Komala members have returned to Iran. These, who were all armed peshmargas, were imprisoned for a short while, but most of them were released and they have a normal life today. The regime's sometimes relatively lenient treatment of returning peshmarga should be seen in the light of peshmarga's wide-spread oppositional activities which makes the Iranian

government treat the returnees in a way so other peshmargas are less hesitant to return to Iran. However, it was stressed that in general, different returnees are treated differently by the regime depending on whether they are perceived as a threat by the authorities or not. According to the source, there have also been a large number of cases where returnees have been imprisoned for years or in some cases even executed after returning to Iran.

Ebrahim Alizadeh (Komala, SKHKI) stated that if the returnees do not contact and coordinate their return with the authorities in Iran in advance and they are caught on the border while entering Iran or after entering Iran, they will definitely be punished. The kind of punishment will depend on what they have done. The source added that previously, the regime punished people without considering the impact for the regime if they release the person. Nowadays the regime takes this impact into consideration. It was further added that if the returnee is considered by the Iranian authorities to be a person who will somehow influence others or have an impact on society, the pressure on this person can be huge and torture can be inflicted on him. On the other hand the regime is not interested in sending a signal which hinders people from returning to Iran, particularly those who are not politically active. Alizadeh pointed out that people who go back to Iran are mostly those who are sure that they will not face any danger and difficulties upon their return. The source summed up by saying that there is no standard returnee case.

Asked about the possibilities of returning to Iran after having stayed in KRI, Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) informed the delegation that a person who has been in KRI in order to work could go back to Iran. Sympathizers who do not have responsibilities in the party can also go back to Iran without risks. A person who has been politically active, written an article or published a book, will according to Mohammad Nazif Qadiri (KDPI) go to prison if he or she returns to Iran. A KDPI member whose affiliation is known in Iran will surely go to prison if he returns. KDPI members sometimes go back to Iran secretly and under cover by using illegal paths.

Mohemed Sahebi (KDPI) stated that a person coming to work in KRI can on return to Iran be suspected of supporting the Kurdish parties. The regime will investigate why the person came to KRI and several people have been arrested in these situations. The source further stated that if a person comes legally to KRI to work, he may still be suspected, investigated or arrested upon return to Iran.

When asked whether families of members of Kurdish oppositional groups who have been visiting their family member in KRI have faced difficulties with regard to Iranian authorities upon their legal or illegal return to Iran, Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, stated that the families do not get into trouble with the Iranian authorities as the Iranian government first and foremost is interested in political parties and their activists themselves.

According to Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, Kurds who have been living in KRI for a long time and have not been involved in political activities may not face difficulties upon their return to Iran.

8.1. Return of former Iranian refugees from Northern Iraq to Iran

UNHCR Erbil informed the delegation that at least during the last two years, there have been no cases of Iranian refugees who wanted to return to Iran.

UNHCR Erbil informally knew of a small number of children of refugees from the old caseload, i.e. refugees who stayed in KRI since three decades who went back to Iran and were registered without problems and without being exposed to any risk. The source added that it is difficult to generalize since the group is small. According to UNHCR, refugees who came during the 1980'ies are not likely to return to Iran. UNHCR Erbil added, however, that it is difficult to monitor return to Iran.

When asked about the refugees in KRI who go back to Iran, an NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq replied by distinguishing between two groups of Iranian refugees in KRI: the old caseload of refugees who were settled in now-closed Al-Tash camp in Anbar province and who later moved on to KRI, and the new refugees who have come to KRI during the last couple of years. According to the source, the old refugees go back and forth to Iran in secret for instance to visit families or participate in family festivities while the new refugees are not seen to go back. The source were not aware of any of these old refugees who wanted to go back to settle in Iran.

8.2. Difference in risk to low-profile returnees with regard to whether they have lived in or outside the camps in Iraq

According to Reza Menuchehri (KMMK), it will definitely be taken into account by the Iranian regime whether or not a person has stayed in a refugee camp in KRI. At the same time, they might ease pressure on some of these returnees as the government has an interest in sending a signal to the rest of the world that Iran does indeed accept persons who are no longer in opposition to the Iranian regime and that the Iranian government makes a serious effort in taking them back.

