



IRAN DEMOCRACY MONITOR

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REVENGE FOR SOLEIMANI STILL DOMINATES IRANIAN STRATEGIC THINKING

January 3rd marked the second anniversary of the U.S. killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of the IRGC Qods Force, in Iraq via drone strike. Two years on, exacting revenge for the incident is still a preoccupation among Iranian leaders. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said as much in remarks to government officials on January 1st, in which he pledged that former President Donald Trump and officials in his administration "will pay back [sic] for their crime."

How Iranian officials plan to do so, however, remains the subject of debate in Tehran. Iran's new president, Ebrahim Raisi, has declared that former President Donald Trump and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo must be put on trial for their roles in ordering Soleimani's death - and threatened unspecified consequences if they are not. "If Trump and Pompeo are not tried in a fair court for the criminal act of assassinating General Soleimani, Muslims will take our martyr's revenge," Soleimani said in early January. In all, Iranian officials are said to have identified 74 U.S. nationals involved in the Soleimani killing, from whom retribution needs to be exacted. (*Iran International*, January 1, 2022; Reuters, January 3, 2022)

AN AFGHAN INFLUX...

The Biden administration's abrupt August withdrawal from Afghanistan - and the Taliban's subsequent takeover of that country - has led to a veritable exodus of refugees into neighboring nations, including Iran. According to a new aid organization report detailed in the *Tehran Times*, more than one million Afghans have fled to Iran in the past four months, with between 4,000 and 5,000 more coming each day. Iran, which already hosts the world's fourth largest refugee community, now is estimated to have three million Afghans in the country. These refugees are both legal and illegal; the study judges that that figure encompasses "some 780,000 Afghan refugees, over 2 million undocumented Afghans, and another 600,000 Afghan passport-holders with Iranian visas." (*Tehran Times*, February 6, 2022)

...AND HYDROLOGICAL TENSIONS WITH IRAQ

Tensions between Iran and Iraq have risen in recent months amid dwindling flows from the Sirwan river, which stretches between the two countries. The culprits behind what Iraqi officials have termed an "unprecedented decline" are low precipitation (which contributed to drought conditions in Iran over the summer) as well as the Iranian regime's answer to that phenomenon: the building of new dams in Iran to husband hydrological resources. The result has been nothing short of catastrophic for Iran's downstream neighbor. "The water level has fallen by 7.5 meters in one year," says Rahman Khani, the director of the Darbandikhan Dam in northeastern Iraq. (Agence France Presse, October 27, 2021)

"PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL" CHARGES THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

The Iran Atrocities Tribunal, a "people's tribunal" established in 2020 by human rights activists to investigate regime culpability in the killing of protesters in Iran in November 2019, has found 160 officials and functionaries guilty of crimes against humanity. The tribunal has sat in session in London, hearing testimony from more than two hundred witnesses to the regime clampdown on opposition forces in the late fall of 2019 - a crackdown that is believed to have been ordered and directed by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei himself. According to its findings, as many as 1,500 civilians were killed nationwide during the unrest, and some 8,000 others were arrested in Tehran alone. (*Iran International*, February 6, 2022)

[EDITORS' NOTE: The Tribunal (also known as the "Aban" Tribunal) has no legal standing, and so its decisions and findings remain symbolic in nature. Nevertheless, it's functioning and determinations represent a powerful call for accountability of the Iranian regime for its human rights abuses and domestic excesses.]