

Editor's Note

Revealed: Secret Drone Factory Training Hezbollah

Last week, the theocratic regime in Iran continued its grim campaign of executions. Over the past fortnight, at least 37 lives have been brutally extinguished in a bid to silence dissent and crush any semblance of opposition.

Meanwhile, thousands of individuals languish on death row, their lives hanging by a thread. Urgent intervention is not just necessary; it is imperative to break this cycle of violence and save innocent lives.

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), called for urgent action by the international community, demanding swift intervention to save lives and hold the Iranian regime accountable for its egregious human rights violations.

Congressmen Steve Cohen (TN-9) and Tom McClintock (CA-5), the Iran Human Rights and Democracy Caucus co-chairs, profoundly condemned Tehran's execution surge. They released a statement saying, "We implore the U.S. Administration to use all diplomatic and economic tools at its disposal to hold the Iranian regime accountable."

Separately, according to a report by The Telegraph, the Iranian regime has been rapidly expanding a top-secret drone factory near Qom, where they are training Hezbollah fighters to carry out drone attacks in the region. Leaked classified documents from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) show the facility has tripled in size since its establishment in 2006, despite facing US sanctions.

This week's featured article explains more details about these revelations: "The intelligence, compiled by the network of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) inside the country from various sources including some inside the IRGC, reveals that the Gangine centre, which has remained secret until now, hosts leaders of the region's terror groups currently wreaking havoc across the Middle East, most notably, Lebanese Hezbollah."

Human Rights

Cartoonist political prisoner tortured in Tehran safe house

NCRI Women (Apr. 23) - A week after the arrest of an Iranian cartoonist and former political prisoner, Atena Farghadani, her lawyer said she was tortured in a safe house run by the regime's security police. Atena Farghadani was violently arrested on April 13, 2024, by security forces while putting up one of her caricatures on a wall in Pastor Street where the presidential palace is located. Her lawyer Mohammad



Moghimi initially said she was taken to Qarchak prison, but because of the severity of her injuries, she was not admitted to the prison and was subsequently transferred to the women's ward of Tehran's notorious Evin prison. Moghimi wrote in his social media account, "To protest her harassment by security agencies, Atena Farghadani went to Pastor Street to put up a protest cartoon on the wall, when the IRGC Intelligence agents, using extreme violence, first took her to one of their safe houses and severely tortured her. She lost consciousness due to severe bleeding from her nose and the blows to her head, and hours later, regained consciousness in the prayer hall of the 8th Fateb police base where she found out some of her clothes had been removed. [Read more...](#)

Iran Human Rights and Democracy Caucus co-chairs condemn recent surge in executions in Iran

Official website (May 6) - Congressman Steve Cohen (TN-9) and Congressman Tom McClintock (CA-5), the Iran Human Rights and Democracy Caucus co-chairs, today voiced their profound condemnation of the recent surge in executions carried out by the Iranian regime, under the direct orders of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. ... We call on the international community, particularly bodies such as the United Nations, the European Union, and human rights organizations worldwide, to join us in condemning these heinous acts. We urge immediate action to address this ruthless campaign of terror against the Iranian people. Furthermore, we implore the U.S. Administration to use all diplomatic and economic tools at its disposal to hold the Iranian regime accountable. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and advocate for policies that promote human rights and democratic values in Iran and across the globe. The Iranian regime must understand that its actions have consequences and that the international community will not stand by in silence. [Read more...](#)

April 2024 monthly report – Iran Human Rights Monitor

Iran HRM (May 1) - Based on the registered statistics at the Center for Statistics and Documentation of Iran Human Rights Monitor (Iran HRM), and through extensive research conducted in this field, the final figures of executions in April 2024 have been obtained. It should be emphasized that the actual numbers are significantly higher, as most executions in Iran are carried out secretly. In April 2024, the execution statistics have significantly increased at an alarming rate. The judiciary of Iran executed 72 individuals during this month. This is in contrast to March, where 18 individuals were executed. The number of executions in April has witnessed an increase of nearly fourfold. Furthermore, compared to February, where 13 individuals were executed, the number has grown by more than fivefold. This means that the trend of executions has multiplied by five over the course of three months, which is highly concerning. [Read more...](#)

Protest-related execution imminent for tortured man: Reza Rasaei

Amnesty International (May 1) - Kurdish man Reza Rasaei, from the Yaresan religious minority, is at imminent risk of execution in relation to the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising. He has exhausted all legal avenues and could be executed at any moment. He was sentenced to death after a grossly unfair trial that relied on his forced "confessions" obtained under torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings, electric shocks, suffocation and sexual violence. [Read more...](#)

