



PC/2/2001

IN THE PROSCRIBED ORGANISATIONS APPEAL COMMISSION

BETWEEN

(1) The People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran

(2) Hossein Abedini

Appellants

- and -

Secretary of State for the Home Department

Respondent

WITNESS STATEMENT OF
ABRAHIM KHODABANDEH

1. Since 1978 I have been a member of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI).
2. I am a member of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), and have been for the past 8 years.
3. I have been actively involved (on a voluntary basis) in the work of the PMOI and NCRI for more than two decades. I have participated, during that time, in many meetings, demonstrations and other public events.
4. I left Iran in August 1971, coming to this country to study. In 1981 I applied for political asylum in this country, and was immediately granted asylum. I am permanently settled in this country.
5. I am presently based in London.

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6. I am in contact with Mohammed Mohaddessin and others in the NCRI and have learned about these proceedings from them. I have been shown extracts of the evidence in reply put in by the Secretary of State, and in particular the documents sent by "Iran-Interlink" to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in July 2002.
7. I have been asked by Mr Mohaddessin to provide a witness statement in support of the appellants in these proceedings because of the information that I can provide about the person who set up "Iran-Interlink".
8. The person who set up and runs "Iran-Interlink" is my brother's wife, Anne Khodabandeh (nee Singleton).
9. Anne Khodabandeh married my brother some years ago, but it was not until four years ago that I began to suspect that she had links with the Iranian clerical regime.
10. I have been aware for some time now that my brother, Massoud Khodabandeh, has links with the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence.
11. In the early 1980s my brother left Iran and went to join the PMOI in Iraq. He then left Iraq and went to France for a time, and then came to this country in 1990. Up until 1994 – 1995 my brother had some contacts with supporters of the PMOI in London, but then gradually he disappeared. Since 1996 there have been indications that he has contacts with the Iranian regime. For instance, I have been told by friends of my brother that he regularly vanishes for several weeks at a time. I believe that during his absences he goes to meet the people that he works for. I know that he has travelled to Singapore, which I understand is one of the places where the regime's agents meet their contacts.
12. My suspicions regarding my sister-in-law arose from the following chain of events. About four years ago (that is, in 1998) I received a number of

urgent telephone calls from people I knew in the office of the International Red Cross in Baghdad. I was told that an urgent message was waiting for me from my mother (who lives in Iran). I found it very strange that she had sent me a message to the Red Cross in Baghdad.

13. I collected the message from the Red Cross. In this message, my mother said that she was worried about me and whether I was safe.
14. I found this very strange because it was easy for my mother to contact me whether directly, or through my brother Massoud.
15. I tried to call my mother straightaway in London to reassure her that I was well and able to move around freely. However, my mother had already returned to Iran.
16. I then spoke to my mother in Iran, and asked her why she had left this message for me. She said that my brother Massoud and his wife, Anne, had asked her to, and had told her about PMOI members being ill-treated in Iraq, and prevented from leaving Iraq. I found it extraordinary that my brother would do this, but I reassured my mother that I was well and able to move freely.
17. I thought that the message had been left for me in Baghdad to give the appearance that I was not able to leave Iraq, and I decided to share what had happened with colleagues in the NCRI.
18. I then learned that Anne Khodabandeh had travelled to Iran in the winter of 2001. I found that surprising because, generally speaking, those Iranians (or their spouses) who are opponents of the regime, do not travel to Iran under any circumstances (for instance even to see dying relatives or to sort out property and other matters). This is for two main reasons. First, to travel to Iran, in the eyes of the regime's opponents, is to give the regime legitimacy (i.e. treating it as a normal country). Secondly, because any known opponents of the regime would be in danger if they travelled there for obvious reasons. As someone

who had been active in the PMOI (and thus an opponent of the regime), as well as the wife of someone who had been active in the PMOI, she would not have been safe (or indeed necessarily allowed to leave Iran) had she not received assurances from the regime.

