

## Stories of few ex MeK's parents and their children:

In Destructive Cults it is not enough that the guru is able to marry or separate couples. Orders them to marry someone or ask all women consider themselves as his wives; as long as there are children, somehow family ties between old couples can survive, and somehow they can bound with each other. For cult leader this family tie can be considered as a threat toward his or her final ambition, which is abolishment of any kind of one to one relation within the cult except the relation between the guru and his disciples. In MEK after forced divorces of couples, ties between parents and their children was exactly the main worry of Rajavi (The MEK leader), as although couples were separated, still through their children and their 'Thursday gatherings' they were able to connect to each other. 1991 Persian Gulf War of US and its allies against Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a very good excuse for Rajavi to get rid of children once for all. One day he gathered all ex-couples and told them that the organisation is not able to safeguard the safety of children if Americans attack Iraq; therefore he asked them 'for the sake of their children' give their consent to the organisation to send all children either back to Iran or to one of the European or American countries to be adopted by a sympathizer family or one of the relatives of theirs. Following to this decision, 800 children aged between two months and fifteen years, were moved from Iraq first to Jordan and then, using fake documents to different European and American countries. Story of sufferings of those children and their parents is a very long story that I hope one day some one finds the opportunity of telling it to the world. Most of the children that I have met or talked to or have heard their stories are among those abandoned children. Obviously almost all of the children and parents that I met and talked too or read their stories didn't want me to revile either their name or their full story. Therefore in the following examples I have avoided mentioning names and some particulars or facts that could revile whom I am talking about.

- 1- Father M and daughter S:** M became an MEK supporter in 1977 when MEK still was a political group and not a destructive cult. He married his wife A, another supporter of MEK and later as policy of MEK toward present government changed into 'arm struggle' or 'terrorism', they were moved to Kurdish region of Iran and then into Iraq. S, their daughter was born in 1984 in Kurdistan region of Iran. M told me that while he was in MEK's prison, he counted and found out between 1984 when S was born and 1991 when he start resisting against mind manipulation of MEK and as a result was imprisoned, he only was permitted to see his wife and his daughter 38 times on rare weekends. In prison, he says 'I was not allowed to see my wife and S, I always used to think what is she doing? Where is she now and who is looking after her? Does she know that I am in prison? Does she have any photograph of me to remember her father? If she sees me, can she recognizes me? You know we can deny ourselves from seeing our children but we don't have any right to deny our children to see their parents and have a normal life. Therefore not only I was hurt emotionally for not seeing my daughter, but I was even more hurt thinking about her and her sufferings as she was growing parentless.' 1991, while her father was in MEK's prison, S along other 800 children was moved to Jordan and then instead of sending her to Turkey to join her grandparents, MEK decided to send her to Sweden to be adopted by a supporter family. M says: 'when they moved my six years old daughter to Jordan and then to Sweden, I was in prison and they didn't let me to see my daughter for the last time. Only later I heard from one of MEK members that she has been moved to Sweden. He told me "When MeK representative wanted to prepare her for passing through pass control, he gave her few

candies and told her to remember from then on her name according to her fake passport is M. While she was crying, gave him back the candies and said –“No my name is S and I am not ready to say I am M “. On the other hand S says that MEK told her that her father has been killed in a battle. She explains her loss and nights that she cried for losing her father. Eventually M could run away and reach Germany as a political refugee. There he tried to find his daughter and for the first time could hear her voice when she was fourteen. He says when after passing through many obstacles I could reach to Sweden to meet her; neither she nor the family that she was with could accept me as her father as all of them were told that I have been killed in a battle. Even after she accepted me as her father still, I could see that she has no affection toward me; instead she had many questions; why did we decide to have her? Why did we abandon her? ... Later when she saw my insistence in seeing her and show of my love toward herself; she told me: “Yes I know you love me but I am afraid I have no feeling toward you or my mother.” She never called me father again.’

