



## Iran to probe into Parachinar 'genocide'

Sat, 07 Feb 2009 11:31:18 GMT

A report to the Iranian parliament has cited grave human rights abuses against Shias in the northwestern Pakistani city of Parachinar.

Lack of government control over the highly sensitive border areas of Kurram Agency, the capital of which is Parachinar, has led to an increased Taliban presence in the area.

Local Pakistani media reported last week that Taliban-linked militants in Parachinar, Hangu district and much of the Kurram tribal agency have during the last six months been engaged in sectarian violence and have killed 25 to 30 people on a daily basis.

Military forces based in the areas usually avoid the violence which has caused uproar in the territory bordering the Tora Bora region in Afghanistan, the media report said.

The National Security and Foreign Policy Commission of the Iranian Majlis (parliament) has received a report on the situation in Parachinar.

"The report provides evidence of a humanitarian disaster in that region, which unfortunately due to the crisis in Iraq and Gaza has not garnered media coverage," Iranian lawmaker Heshmatollah Falahat-Pisheh told *Tabnak* on Saturday.

Falahat-Pisheh affirmed that the parliament would investigate the "genocide" through relevant international agencies.

"We are pressuring international human rights organizations to dispatch fact-finding missions to the area," he added.

Taliban militants have launched deadly attacks against the enclave of Shiites settled in Parachinar and have blocked road routes to the city since April 2007 when sectarian violence between Shias and Sunnis broke out after provocative remarks by a Wahhabi against historical Shiite figures.

The Taliban sided with the Sunni majority in the country, imposing an ongoing 20-month blockade which has caused serious food shortages.

The Pakistani government has on various occasions dispatched relief convoys loaded with food and medicines to the area, but most supplies are confiscated by the militants and the drivers are killed or kidnapped.

In a recent incident, the militants beheaded a police officer on Thursday and kidnapped four Shia Muslims on their way to Parachinar.

"Taliban militants beheaded a policeman and kidnapped four Shias in Tal, a town 45 km northeast of Miranshah," a security official told the **European strategic intelligence and security center** last week.

The grave situation has also prompted the leading Shiite figure of Iraq, Grand Ayatollah

Ali al-Sistani, to issue a ruling -- known as a fatwa -- encouraging all Shiites in Pakistan to do what they can to help their "brethren" in Parachinar.

"Pakistan says it cannot control the situation in the area, but this is a lie, they have got troops inside Parachinar but the population are better off without them," Hussein Ali Shahriyari, another Iranian lawmaker, said.

MT/AA

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