Asked to elaborate on the situation of refugees from now-closed Al-Tash camp or one of the other refugee camps in case of return to Iran, Reza Menuchehri (KMMK) stated that both former Al-Tash refugees and people from other refugee camps have fled Iran due to the threat from the regime. All refugee camps in KRI have connections to the political parties who are somehow active in the camps, and people from these camps will be looked upon with suspicion if they return to Iran. The fact that many of these people have fled to and remained in Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war is also considered problematic by the Iranian authorities. The source had however no knowledge of former Al-Tash refugees who have actually returned to Iran. Nevertheless the source had no doubt that these refugees will be looked upon with suspicion.

Analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) said that refugees with no political affiliations who stayed in the former Al-Tash camp will be able to return to Iran. For refugees with political affiliations who returned to Iran, problems should be expected. Asked about the types of reaction,

the source replied that the reaction of the regime will be difficult to assess as there is no legislation on the issue. If a returnee has stayed in a party camp in KRI, it could have consequences. For other camps it is difficult to predict how the authorities will react. When asked whether staying in a refugee camp in KRI such as Al-Tash in general will cause more suspicion among the Iranian authorities upon return compared to those having stayed outside the refugee camps, the source assumed that it would make a difference for a returnee whether he had stayed in a camp or not. The source had, however, no knowledge of cases in which Al-Tash refugees returned to Iran. The source mentioned a case in which a person affiliated with a political opposition party returned to Iran and he was imprisoned for three years. Three years after being released, he is still asked to report to the authorities on a regular basis, and he cannot get a passport. Regarding the regime's treatment of returned person's family, the source said that in general, as long as the regime can reach an activist the family will not be harassed. When asked whether a Kurd who has left Iran legally and stayed in KRI for a long time without being involved in any political activity will face suspicion upon his return by the Iranian authorities, the source replied that if such person returns with a passport, he will usually not get any problems. The source emphasized, however, that due to the exacerbating political and financial situation in Iran, Iranian Kurds residing in KRI have not been interested in returning in recent years.

When asked about the Iranian refugees who return from KRI to Iran, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) considered it dangerous for a person to return to Iran after having spent many years in the now-closed Al-Tash camp or one of the other refugee camps. The source assumed that particularly the former Al-Tash refugees may be at risk if they return to Iran as both the party "People Mojahedin of Iran" and KDPI have been active in Al-Tash camp, and because the Iranian regime will look at the former Al-Tash refugees as those who have supported opposition parties and even Saddam Hussein. Even if the former Al-Tash refugees have not been politically active, they will still be considered to be against Iran. However, the source had no knowledge of such returns actually taking place.

Asked about the situation of a returnee having lived in KRI for many years outside the refugee camps in KRI, Sardar Mohammad and Asos Hardi (Awene Newspaper) replied that there will certainly be a kind of investigation about what he has done during his stay in KRI. During the investigation, he may be detained and then freed on bail. The source emphasized that the regime's reaction will mainly be based on two criteria: whether the person has stayed in KRI legally and whether he has been in contact with KDPI or other Kurdish political parties. The source added that if there is evidence of political activities, the returnee can expect problems.

8.3. Prevalence of deportation from Northern Iraq

Reza Mohammad Ismail, Mayor of Penjwin, stated that to his knowledge, no political activist has ever been deported from KRI to Iran. However, the mayor added that if a person is stopped by the

KRG authorities entering KRI illegally, he will be sent back to Iran along the same path unless he has a political case in Iran. In this case he will not be sent back to Iran.

With regard to deportation of Iranians from KRI, analyst Ziryan Roj Helaty (Tanupo Magazine) informed the delegation that in recent years KRG has not deported any Iranian refugees. Up until 2003, the Iraqi Kurdish parties helped the Iranian intelligence service in finding and killing Iranian oppositional activists. In recent years KRG has gained strength in their relation to Iran and can thereby resist the pressure from the Iranian government with regard to the Iranian refugees.

An NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq explained that asylum seekers coming to KRI are at risk of deportation if they are arrested at a check point before they have established contact to UNHCR or NGOs working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq. In recent years, deportations have been prevented due to an agreement between NGOs working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq, the prisons in KRI and the political parties in the Iraqi Kurdish region. The source said that there is no record of deportations of political active refugees from KRI. The source further added that most asylum seekers come to KRI legally by their passports. Moreover, the source added that some people come to work rather than to seek asylum.

Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) said that he has never heard of political persons being deported by the KRG authorities back to Iran. On the other hand there are examples of non-political persons being deported to Iran. When asked whether the source knows about concrete cases of non-political persons having been deported to Iran, Mustafa Moloudi (KDP-Iran) replied that he could not remember any concrete cases. However, the source stated that there have been cases of people who had committed non-political crimes in Iran and then came to KRI to stay there, but as KRG did not allow them to stay in KRI and the Kurdish parties did not accept them either, they had to go back to Iran. Later on, the source had heard that KRG had deported them.

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An NGO working with asylum seekers and refugees in Iraq

A Western diplomat and expert on Iran in Erbil

Beigi, Foad Khagi, General Secretary of KDPI Youth Organisation, Lawan

Bishir, Shamal, Head of Foreign Affairs, Party of Free Life for Kurdistan, 'Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê', (PJAK)

Elkhanizade, Omar, Secretary General of the Komala of Toilers of Kurdistan and the Komala Party of Kurdistan, 'Komala Zahmatkeshane Kurdistan', (KZK)

Faraj, Yadgar A., Brigadier General, Erbil Residence Director, Directorate of Displacement and Migration, KRG

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Rashid, Badria Ibrahim, Norwegian People's Aid - Iraq (NPA-Iraq)

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ANNEX 1 Terms of Reference, Fact-finding mission to Northern Iraq May 2013

A) Situation in the Kurdish area of Iran

1) KDPI/Komala in Iran

- I. Status and repute of KDPI/Komala among Kurds in the Kurdish areas of Iran.
- II. Difference between the young and the elder generation of Kurds in Iran with regard to engagement in party political activities.
- III. KDPI/Komala party organization in Iran.
- IV. Prevalence and mode of recruitment of KDPI/Komala members in Iran, and profile of the recruited.
- V. Types of KDPI/Komala activities in Iran, including their role in relation to demonstrations.
- VI. Occurrence of non-Kurds supporting KDPI/Komala economically
- VII. Occurrence of non-Kurds carrying out activities for KDPI/Komala. Nature of activities.
- VIII. KDPI/Komala party sympathizer's participation in party meetings
- IX. Consequences for a person sympathizing with or carrying out low profile activities for KDPI/Komala Risks to family members of persons associated with a Kurdish party.
- X. Extent and ways of monitoring KDPI/Komala by the Iranian authorities.

2) Political materials

- I. KDPI/Komala's ways of communicating their ideas and messages to the Kurds in the Kurdish parts of Iran (means, media etc.)
- II. Prevalence and extent of use of flyers. Type of messages/news conveyed through flyers. Form and content of a flyer. Production, storage and distribution of flyers.
- III. Consequences of carrying, distributing as well as storing of political materials (CDs, flyers, books etc.) in the Kurdish area in Iran. The impact of type and quality of materials.
- IV. Access to internet in the big cities in the Kurdish area of Iran. Prevalence of use of internet by Iranian Kurds, including the Kurdish opposition inside and outside Iran, to communicate political messages.
- V. Production of political materials in Northern Iraq for distribution in Iran
- VI. Occurrence of Kurds who are affiliated with KDPI/Komala writing political slogans in public places on house walls etc.

3) Conditions in border areas between Iran and Iraq

- I. Cooperation between Iranian and Iraqi border control with regard to trafficking of persons and goods across the borders
- II. Impact of border controls on the extent and the type of KDPI/Komala cross-border activities
- III. Typical smuggler/trafficker routes (geographically)
- IV. KDPI/Komala's mode of transportation of their own members in the border areas (by KDPI/Komala's own means, private cars, taxis). If hiring private persons, profile of the hired: same persons each time, kurds/non-kurds etc.
- V. Presence of Iranian intelligence in the border area.
- VI. Risk to Iranians of Kurdish origin visiting Northern Iraq for recreational purposes or for employment of being suspected by the Iranian authorities of being sympathetic for KDPI/Komala or other Iranian Kurdish parties. Profile of persons at this risk.
- VII. Risk to relatives of active KDPI/Komala members visiting them in Northern Iraq, and its consequences for mode of crossing the border (legal, illegal).