19. Then early this year, when I was again in Iraq, I received another call from someone I knew at the International Red Cross office in Baghdad. I was again told that there was an urgent message waiting for me.
20. When I went to collect this message, I discovered that it was from my daughter. She told me that she was worried about what has happening to me in Iraq, and whether I would be able to leave Iraq. My daughter also asked me to contact her urgently. My daughter lives in Birmingham with her family.
21. There was also a letter from Anne Khodabandeh, telling me that my mother was very worried about me and my situation, and that my mother wanted me to make contact with her immediately.
22. I called my daughter from Baghdad and asked her who had asked her to send a letter to me through the Red Cross in Baghdad, and she told me it was Anne Khodabandeh.
23. I gave these letters to the PMOI office in Baghdad because I considered Anne Khodabandeh's motivation to be suspect, and shared my suspicions with the PMOI office there. I believe that Anne Khodabandeh is seeking to give the world the impression that I am one of the people whom the Iranian regime, and its agents, says are being held against their will by the PMOI.
24. I later learned (in spring 2002) when I returned to this country, that Anne Khodabandeh had been in regular contact with my daughter, trying to find out my whereabouts.

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25. Anne Khodabandeh had also, I learned, been speaking against the PMOI to my daughter, and had been trying to distance my daughter from me.
26. I also learned that Anne Khodabandeh had been trying to persuade my daughter to go with her to Iran, which I again found suspicious for a number of reasons.
27. First, given my role in the struggle against the Iranian clerical regime, I live under the constant threat of assassination by the agents of the regime. I have always told my daughter never to discuss my whereabouts with anyone.
28. Secondly, Anne Khodabandeh has no reason to contact my daughter about my whereabouts because she is in contact with my mother, who is able to get in touch with me. In fact, my mother travels to London every two years to see my daughter and her children.
29. Thirdly, because I am a well-known figure in the NCR! and a well-known opponent of the Iranian clerical regime, if my daughter travelled to Iran she would be in danger because of her relationship with me.
30. I believe that Anne Khodabandeh was trying to use my daughter, so that by travelling with her, she could portray her trip to Iran as an innocent family visit to see relatives. I also believe that she was trying to use my daughter to undermine me, i.e. to show that my daughter differed from me politically in her attitude to the regime because she was willing to travel there.
31. My daughter did not agree to travel to Iran with my sister-in-law. She told Anne Khodabandeh that given my activities with the PMOI and NCR! she would not be safe if she went there.
32. I have seen the "Iran-Interlink" website, which contains within it allegations that are untrue. For instance, it is claimed that in the last

twenty years, the PMOI has changed from an "armed political force into a cult". The website also says that Iran-Interlink is "concerned about members who may wish to leave the organisation but who are prevented from doing so", and that the "fundamental human rights" of PMOI members are being "violated".

33. These claims are untrue and are identical to the propaganda that has been put out by the Iranian clerical regime and its agents, in an effort to undermine the Iranian Resistance in the eyes of its Western supporters, over many years.
34. The NCRI and PMOI are legitimate and democratic organisations, working towards a pluralist and democratic society in Iran, which respects human rights and international law.
35. In fact, the allegations being put out on the "Iran-Interlink" website have a long history. I can recall that in response to criticisms being made to Khomeini that he was torturing PMOI members, Khomeini claimed that if there was any torture being conducted, it was the PMOI who were doing it to their own members. Such claims were, and remain, absurd and completely untrue.
36. I recently spoke to Anne Khodabandeh. My mother was visiting this country in August 2002, and I met up with her a few times at my daughter's house in Birmingham. During one of these visits, it so happened that my brother and sister-in-law were also there.
37. Anne Khodabandeh told me quite openly that she had visited Iran a few months before, showed me her photographs, and told me that during her visit she had been to Khomeini's grave. I found this an incredible statement from someone who purports, through her website, to be concerned with human rights.
38. Anne Khodabandeh also spoke to me against the PMOI, saying that everyone was now against them because they are terrorists.

39. My mother told me that during Anne's visit to Iran, she had wanted to meet all our family members and that during her visits with them, she had spoken against the PMOI.

I believe that the contents of this statement are true.

Signed



(Abrahim Khodabandeh)

Dated

12 NOV 2009