- 2- **M:** She was nine years old when she was moved from Iraq to US to live with one of the MEK’s supporter- families. Later it was revealed that the man of the family had molested her and as a result police and media got involved. Then suddenly the man was vanished and nobody could find him. Later MEK to calm down the tragedy transferred M’s mother from Iraq to US to work over there and at the same time to look after her daughter. She says: ‘only in US, I found out what has happened to my daughter, the organisation was trying to come me down and pretend nothing so horrible has happened. I couldn’t remain a member anymore and decided to leave the group, but remain among their supporters. It seemed MEK was ready to let me go as long as they could get rid of the problem. Later I found out that the aggressor to my daughter during all those years has been under protection of the group working for them in another city. Knowing this fact made me so angry that I stopped supporting the group for ever.’
- 3- **Yasser Ezati: (I am mentioning his name as his story already has been published by HRW)** I have had contact with Yasser many times and I have heard and read his story in detail, but I prefer to give his story from the report of Human Rights Watch about violation of human rights in MEK. In this report page fifteen we read: ‘Yasser Ezati was born on May 27, 1980, to Hassan Ezati and Akram Ghadim-al-ayam {both members of MEK or as it has been mentioned in this report MKO or Mujahidin Khalq Organisation}<sup>i</sup>. ... Yasser’s mother died during one of the MKO’s military operations. Ezati moved to Iraq with his family at the age of three and grew up inside the MKO military camps. During the 1991 Gulf war, Ezati and other children inside the camps were separated from their parents and sent outside Iraq. During the next three years, Ezati lived with three different families in Canada. These families were MKO sympathizers. In the summer of 1994, the MKO moved Ezati to Cologne, Germany, where he lived in a group-house for the MKO children. The organization recruited Ezati for military training when he was seventeen years old and sent him to Iraq in June 1997. “After the first six months in Iraq, I realized I had no desire to stay. In Europe I had an image of a democratic organization, but in Iraq I realized the extent of censorship and control. I wanted to leave. I was repeatedly told the only way out was to go to Iran. I was too afraid to go to Iran.” Ezati was extremely uncomfortable with the many means of thought control enforced inside the camps. He said there were many gatherings where high ranking officials lectured members not to think of any issue except those relating to internal MKO operations. “We

had to write self-criticism reports on a regular basis. If we had any thoughts outside of the organizational framework we had to report them,” he said. Ezati’s most daunting experience took place in summer of 2001: It was a gathering called *to’emeh* [lure, or bait] that lasted four consecutive months. All of the camp members were present during these sessions. At this time the number of dissidents who wanted to leave the organization was growing daily. First, Masoud Rajavi talked about the Mujahidin’s basic ideology. He then talked about the organization’s strategy, and finally he addressed the issue of those members wishing to separate from the organization. His purpose was to intimidate members and to say that anyone who wants to leave is a traitor. These sessions were held from morning to evening. Dissident members were brought in front of the audience and forced to self-criticize their actions and thoughts. They were expected to conclude by saying that they will remain with the organization. As soon as someone would speak their minds or criticize the organization, the attendees would attack him/her mercilessly using harsh verbal abuses. Anyone who dared to ask to leave the organization would immediately be labelled an agent of the Iranian government. It was psychologically devastating. I had to pledge my allegiance to the MKO numerous times during these gatherings. After four consecutive months of psychological pressures, I ended up signing documents that I would stay with the organization. After the American occupation of Iraq, Ezati managed to escape Camp Ashraf in June 2004. He is living in Europe.’<sup>ii</sup>