4) General situation in the Kurdish area of Iran

- I. Non-political activities perceived by the Iranian authorities as a threat and consequences of such activities.
- II. Grass root political activities, including demonstrations, activities performed by students, environmentalists and other groups, and consequences of such activities.

B) KDPI, Komala in Northern Iraq

1) KDPI/Komala in Iraq

- I. Possession of residence permit by KDPI/Komala members living in KRI. Prevalence of members not having residence permits.
- II. Possibility for KDPI/Komala members of identify themselves as such when stopped by the authorities in KRI.
- III. Location of KDPI/Komala headquarters, camps and other offices located in Iraq. Profile of people residing in the camps.

2) KDPI/Komala membership

- I. Profile of persons admitted to membership of KDPI/Komala and mode of admission.
- II. Types of membership.
- III. Issuance of membership cards: prevalence as well as form and content of the card.
- IV. Issuance of letters of recommendation: prevalence as well as form and content of such letters.
- V. Activities for new recruits in Northern Iraq (type of activities, IT courses or similar)

- VI. Possibility to become member of KDPI/Komala outside of KRG and Iran

3) Recruitment and training of KDPI peshmargas

- I. Profile of the persons recruited as peshmargas.
- II. Type and length of the peshmarga training.
- III. Location of peshmarga training camps in Iraq.
- IV. Freedom of movement during the peshmarga training (permission to leave the camp during the training period)
- V. Issuance of proof of training: prevalence as well as form and content of such a document.

4) Return of former Iranian refugees in Northern Iraq to Iran

- I. Return of former Iranian refugees from Northern Iraq (including Al-Tash refugees) to Iran, particularly low-profile KDPI/Komala members or family members of KDPI/Komala members, including children born in Iraq:
 - a. the number of returnees
 - b. the risk of being arrested upon return to Iran in case the returnee is unidentified
 - c. the risk of being arrested upon return to Iran in case the returnee stayed in Northern Iraq for a longer period
 - d. the risk of being arrested after entry in Iran
 - e. risk from other agents of persecution.
- II. Prevalence of deportation of low-profile party members from Northern Iraq.
- III. The Iranian intelligence's knowledge about persons returning from Iraq to Iran.
- IV. Difference in risk to KDPI/Komala (low-profile) returnees with regard to whether a person has lived in or outside the camps in Iraq.

C. Pjak

1) Pjak in Iran

- I. Status and repute of Pjak among Kurds in the Kurdish areas of Iran.
- II. Pjak party organization in Iran.
- III. Prevalence and mode of recruitment of Pjak members in Iran, and profile of the recruited.
- IV. Types of Pjak activities in Iran, including their role in relation to demonstrations.
- V. Types of Pjak activities in Iran, including armed activities
- VI. Consequences for a person sympathizing with or carrying out low profile activities for Pjak
- VII. Risks to family members of persons associated with Pjak

- VIII. Risk to relatives of active Pjak members visiting them in Northern Iraq, and its consequences for mode of crossing the border (legal, illegal).
- IX. Extent and ways of monitoring Pjak by the Iranian authorities.
- X. Pjak's ways of communicating their ideas and messages to the Kurds in the Kurdish parts of Iran (means, media etc.)
- XI. Impact of border controls on the extent and the type of Pjak's cross-border activities
- XII. Pjak's mode of transportation of their own members in the border areas (by Pjak's own means, private cars, taxis). If hiring private persons, profile of the hired: same persons each time, kurds/non-kurds etc.

2) Pjak in Northern Iraq

- XIII. Possession of residence permit by Pjak members living in KRI. Prevalence of members not having residence permits.
- XIV. Necessity for Pjak members of identify themselves as such when stopped by the authorities in KRI.
- XV. Location of Pjak headquarters, camps and other offices located in Iraq. Profile of people residing in the camps.
- XVI. Profile of persons admitted to membership of Pjak and mode of admission.

Annex 2 Map of Iran



Source: UN Cartographic Section

<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/iran.pdf>

Annex 3 Map of KRI



Map No. 3035 Rev. 5 UNITED NATIONS
March 2011

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

Source: UN Cartographic Section

<http://www.un.org/depts/Cartographic/map/profile/iraq.pdf>

Source: The Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, supported by OCHA and UNAMI
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