Protests, Economy

Drivers, retirees, merchants protest economic conditions, regime policies

PMOI (May 5) - Truck drivers in several cities of Iran are on strike due to fuel shortages and low fares. These protests have continued for several days, with drivers forming lines of parked trucks. On Sunday, these protests continued in Shiraz. In addition to fuel shortages and fare rates, an increase in municipal transportation fines is also among the grievances of truck drivers. On Saturday as well, strikes took place in cities of Sistan and Baluchestan province, including Dashtyari and Chabahar. The reduction in diesel quotas for truck drivers and disruptions in transportation in Sistan and Baluchestan are among the main reasons for the truck drivers' strike on Saturday. Truck drivers are refraining from

loading cargo to express their protests. Striking truck drivers in various parts of the country, including Tehran, Sistan and Baluchestan, Khorasan Razavi, Asaluyeh, Kerman, and Ilam are protesting the lack of allocated diesel fuel quotas, low fares, and lack of supervision and support from relevant organizations. [Read more...](#)

Western Policy, Nuclear Weapons

[US Treasury targets networks facilitating illicit trade and UAV transfers on behalf of regime military](#)

US Treasury (Apr. 25) - Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is sanctioning over one dozen entities, individuals, and vessels that have played a central role in facilitating and financing the clandestine sale of Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), which itself is involved in supporting Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Russia's war in Ukraine. Sahara Thunder is the main front company that oversees MODAFL's commercial activities in support of these efforts. Sahara Thunder also plays a key role in Iran's design, development, manufacture, and sale of thousands of UAVs, many of them ultimately transferred to Russia for use in its war of aggression against Ukraine. OFAC is also sanctioning two companies and a vessel involved in the shipment of Iranian commodities for Sepehr Energy Jahan Nama Pars, which similarly plays a leading role in the commercial activities of Iran's Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS). Concurrent with this action, the United Kingdom and Canada are imposing sanctions targeting several entities and individuals involved in Iran's UAV procurement and other military-related activities. [Read more...](#)

Terrorism, Cyber Warfare

[EU lawmakers push for IRGC terror listing, condemn Iranian regime's aggression](#)

NCRI (Apr. 25) - On Thursday, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to be included on the list of designated terrorist organizations. The motion garnered 357 votes in favor, 20 against, and 58 abstentions in Strasbourg's plenary chamber. A day earlier, on April 24, The European Parliament held a formal session, where members discussed the urgent need to adopt a resolution condemning the warmongering regime in Iran and designating the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. The session was attended by Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. During the session, several members of the European Parliament expressed their strong condemnation of the Iranian regime's actions, describing it as the "head of the snake of war and terror" in the region and a "global threat." [Read more...](#)

[Dutch woman arrested over shooting of Spanish former politician](#)

The Guardian (Apr. 30) - A Dutch woman has been arrested in the Netherlands in relation to the shooting of a Spanish former politician in Madrid last year. Alejo Vidal-Quadras, a founder of Spain's far-right Vox party, was shot in the face near his home in the wealthy Salamanca neighbourhood on 9 November by a motorcycle passenger. A long-time supporter of the Iranian opposition, Vidal-Quadras, 78, has accused the Iranian regime of involvement in the shooting. Four people had already been arrested as part of the investigation into the shooting, but the suspected gunman – a French national of Tunisian origin with several previous convictions in France – remains at large. "A woman was arrested in Holland for her alleged participation in the financing and preparation of the attack on Vidal-Quadras," the national police said in a brief statement on Tuesday. [Read more...](#)

Iranian Resistance



International conference in support of Iran's Resistance held in Paris

NCRI (May 2) - In a gathering held at the Municipality of the 5th District of Paris, a conference in solidarity with the resistance movement in Iran took place, featuring prominent speakers including Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. In addition to Florence Berthout, Mayor of the Paris 5th District, speakers at the conference included Mrs. Michèle Alliot-Marie, former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Justice, and Interior; Jean-François Legaret, President of Foundation for Middle Eastern Studies (FEMO) and former Mayor of the 1st District of Paris; Mrs. Ingrid Betancourt, former Colombian Senator and presidential candidate; Mrs. Dominique Attias, Chair of the Board of Directors of the European Lawyers; Pierre-Yves Bournazel, member of the Paris City Council and former member of the French National Assembly; Bruno Mace, Mayor of Villiers-Adam, Jean-Pierre Brard, former MP and former Mayor of Montreuil, and Pierre Bercis, President of the French New Human Rights. In her address, Mrs. Rajavi highlighted the unprecedented acceleration of executions by the Iranian regime, with 49 prisoners executed and a significant number sentenced to death in just the past 11 days. She underscored that these rulings epitomize the regime's recent crackdown on women, aimed at addressing the crises engulfing the regime. [Read more...](#)

Featured Article

Revealed: Iran's rapidly expanding top secret drone factory where Hezbollah is trained

By Melanie Swan
The Telegraph
May 5, 2024

Iran is training Hezbollah fighters to carry out drone attacks on northern Israel at a rapidly-expanding top secret base, The Telegraph can reveal.

