



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

**Iran - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Wednesday 28, Thursday 29 & Friday 30 November 2012**

**Information on the National Iranian Resistance Organisation/NIRO, including:**

**When where they founded;**

**What are their aims;**

**Who was their founding leader;**

**Who is their current leader;**

**Names of any prominent members;**

**Where is the group based;**

**Treatment of the group/members by the Iranian government;**

No information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

**Information on the National Movement of Iranian Resistance/NAMIR, including:**

**When where they founded;**

**What are their aims;**

**Who was their founding leader;**

**Who is their current leader;**

**Names of any prominent members;**

**Where is the group based;**

**Treatment of the group/members by the Iranian government;**

Utilising an external source a report issued in June 2011 by the *United Kingdom Home Office* points out that:

“There is also a National Movement of Iranian Resistance, based in Paris” (United Kingdom Home Office (28 June 2011) *Iran, Country Of Origin Information (COI) Report*, p.254).

The National Movement of Iranian Resistance are also listed among a number of organisations as supporting a return to monarchy in this United Kingdom Home Office report (ibid, pp.105-106).

The *Los Angeles Times* in August 1991 states:

“Shahpour Bakhtiar, the late Shah of Iran's exiled prime minister and an outspoken foe of Tehran's current government, and Bakhtiar's secretary were found stabbed to death Thursday near Paris despite heavy security, the French Interior Ministry said. There were no immediate claims of responsibility, but Iranian exiles blamed Tehran. Police said they were looking for three Iranians who had visited Bakhtiar on Wednesday night. Bakhtiar, 76, was ousted and "sentenced to death" by the 1979 Muslim revolution that brought the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to power in Iran. In 1980, he escaped an assassination attempt by the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) that claimed two lives. The leader of the National Movement of the Iranian Resistance, he was the third Iranian dissident killed in France in less than a year” (Los Angeles Times (9 August 1991) *Prime Minister Under Shah Is Slain In France*).

This document also states that:

"In 1981, Bakhtiar founded the National Movement of the Iranian Resistance, an opposition-in-exile group opposed to the revolutionary government" (ibid).

In August 1991 *The Times* points out that:

"The National Movement of the Iranian Resistance, which he founded, no longer attracts the support of young Iranians and it has also lost the financial underpinning of the Saudis and others" (The Times (9 August 1991) *Bakhtiar murder is linked to feud in Tehran government*).

A report released in November 2001 by *Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation/ACCORD* states:

"Liberal Nationalist groups such as the National Movement of Iranian Resistance (NMIR, Nezhat-e Moghavamat-e-Milli) who were very active in the early eighties and supported by many former Iranian military officers in and outside of Iran, have also been losing ground and no longer play an active role in opposition activities inside Iran. The murder of its leader Shahpour Bakhtyar in Paris in 1991 had a crushing effect on the group's activities" (Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation/ACCORD (1 November 2001) *Iran: 7th European Country of Origin Information Seminar, Berlin, 11-12 June 2001, Final Report*, p.89).

A paper issued in September 1998 by the *UNHCR* points out that:

"The NMR, also called National Movement of the Iranian Resistance, is a monarchist opposition group founded by the last Prime Minister under the Shah, Shahpur Bakhtiar...After being ousted from power by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, Mr. Bakhtiar fled to Paris where he established the NRM, and staged an unsuccessful coup d'etat against the new Islamic regime...The organization is said to advocate the separation of religion and state in Iran, and the "liberation of Iran from religious fanaticism"...Mr Bakhtiar was murdered in Paris in August 1991, following the killing of another NRM member in the same city..." (UNHCR (1 September 1998) *Update to the UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Iran*).

The *Associated Press* in October 1987 notes:

"Press Association said there are believed to be 8,000 exiled opponents of the Tehran government in Britain and that 2,000 of them are supporters of the National Movement of Iranian Resistance" (Associated Press (3 October 1987) *Bodies Found; Check Political Motive*).

Research issued in November 2001 by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* notes, utilizing an external source, that the:

"...NAMIR is no longer very active..." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (26 November 2001) *Iran: Information on the National Movement of Resistance (National Resistance Movement of Iran, Movement of National Resistance, National Movement of Iranian Resistance, NMIR, NAMIR): activities, roles, objectives in Iran and abroad (1998-2001)*).

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

**Information on the National Council of Resistance of Iran/NCRI, including:**

**When where they founded;**

**What are their aims;**

**Who was their founding leader;**

**Who is their current leader;**

**Names of any prominent members;**

**Where is the group based;**

**Treatment of the group/members by the Iranian government**

In June 2011 a document published by the *United Kingdom Home Office* states, utilising an external source, that:

“—The National Council of Resistance was formed in Paris, France, in October 1981 by former President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr and Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the Mujahidin-e-Khalq in Iran. In 1984 the Council comprised 15 opposition groups, operating either clandestinely in Iran or from exile abroad. Bani-Sadr left the Council in that year because of his objection to Rajavi's growing links with the Iraqi Government. The French Government asked Rajavi to leave Paris in June 1986 and he moved his base of operations to Baghdad. In June 1987 Rajavi, Secretary of the NCR, announced the formation of a 10,000–15,000-strong National Liberation Army as the military wing of the Mujahidin-e-Khalq. However, the status of the Mujahidin was initially uncertain following the invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition in March 2003 ... and firmer measures being taken against the activities of the organization by the authorities in Paris in mid-2003. In July 2004 the USA declared a group of 3,800 members of the Mujahidin-e-Khalq interned in Iraq to have ‘protected status’ under the Geneva Convention” (United Kingdom Home Office (28 June 2011) *Iran, Country Of Origin Information (Coi) Report*, p.254).

