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## Kerry: US a Sort Of Int'l Pariah

DAVOS, Switzerland, Jan. 27--Massachusetts Senator John Kerry slammed the foreign policy of the Bush administration on Saturday, saying it has caused the United States to become "a sort of international pariah."

The statement came as the Democrat lawmaker responded to a question about whether the US government had failed to adequately engage Iran's government before the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, AP reported.

Kerry said the Bush administration has failed to adequately address a number of foreign policy issues, speaking during a World Economic Forum panel discussion that also included Iraqi Vice President Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Mohammad Khatami, former Iranian president.

"When we walk away from global warming, Kyoto, when we are irresponsibly slow in moving toward AIDS in Africa, when we don't advance and live up to our own rhetoric and standards, we set a terri-

### Mussa: Attack on Iran Would Drag Mideast Into Hell



John Kerry



Amr Mussa

ble message of duplicity and hypocrisy," Kerry said.

"So we have a crisis of confidence in the Middle East--in the world, really. I've never seen our country as isolated, as much as a sort of international pariah for a number of reasons as it is today."

Kerry said the government needs to use diplomacy to improve national security.

"We need to do a better job of protecting our interests, because after

more forcefully and effectively we could really change the dynamics of the world," Kerry said. "We should be less engaged in this 'neocoon' rhetoric of regime change and more involved in building relations and living up to our own values so that people make a different judgment about us."

Also on Saturday, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Mussa, said Saturday that military action against Iran "would bring the whole of the Middle East into hell."

Speaking to AFP, he said: "I said the war in Iraq would open the doors of hell and it did. This time, it would bring the whole of the Middle East into hell itself."

Mussa added that "any military action now anywhere in the Middle East is to be discouraged."

His comments were echoed by the United Nations nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who said on Friday that military action would be 'bankers'.

### Renewed Bid To Overcome Lebanon Crisis

BEIRUT, Lebanon, Jan. 27--Lebanon's fractious leaders sought Saturday to overcome the nation's high-stakes political crisis after violence between government and opposition supporters sparked fears of a return to civil war.

Political sources said that Nabih Berri, the Shiite Muslim speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, had engaged in telephone talks with Fuad Siniora, the Sunni Muslim prime minister, and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, a key supporter of Siniora's embattled government.

"We're at a crossroads," a close adviser to Berri told AFP on Saturday.

"If those in power continue to reject all solutions that would satisfy all sides, there will be a third round of violence, and then no one would be able to halt a slide to civil war."

Meanwhile, the Sunni parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri, a staunch opponent of Syrian involvement in Lebanon, said he was ready to meet Hassan Nasrallah, who heads the Shiite opposition group Hezbollah.

"There is no other choice but to return to dialogue,"

Hariri said.

Fears of a return to Lebanon's devastating 1975-90 civil war resurfaced when a general strike Tuesday--called by Hezbollah to force Siniora's government to resign--brought the nation to a standstill and, in some places, turned violent with three killed.

Trouble flared anew Thursday when riots between Sunni and Shites in south Beirut erupted, leaving four dead and 152 injured, and prompting the Lebanese Army to impose an overnight curfew for the first time in a decade.

Gunmen were seen on rooftops for the first time in years and masked men demanded identity papers at roadblocks, as hard-pressed government troops struggled to keep the pro- and anti-government camps apart.

Siniora--whose government enjoys US, European and Saudi support--was in Paris when the riots broke out, securing 7.6 billion dollars (6.1 billion euros) in international aid to keep Lebanon's fragile economy intact after last year's crippling 33-day war between Israel and Hezbollah fighters.

### Banking Hours Bylaw Sought

TEHRAN, Jan. 27--President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad notified the Economy Ministry and Central Bank of Iran to devise a bylaw for banking hours as soon as possible.

According to this ratification, the government has been mandated to regulate the banking hours in a way that banks start work before state bodies, Mehr News Agency reported.

The Economy Ministry and CBI will reportedly hold a joint session on Sunday to decide about the banking hours.

The double-urgency draft to change the banking hours was ratified by Majlis on January 5 and later endorsed by the Guardians Council.

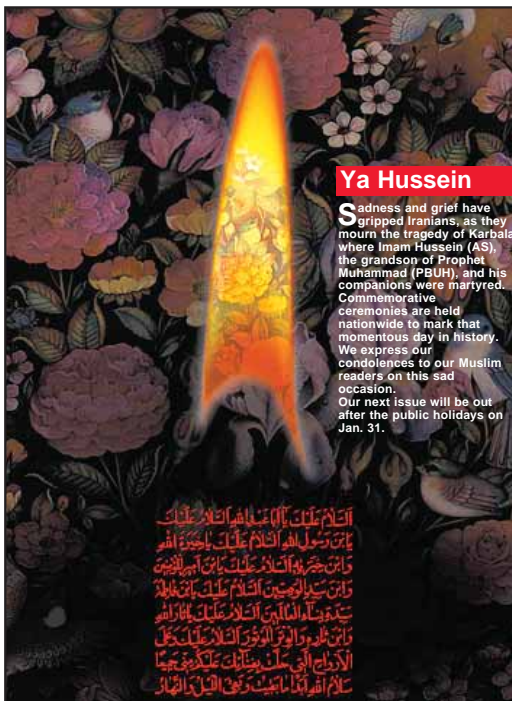
Currently banks open at 9:00 a.m., while state bodies start work at 7:30 a.m.