- 4- **B:** When in 1988, his parents as members of MEK escaped from Iran to Turkey, he was born there; the same year MEK moved the family into Ashraf base in Iraq. 1991, when he was only three years old, he along other children was moved to Canada and was adopted by a supporter family. He had a miserable life, living with that family which is a very sad story. Fortunately for him, after few years, his father escaped from Camp Ashraf and after passing through different obstacles, eventually found out whom his son is living with and could get him back. When MEK found out what has happened, using his mother (as member of MEK who lives in camp Ashraf) complained to the Canadian court that father has kidnapped his son<sup>iii</sup>. Fortunately the court didn’t accept this claim and let B remain with his father and move to Netherland where he is studying in a university.
- 5- **Mother G and her 21 years old son;** She says; ‘1986, we (G, her husband and their son) left Iran to Turkey to move from there to Europe and build a new life for ourselves. In Turkey recruiters of MEK could persuade my husband to go to Iraq, joining MEK members in camp Ashraf instead. I was totally against this idea and was hoping to change my husband’s mind and get his agreement to stick to our previous plan, going to Europe and supporting MEK over there. One day when I was tired and sleepy, my husband told me that he wants to take our son to the park, it was strange, but as my son loved going to the park, I couldn’t argue, I went for an afternoon nap and they apparently left for the park. Late afternoon when I woke up, I found out they have not returned yet, while I was making a tea for myself, I found a handwritten note from my husband saying: “Obviously you don’t want to join resistance and prefer to remain a traitor and mercenary of Iranian regime, I took our son and soon we are leaving for Iraq.” I didn’t know what to do? I only had 500 Lira that perhaps was only enough for a taxi. I didn’t know any Turkish but took the money and went out, I took a taxi and said two words that I knew (I can’t speak Turkish and I am Iranian); thanks God, the driver found out that I am Iranian and took me to an area, where many Iranian reside over there; ...

eventually I could find supporters of MEK and through them, my husband and as I had no choice, agreed to go with them to Iraq, camp Ashraf. In Ashraf after passing through many courses of actions, I became one of the teachers of MEK's nursery, I was happy of my job as I could see my son as long and as often as I wished. Of course neither I, nor any other teachers had any education about children and I can say almost all those who used to work over there, they were there as they could not be employed elsewhere, for example either they were ill, disable, or the organisation could not trust them to ask them to do more sensitive jobs. ...' G talked about the nursery and suffering of children over there, her rare meeting with her husband which was perhaps two to three nights per month, and also nightly meetings that they had with their supervisors. For example she said always they were criticising her in those meetings, why she is taking her two year old son to her bed to sleep, or why does she kisses her son in front of others? ... eventually after divorce of couples in MEK and transfer of children to Europe, as she couldn't stay in the cult any more, she escaped and after finding her son, they start living with each other. Her husband still is in MEK and her son prefers not to think or talk about her father.

- 6- **Father A and his daughter;** After A escaped from Ashraf camp during American occupation of Iraq; he could reach Europe and as he knew his daughter is in Norway; he could find him and after many years father and daughter could see each other. Since then they are living together and both are trying very hard to save A's wife. A and his daughter travelled from Norway with legal papers demanding a visit with the girl's mother. A and his daughter got to see the mother in the presence of MEK minders. The mother didn't come closer than three meters and only swore viciously at her daughter before leaving, calling her and her father as traitor and mercenary of Iranian regime.
- 7- **Father S told his story as below:** 'My first child was born when I and my wife were members of MEK. In 1980 when he was only six months, his mother was arrested and I had to leave him with another family who were supporting the MEK and as a result I only could be with my son every Friday. Later when his mother was freed from prison, we took our son back to live with us, but he had no feelings toward his mother. Life for MEK's children during 1980, 1981 in Iran was horrible; as renting a place to live in was very difficult for the group that openly was in war with the regime. In any small apartment few families had to live together, as a result children had to be quite all the time; any loud cry or laugh was forbidden. They were not allowed to go outside or play in the house, going to any school was out of question. Children only could see the outside world, when they were misused by the organisation; it was when they were taking them out with other combatants to look normal as a family. This is why; many children were killed during MEK's fight against the government during these moving. Even those children who had to stay at home were not safe from being killed as many bases at the same time were a military base that at any time could be attacked by revolutionary guards. Death, being killed, imprisonment, injury and blood among members of all bases were very common and as a result children from very early ages had to understand and live with these harsh realities of life. Later when my son was older, anytime he was seeing me, he used to hug me saying: "I am glad you are not yet a martyr". 1983 along other members of the organisation we had to leave Tehran and move to Kurdish region and then into Turkey, then France and eventually Iraq. In Paris A (Our son) was in MEK's nursery and only in late night time he was with us. During our stay in Paris we