The *Associated Press* in October 1981 notes:

“Meanwhile, in Paris, Bani-Sadr announced he and the exiled head of the Mujahedeen Khalq, Massoud Rajavi, were forming a "transitional" government-in-exile with himself as temporary president and Rajavi heading a "National Council of Resistance for the Independence and Freedom of the Democratic Islamic Republic." They called on all "national, popular and Islamic forces" to join them. Azadegan, a group of monarchist exiles in Paris, rejected the invitation, saying Bani-Sadr was responsible for 2 1/2 years of massacres and the "destruction of the economy and traditions and culture" of Iran. Bani-Sadr replied that he didn't need or want them because they "showed their true colors." The leader of another anti-Khomeini exile faction in Paris, former Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar, had no comment” (Associated Press (2 October 1981) [Untitled]).

A report published in February 1982 by *The Economist* notes:

“A few weeks ago the Mujaheddin set up an umbrella opposition organisation, the National Council of Resistance. This includes, apart from the Mujaheddin, the old liberal opposition to the Shah and the Kurdish Democratic party. The council has a provisional government-in-exile, of which Mr Bani-Sadr is president and Mr Rajavi prime minister” (The Economist (13 February 1982) *Iran; Still kicking*).

In June 1986 *The Times* reports that:

“Mr Rajavi, leader of the biggest resistance group to the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, escaped to France with the former Iranian President, Mr Bani, Sadr, in 1981. Together they set up the National Council of Resistance, but political disagreements, notably over Mr Rajavi's growing links with Iraq, caused a break between the two men three years later” (The Times (9 June 1986) *Iran rebel settles in Baghdad / Mujahedin leader Rajavi leaving France for Iraq* (246) /SCT).

Research issued in August 1993 by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* notes that:

“Sometime after the failed uprising of June 1981, former Iranian president Bani Sadr and the leader of the Mujaheddin, Masud Rajavi, announced they would return to Iran from Paris to replace the Islamic Republic with a democratic Islamic republic. Shortly after this announcement they formed the National Council of Resistance (NCR)...Initially the NCR was a broad coalition, including the Mujaheddin, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), the National Democratic Front, the Hoviyat Group (an offshoot of the minority Fedayin) and several small leftist groups. The National Front and the main Marxist organizations were never part of the NCR. In 1984 a number of groups left the NCR, among them the liberals under Bani Sadr and the KDPI...Now firmly under the control of the Mujaheddin, the NCR currently numbers about 200. Although the Mujaheddin view the NCR as the backbone of the political alternative to the regime in Tehran...others view it simply as a PMOI front organization...The March 1993 killing of its representative in Italy indicates that the NCR is still a target of the Iranian regime...” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1 August 1993) *Political Opposition*).

A paper issued in September 1998 by the *UNHCR* comments that:

“After being forced out of the country in June 1981, former President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr fled to Paris where he formed the National Council for Resistance with the former Iranian leader of the Mujahidin-e-Khalq, Massoud Rajavi...Mr. Bani-Sadr was declared the Council's preferred presidential candidate of an alternative government, and by 1984, 15 anti-fundamentalist opposition groups operating under cover in Iran or in exile, including the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), were aligned with the NCR...In March 1984, reportedly due to differences with Mr. Rajavi over alliances with Iraq and suspicions as to his previous relations with the ruling regime, Mr. Bani-Sadr left the NCR...In 1985, the KDPI was expelled from the Council for alleged relations with the regime, and in June 1986, France asked Mr. Rajavi to leave the country, forcing the NCR to relocate its headquarters to Baghdad, Iraq... The NCR reportedly advocates the separation of church and state in Iran, and recently elected a woman, Maryam Rajavi, as their provisional government President...” (UNHCR (1 September 1998) *Update to the UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Iran*).

A report issued in June 2003 by *Amnesty International* points out that:

“The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) is an umbrella organization of groups opposed to the current government in Iran. Its largest member is the People's Mojahedin of Iran (PMOI), an armed organization based in Iraq, which is illegal in Iran and considered by the European Union and The United States of America to be a "terrorist" organization” (Amnesty International (17 June 2003) *Iran: Disappearance/ Possible forcible return/Incommunicado detention/ Fear of torture or ill-treatment*, p.1).

In February 2006 *Amnesty International* notes:

“The National Council of Resistance of Iran, of which the PMOI is a member, was the source of evidence in 2002 revealing Iran’s nuclear programme to the outside world” (Amnesty International (27 February 2006) *Iran: Worrying trends in use of death penalty*, p.1).

