

# The Iran Based Mujahideen-e Khalq (MEK) Terrorist Organization: Why Bolton's MEK Connection Matters

By [Daniel Larison](#)

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*Jason Rezaian [comments](#) on Bolton's enthusiasm for the Mujahideen-e Khalq (MEK) and what it means for U.S. Iran policy:*

The MEK is the type of fringe group that sets up camp across the street from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and hands out fliers filled with unsubstantiated claims. This is America — we let crazy people talk. That's their right, and I would never suggest that they be prohibited from doing that. But giving the MEK a voice in the White House is a terrible idea.

In John Bolton they have someone who will do it for them.

Now that Bolton is in such an influential position in the Trump administration, his connection with and support for the MEK pose some real dangers for the U.S. He could use his position to funnel misinformation from the MEK to the president to distort U.S. policy in their favor. He might use his position to advocate publicly on behalf of the MEK, and that would give them a de facto endorsement from the administration. Worse still, he could persuade the president that this totalitarian cult is the "real" Iranian opposition, which would simultaneously harm Iranian dissidents and saddle the U.S. with a discredited, deranged cult as its preferred alternative to the Iranian government.

Bolton's connection with the MEK is not the only disqualifying thing in his record, but it is one of the more egregious red flags that should have prevented the president from ever offering him the job in the first place. If any other group had been removed from the list of foreign terrorist organizations a few years earlier, anyone publicly advocating on their behalf *while they were still on the list* would have tremendous difficulty getting work with the U.S. government, much less serving as one of the most important officials in the White House. Because the MEK hates the Iranian government, shilling for them is probably considered a plus in this administration. It is a measure of how warped the debate over Iran policy is that Bolton and others like him could openly shill for such a group without becoming pariahs.

Rezaian reminds us just what the MEK is:

But it is the group's activities in the decades since that have cemented its reputation as a deranged cult. For decades its command center was a compound in Iraq's Diyala province, where more than 3,000 members lived in

virtual captivity. The few who were able to escape told of being cut off from their loved ones, forced into arranged marriages, brainwashed, sexually abused and tortured.

All this was carried out under the supervision of the group's leaders, Massoud and Maryam Rajavi, the husband and wife at the top of the organization's pyramid. He has been missing since the U.S. invasion in 2003 and is presumed dead. She now runs the group and makes regular public appearances with her powerful friends from the West — such as Bolton.

There has been a shameful parade of former U.S. officials, retired military officers, and has-been politicians making their annual pilgrimage to pay tribute to Maryam Rajavi in Paris every year. Bolton has been a faithful devotee for the last decade, and when he was just a former Bush administration official few people cared that he was disgracing himself with his appearances there. Now that he is going to be the next National Security Advisor, his horrible judgment and sketchy ties to awful groups should receive extensive scrutiny and they should make us extremely skeptical about everything he says and does in that position.

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