found our daughter whom we called N. After moving to Iraq, both our children had to stay in MEK's nursery and stay with us only during weekend. During those years both, we as parent and our children suffered a lot because of separation and seeing each other only in rare weekends. But still we were happy to see each other and be a family even if it was only for one day per week. 1990 along all other members, according to the order of the leader, I and my wife had to divorce each other, later in 1991 they sent all children to Jordan to be moved to different countries. This was very horrible for me to accept and as a result I start arguing and resisting mind manipulation of the group. Eventually they decided to send me away to a refugee camp in Iraq which had worse condition than any prison. At this time to hurt me even more and perhaps to put me under pressure and teach me a lesson, they returned my twelve year old son and eight years old daughter from Jordan to Iraq to stay with me in that camp under that horrible condition. It was a very hard time as everyday my main worry was how to feed my children. Eventually I surrendered and asked them to return them back to Jordan. Later they were moved to Germany and after a year, I could get refugee status in Netherland. While I was in Amsterdam, I found out where my children are and asked the branch of the group in Netherland to return my children to me. But they refused and told me those children are children of the MEK and not a traitor father. It was very difficult time for me to even prove that I am father of my children. Living as a refugee in Netherland and being penniless, I had to beg different attorneys to help me to free my children from mind manipulation of the group. After it was proved that I am father of my children a time was set for a court in Germany to decide about my case. MEK which was not ready to lose the children, to fight back moved their mother from Iraq to Germany to claim her children too. Obviously with wealth of the organisation and the solicitor that they could employ, they won the case, but the court allowed me to visit my children every weekend. After two years, at last I met my children, but due to the mind manipulation of the group, they were looking at me as a traitor to the group, emotionless and without any affection. My fourteen year old son hardly talked to me; still when the organisation found out that I have met my children, changed their school and later before they reach to the age of consent, they were moved back to Iraq to become next worshipers of the leader. That was the last time that I met my beloved children.

- 8- **Mother B:** She was born in 1965. In 1986, she was married to her husband, and at the same year they were moved to Pakistan. There, in 1987, they were recruited by the MEK and later were moved to Iraq. 1990, along all other members they were ordered to divorce each other. B Says: "My husband and I initially resisted this order and did not wish to either be separated from each other, or to abandon our children, but we were put under enormous psychological pressure and we were forced to submit to their demands". She adds: 'My daughter H was born in Pakistan in 1987 and my son M was born in Iraq in 1991. 1991, when H was 5 years old and M was only 6 months old, they were separated from us and they were sent to Europe. Since then MEK did not allow us to have any contact with our children at all. I still remember my daughter crying hard as she was forced to leave me. And the innocent face of my six months' old son is always before my eyes. Many years later I found out that my daughter had been given to a family in the south of Sweden with the fake name of S, and she is now studying in a university in the north of that country. My son was taken to Holland by a family and later moved to another family and eventually was left in an orphanage and

now he lives in a care centre for youth in Holland.’ Ms. B, who was one of the high ranking members of the MEK, escaped the group when American army for a short period was in charge of Camp Ashraf. After passing through many obstacles she moved to Europe in search of her children. Eventually she could find them, but her daughter due to the education of MEK supporters in Sweden, refuses to talk to her and claims that her mother because of leaving the group is a traitor to the cause. Her son doesn’t know her; he cannot speak Persian, and prefers to have no connection with his past. Strangely sister and brother had no clue of where about of each other and the son even didn’t know that he has a sister living in Europe. After Ms. B tried to contact her children; MEK sent a special representative to talk with her children to persuade them to take a stance against her. Her daughter as mentioned above obeyed the organisation and refused to see or talk to her mother, and her son as has no link with Iran or the organisation, couldn’t understand them and refused to have any relation with either his mother or the group.