Research carried out in December 2009 by the *Australian Refugee Review Tribunal* notes that:

“The National Council of Resistance (NCRI) was formed in 1981, in Paris, as an off-shoot of the Iranian Mujahadin-e Khalq organization (MEK). The MEK, which advocates the violent overthrow of the Iranian government, attempted to topple the newly installed Islamic regime by launching a bombing campaign in Iran in 1981. This campaign included an attack against the head office of the Islamic Republic Party and the Prime Minister’s office, which killed some 70 high-ranking Iranian officials, including Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, President Mohammad-Ali Rajaei, and Prime Minister Mohammad-Javad Bahonar. These attacks resulted in a popular uprising against the MEK and an expanded Iranian government crackdown, which forced MEK leaders to flee to France. In Paris, the MEK formed what has been termed the political wing of the MEK under the name of the National Council of Resistance. The NCRI has a global support network with active lobbying and propaganda efforts in major Western capitals. NCRI also has a well-developed media communications strategy. The NCRI is led by Mrs. Mayram Rajavi, the wife of MEK founder Massoud Rajavi, who remains in hiding – possibly in Iraq. Mrs. Rajavi is an active leader, delivering numerous speeches and organising events and rallies in support of the organization, using offices located in several European capitals” (Australian Refugee Review Tribunal (3 December 2009) *Iran – IRN35739 – National Council of Resistance – Mojahedin-e-Khalk – University admission*, p.1).

The *New York Times* in June 2010 notes:

“At least 30,000 opponents to the Iranian government gathered on Saturday in a stadium in this quiet town outside Paris to support the National Council of Resistance to Iran in a large rally coming a year after disputed elections in Iran” (New York Times (26 June 2010) *Thousands of Iranian Government Opponents Hold Rally Outside Paris*).

This article also states:

“The National Council of Iran, founded in France in 1981, remains on the list of terrorist organizations kept by the United States State Department, which considers it a political front for the People’s Mujahedeen of Iran. But it has been removed entirely from a similar list kept by the European Union and is considered a legitimate dissident organization” (ibid).

It is also noted in this article that:

“The rally, with supporters dressed in lavender and yellow, was in support of the council leader, Maryam Rajavi, who calls herself the president-elect of the Iranian resistance and lives in exile in France. Her husband, Massoud Rajavi, has not been made any public appearances since 2003” (ibid).

The *Associated Press* in September 2012 commenting on MEK states:

“Because the MEK cannot operate legally in the U.S., it has lobbied its cause through several front organizations. Maryam Rajavi is the ostensible head of the whole movement from the France headquarters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Her husband, Massoud, was the MEK's leader before he disappeared in Baghdad nine years ago. He is presumed dead” (Associated Press (21 September 2012) *AP sources: US to take Iran group off terror list*).

The *United States Department of State* in July 2012 notes:

“The MEK's political arm, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), has a global support network with active lobbying and propaganda efforts in major Western capitals. NCRI also has a well-developed media communications strategy” (United States Department of State (31 July 2012) *Country Reports on Terrorism 2011: Iran*).

A report issued in September 2012 by the *Wall Street Journal* points out that:

“The State Department has decided to remove an exiled Iranian opposition group from its list of terrorist organizations, according to senior U.S. officials, in a move likely to infuriate Tehran and further complicate stalled talks over Iran's nuclear program. The Mujahedin-e Khalq, or MeK, was put on the list in 1997 because of its military alliance with Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein and an assassination campaign it launched against American officials in Tehran during the 1970s, according to U.S. diplomats” (Wall Street Journal (24 September 2012) *World News: U.S. to Pull Iran Group Off Terrorist List*).

This article also notes:

““Revoking this designation is the first step to rectify the misguided and disastrous policy of appeasing the religious fascism ruling Iran,” said Shahin Gobadi, a Paris-based spokesman for the group's political arm, the National Council of Resistance of Iran” (ibid).

A report published by *United Press International* in October 2012 states:

“The National Council of Resistance of Iran, the political coalition with the People's Mujahedin of Iran as its principal force, has long stood as an alternative to the clerics in Tehran. Their progressive platform is laid out by Maryam Rajavi, the leader of Iranian Resistance who as a Muslim woman stands as the antithesis to the backward and misogynistic ideology espoused by the Iranian regime” (United Press International (23 October 2012) *Outside View: The solution to Iran Crisis*).

The *Washington Times* in October 2012 notes the:

“Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran” (Washington Times (10 October 2012) *Embassy Row*).

A report issued in November 2012 by *United Press International* notes:

“The PMOI is a member of the broader Iranian opposition coalition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran. This coalition has been committed to democratic change in Iran. The ruling theocracy has countered this threat by killing 120 000

supporters and members of the PMOI and NCRI during the last 30 years. Many of them were executed in prisons, murdered under torture and targeted by terrorist attacks abroad" (United Press International (20 November 2012) *Outside View: Empower Iranian Resistance*).

The website of the National Council of Resistance of Iran is <http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/>

No further information on this issue could be found among sources available to the RDC.

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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