### Fresh Warning About Pollution

TEHRAN, Jan. 27--Air pollution in some districts of Tehran has reached the 'danger' level, according to data collected from the capital's air pollution evaluation stations.

Fars News Agency quoted Tehran's Department of Environment as reporting that air pollution in the areas of Azadi, Bahman, Qolhak, Pardisan, Shah-e Rey and Fatemi has reached the 'danger' level.

The department called on patients suffering from respiratory and pulmonary diseases as well as children not to enter high-traffic and polluted areas of Tehran. Citizens have also been advised to avoid unnecessary travel to the city center and use public transportation as far as possible.



### Ya Hussein

Sadness and grief have gripped Iranians, as they mourn the tragedy of Karbala where Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and his companions were martyred. Commemorative ceremonies are held nationwide to mark that momentous day in history. We express our condolences to our Muslim readers on this sad occasion. Our next issue will be out after the public holidays on Jan. 31.

### America Intensifying Mideast Tension

TEHRAN, Jan. 27--Defense Minister Brigadier General Mostafa Mohammad Najjar said on Saturday the United States has adopted new policies to intensify religious and ethnic conflicts in the Middle East to compensate for its failures in the region.

Addressing a gathering of Defense Ministry personnel, Najjar said American officials are seeking to create discord among Shites and Sunnis in Iraq and interfering in the domestic affairs of Lebanon, IRNA reported.

"They [Iraq and Lebanon] are examples of US policy for creating tension in the region. The US government believes that if it were to continue its illegitimate presence in the strategic Middle East and plunder its resources, war, conflict, tension and insecurity should be intensified in the region," he said.

Najjar added that the persistence of American neocons to send more troops to the region despite the opposition of the US Congress indicates that they have adopted policies to intensify tension in the Middle East.

The top military official said vigilance, self-control, non-violence, mobilization and regional unity in the Middle East are the most essential issues.

He noted that security, stability and peace in the region, in view of cooperation and constructive interaction among regional governments for preventing tension, will expedite the pullout of foreigners from the Middle East.

Najjar stressed that US moves in the region will have no result except increasing tension and hatred of nations and governments for the American warmongers.

### Simultaneous Majlis-Presidential Polls Unconstitutional

TEHRAN, Jan. 27--Guardians Council Spokesman Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei said although the recent ratification about holding the next Majlis and presidential elections simultaneously has not yet been discussed formally in the council, it contradicts the Iranian Constitution.

Talking to reporters in his weekly press conference on Saturday, Kadkhodaei said several parliamentarians had already opined that this ratification is against the constitution because it extends the Majlis duration and reduces the presidential tenure, IRNA reported.

"I don't think State Expediency Council would endorse this ratification. I recommend lawmakers that they conduct more expert studies about their ratifications," he said, adding that this ratification lacks expert studies.

Referring to the budget bill of the next Iranian year (to start March 21), the official said the Guardians Council is currently discussing the bill informally.

"The bill should have been presented to Majlis sooner," he said, noting that the Guardians Council is examining the bill

informally until it receives the bill from Majlis formally.

Commenting on the Majlis ratification on changing the banking hours, which should be regulated before state bodies start work, the spokesman noted that as soon as a ratification is endorsed by the Guardians Council, the executive branch is obligated to implement it.

Kadkhodaei also said that the Guardians Council has decided to publish details of its interpretations about Majlis ratifications for experts.

"The initiative is aimed at making experts aware of the opinions and reasons of Majlis, government and the Guardians Council for the ratifications," he said.

Asked about the amendment to the law pertaining to the responsibilities and functions of village and city councils, Kadkhodaei said that defining legislative and executive responsibilities for councils is against the constitution.

"The Guardians Council has not yet reached consensus over this amendment," he said.

### UN Misuse Over Holocaust Protested

UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 27--Iran on Friday dissociated itself from a UN General Assembly resolution on the Holocaust, saying it was a politically-loaded, hypocritical exercise that will be exploited by the Zionist Israeli regime against Palestinians.

"In our view, there is no justification for genocide of any kind, nor can there be any justification for the attempts made by some, particularly by the Israeli regime, to exploit the past crimes as a pretext to commit new genocides and crimes," Hossein Gharibi, a New York-based Iranian diplomat, told the assembly, IRNA reported.

He was elaborating on the position of Iran on withholding support to the draft resolution entitled "Holocaust Denial", before he left the meeting in a sign of protest.

"I wish to place on record my delegation's deep concern over and rejection of the attempts made by certain members to misuse the General Assembly's procedure to raise an issue that has neither been on the agenda of its 61st Session, nor has it any relevance to the agenda item under which the resolution at hand has been tabled. There is every reason to believe that today's attempt is both procedurally and substantively

flawed," he said.

Saying that the intention behind the move cannot be considered genuine, Gharibi said, "The main sponsors' aim behind this draft resolution lies in their mischievous intention to pursue their narrow political interests by all means, including the misuse of this august body."

"If the thrust of the draft resolution is to condemn the crime of genocide, the Assembly, through a great number of resolutions, has already addressed this concern of grave nature. We, like many other countries, have condemned genocide against any race, ethnic or religious group as a crime

against humanity," he said.

The envoy reiterated this unambiguous position in the meeting.

Gharibi also stressed that many abhorrent cases of genocide that have occurred throughout history necessitate a thorough and comprehensive examination by the international community, in order to prevent the recurrence of such crimes in future.

The US-drafted resolution was deliberately timed to coincide with a General Assembly decision in 2005 to mark January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration of Holocaust.