- 9- **Children P and A;** In 1983 they were moved with their parents from Iran to Iraq. Living in Iraq as other children they were allowed to visit their parents only during weekends, therefore they couldn’t have any normal relation with their parents and they say we hardly knew what our parents think and what kind of personality they have. 1989 – 1990; during Ideological revolution of the group, when Rajavi ordered all members to divorce their spouses; their father decided to leave the group, but their mother decided to remain. Eventually the father could get hold of his children and move them to Netherland to become as refugees there. They talked about their hard times not only for moving from Iraq to Netherland, but how to deal with the father that they hardly knew. Eventually they could understand each other and change into a united warm and kind family. They tried hard to help their mother to escape from the organisation and eventually they succeed and now they are living as a united family.
- 10- **S:** Her parents who were members of MEK, in 1983 were moved from Iran to France, where S was born. Two years later along all other families, they were moved from France to Iraq. 1991, as other children, seven years old S was moved from Iraq to Canada. She talks about her hard time in Canada, especially as she was under manipulation of the group via the family whom she was living with. For example they were asking her to join teams of earning money for the group in the streets of different cities of Canada. Fortunately, her aunt who was living in Netherland eventually could find out about her and after contacting her, helped her to become independent of the group and now she is trying hard to find and save her parents who live in Camp Ashraf of Iraq.
- 11- **Talking with friend of A:** A was born in 1985 in Iraq. In 1991, he was moved to Germany and later in 1998 according to the decision of the group for moving all grown children back to Iraq, he who was 13 was forced to become a young soldier of the group. But he had changed and couldn’t adopt himself with the discipline of the camp or harsh reality of the living in a destructive cult, therefore once when he was only fifteen and due to guard his base he shot and killed himself. MEK announced his death as an accident.
- 12- **Part of interview with Nadereh Afshari one of the ex teachers of MEK’s nursery from a book called: ‘Injured clematises’ written by Mehdi Khoshhal**

'I was working in one of the MEK's nurseries in Köln Germany where we had to look after 150 children aged between two months and sixteen years. My responsibility was to look after 'health' of those children and another 30 other children who were in another MEK's base in the same city. We didn't have enough rooms in those two bases for children to have enough space for living and playing. There were twelve small rooms, one for dining room, another for praying room; other rooms were divided between children according to their sex and age. Although I think the government was giving enough money for looking after those children but most of the money was going for the organisation and only part of it was spent for the welfare of the children<sup>iv</sup>. Not only children didn't have proper bed or cloth or food; emotionally they were in very bad shape. Many of them especially younger ones were missing their mothers badly, and some of the older ones didn't really know what parent means as they had to change one, two or perhaps three sets of parents due to losing them one by one in the Rajavi's wars. It was supposed to be some kind of orphanage but in reality it was more like a military school, with a very harsh discipline. All children, very young and old had to wake up early morning, in a very limited facility for washing and toilet had to prepare themselves for standing in front of Rajavi's picture and sing one of the anthems of the group. Then most of them had to go to a school, called Martin Luther, which was far from the house. After that children as young as seven had to do different jobs around the house, and sometimes when the organisation had some activity such as a demonstration in different cities of Germany they had to prepare the banners and placards. Older ones even during weekends and holidays had to go to the streets and join teams of collecting money. Emotion exchanges between children, even siblings or between them and teachers were tightly under control as all their emotions had to be directed toward Rajavis (husband and wife). In New Year celebration children only were allowed to give pictures of Rajavis as present to each other. Supervisors were very against any kind of attachments between members and children, even my own daughter was not allowed to call me mother when we were in that house, she used to come close to me and whisper on my ear 'mommy' as she had to call me teacher Nadereh. Even after years from those days, while she is 24, still she is suffering from remembering those days. I feel we committed some kind of crime toward our children, by joining the group, but I feel the worst criminal is the Rajavi himself by manipulating us to hurt our own children as we did. The only time children could hear their parent's voice was when they were unmanageable and we had to get help from their parents to call them and teach them a lesson or two.

**13- S:** He was born in Tehran, 1984. His parents were MEK's sympathisers. 1985 his family according to the order of the organisation had to move from Iran to Iraq. For next five years S was grown up staying in the organisation's nursery, staying with his parents only during weekends. 1990, along other children he was moved to Jordan and then to the Hamburg Germany, where he stayed with a sympathiser family. Fortunate for him, his father a year later escaped from the cult and passing through many obstacles could reach to Germany and after proofing to the court that he is his father's son, eventually in 1993 father and son could unite with each other. For next ten years he stayed with his father. He never could see his mother again. She only according to the order of the organisation called him once, when the group found out that his father has won his custody. His mother called him to persuade him to leave his father. S told his mother where are you and where have you been during past