The drone facility in Iran has tripled in size since it was set up in 2006, in spite of US sanctions, according to leaked classified Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

documents.

Located just five miles from Iran's holy city of Qom, the centre, under the command of the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has expanded from a runway of 500 metres to 1,500 metres today.

Intelligence reveals the country's dictator ordered the concentration, strengthening and rapid development of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) manufacturing activities by the regime's main drone manufacturer, Qods Aviation Industry Company in 2004.

In spite of being on the US Treasury sanctions list since Dec 12 2013, the drone HQ which belongs to Qods, has continued to expand.

Once a small airport for small crop-spraying planes, it has gone from a runway of 500 metres in 2007 to expanding to 1,000 metres in 2014 and, in 2020, to 1,500 metres, allowing for bigger, more long-range drones to take flight, such as those used in Iran's aerial assault on Israel last month. A new hangar was added to the complex next to the runway in 2021.

The intelligence, compiled by the network of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) inside the country from various sources including some inside the IRGC, reveals that the Gangine centre, which has remained secret until now, hosts leaders of the region's terror groups currently wreaking havoc across the Middle East, most notably, Lebanese Hezbollah.

In addition to training and testing drones such as the long-range Mohajer, which can fly up to 1,000 miles over 24 hours, the centre also is a drone pilot training centre. According to reports from inside the regime, militants are trained in small groups of a handful of fighters.

According to information revealed by the hacking group Uprising Till Overthrow, the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics has taken over 949 hectares (about 9.5 square kilometres) in the Ganjine region north of Qom for the establishment of this centre. Hossein Abedini, deputy director of the National Council of Resistance of Iran's UK office, said: "The developments in recent months have proven that the head of the snake, in terms of belligerence and the export of terror in the Middle East, is the clerical regime in Tehran."

Mr Abedini said that Iran's warmongering abroad comes as a ploy to distract from unrest at home, triggered by the death in morality police custody of Mahsa Amini in 2022, arrested for allegedly breaching hijab rules.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Iran has been sanctioned for its provision of drones to Russia used on civilian targets. "Ali Khamenei, the regime's leader, has been emboldened by appeasement and feels confident about the inaction of the international community and the absence of serious consequences for his regime's malign activity," Mr Abedini said.

"It is time to place the IRGC on the terrorist list. This is a necessary precursor to peace and tranquillity in the region and the world."

Douglas Barrie, a senior fellow for military aerospace with the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said supplying drones to Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, allows Iran to have a real-life centre to test design, functionality and accuracy of their missiles.

He added: "Exporting systems also allows Iran to see how their .," he said, testing the likes of design,

"Tehran puts these capabilities in the hands of its network of regional actors so it can influence their behaviour and make considerable mischief for some of its regional rivals."

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Suggested Reading

[Iran: The Ayatollah's Hidden Hand](#)

In this informative and well-presented volume, Professor Ivan Sascha Sheehan pulls back the curtain on the regime's propaganda franchise. He reveals the excessive investment of funding, infrastructure, and workforce frantically trying to convince Iranians and the world not to

believe their own eyes and ears. After years of trying to ignore the MEK, hoping others would do the same, regime officials now seemingly cannot stop talking about how effectively the MEK's message and organizing efforts are empowering the national uprising. Sheehan's research makes clear that the regime is scared, knowing that there is a blueprint and a competent political organization – run at every level by women – ready to help guide Iran to a legitimate constitutional future when the regime crumbles, just as happened with the Shah.

[Read more here.](#)



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About Iran Weekly Roundup:

This weekly is compiled by the US Representative Office of National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI-US). The NCRI is a broad coalition of democratic Iranian organizations, groups, and personalities founded in 1981 in Tehran. The NCRI is an inclusive and pluralistic parliament-in-exile that has more than 500 members representing a broad spectrum of political tendencies in Iran. The NCRI aims to establish a secular democratic republic in Iran, based on the separation of religion and state. Women comprise more than half of the Council's members. Mrs. Maryam Rajavi is the president-elect of the NCRI.

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