few years to tell me to leave my father!? Since then they have not talked with each other. He says: 'At the moment I feel I have no connection to the past. I cannot spend my time thinking of the past that everybody has very bad memories of. I feel for what has happened to me and other children, perhaps %80 the group was responsible, but our parents were responsible as well, yes perhaps their responsibility was about %20. I understand the group's mind manipulation, I have seen many intelligent people, writers, singers, artists who have been deceived by them and had done whatever they have asked them to do, but this will not wash away my parent's responsibility toward what has happened to me. They had to think about me as well, especially when they started working with the group. They decided to join the group, without thinking that they have a child and welfare of that child is their responsibility.' About the past he says: 'Yes I mentioned that I try not to think about the past, but there are certain things that a child never is able to forget, not seeing your parents; leaving them with cry and misery at the end of each weekend when you are only five or six years old; for a year not having any stability in life, going from one city to another, from one place or hotel to another; staying with fostered parents that you don't know anything about them; war and explosions; growing like animals without proper love of parents, being exploited and used by everybody; ... these things cannot be forgotten easily, but I am an optimistic person, I think among all those children I was one of the lucky ones as after a year, I could unite with my father and could stay with him and grow up as normal as possible. I think I have dealt with my past and have no nightmare of those years. I love my father and about my mother I understand she is under very harsh mind manipulation or brainwashing, therefore when she tried to talk to me, perhaps I could realise that is not my mother that I am talking to, but a member of the group who has been ordered to say certain things to me. Still, I have to say it is very difficult for me to understand and imagine how a mother can change so much to be so cold and loveless toward her own child. Calling me just once, not wanting to know about me; or having my picture ... well I understand the concept of mind manipulation but still I wonder how they managed to kill love and feelings of a mother for her child? Be honest hearing her after thirteen years, I am not even sure if she was my mother, usually when you hear a loved one after so many years; it is very difficult not burst into tear and cry. She was very blunt and dull, asked me about my address and email and asked me not to tell to my father that she has called. I told her: "who are you telling me to hide your call from my father? Where have you been all these years to ask me such a thing?" Then she asked me if she can see me? I waited for almost twenty seconds how to respond! I told her no I don't want to see you. Then I said "I don't know, really it doesn't matter; if I see you, I have seen you, if not that is ok as well." I think we all have to think positive and be happy as we are among those who escaped more misery of the group, we are among saved ones.'

**14- X's fostered mother told me:** 'we adopted X when she was moved from Iraq to here. At start she was very good. Although she was only five or six years old, still she was trying very hard to learn writing in Persian so she could write a letter to her mom and dad. She wrote many letters that we gave them to the branch of the group in our city. We never got a reply or a phone call for her. They were telling us that it is because of war in Iraq. But even after the war she never got any news from her family. Step by step her behaviour changed from good to bad and then worst. It seemed she was trying very hard not to respect any norms, ethics



or laws of the house and our family. Even when we were taking her to shopping with ourselves, all the times we had to watch her not to take anything from supermarkets. I really don't know what happened but it seems gradually she decided to forget the past and accept us as her family. She stopped talking about her mother or father or MEK. MEK many times asked us to return her to the group, but as she was legally adopted by us and she was not ready to think or talk about the group anymore, we refused to return her. Now days it seems the past is completely death in her mind and she has a happy and normal life.



**Behind barbed wires of Camp Ashraf of MEK**

**Families waiting and hoping to see their loved ones**

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<sup>i</sup> Every thing mentioned in{ } are mine

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/mena/iran0505/5.htm#\\_ftnref52](http://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/mena/iran0505/5.htm#_ftnref52) last visited on 28/11/2009

<sup>iii</sup> Please remember that MEK as perhaps all other destructive cults consider all children as property of the cult leader. In case of MEK all these children after reaching 16 or 17 were moved back to Iraq –Camp Ashraf to be changed into a soldier of Rajavi. In MEK's point of view, father or mother have no right over their children and taking back their children will be considered as kidnapping.

<sup>iv</sup> Of course later, after complains of neighbours, German police raid many bases of MEK, among them base of children and found out about fraud of the group, misuse and exploitation of children. German magazine Focus number 29 of year 2000 published to full report of the government.