

STRUMMING ALONG



Ela Lamblin intently plays the stamenphone Saturday afternoon as a group of people stop to listen to his unique music during the Oregon Country Fair.

Catharine Kendall/Emerald

Iranian government up in arms with student protests

By Anwar Faruqi
The Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Riot police backed by helicopters broke up a demonstration of 1,000 people in Tehran on Monday, as hard-liners in the Iranian government lost patience on the fifth day of pro-democracy protests.

Police fired tear gas and shots in the air and arrested several protesters at Tehran University, witnesses said in phone interviews.

Demonstrators in Tehran set fire to a police vehicle and hurled stones at policemen, while helicopters hovered overhead to direct

the police response, the official Islamic Republic News Agency said, adding there were no injuries.

The crackdown followed government warnings Sunday that unauthorized demonstrations would no longer be tolerated. The protests, which began Thursday, have shown the widening gulf between Iran's reformists, who support President Mohammad Khatami, and the hard-liners in government who oppose him.

The crux of the power struggle is over the limited powers of the elected president. The country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei, is not elected, but he controls the armed forces, the police, the judiciary, the Intelligence Ministry and the media.

The protests swelled into the biggest seen in Tehran since the 1979 Islamic revolution after police stormed a university hostel Friday in response to a small protest the night before over the banning of a liberal newspaper. The attack was apparently carried out with the backing of government hard-liners.

One person was killed and 20 injured in the assault.

Demonstrations have been in support of Khatami, who has striv-

en to increase political and social freedom since taking office in 1997.

The United States urged Iran on Monday to protect peaceful demonstrators.

State Department spokesman James Foley also said the United States remains committed to a dialogue with Iran but that the Islamic republic's government is not yet ready for talks.

"We are also concerned by reports that hard-line vigilante groups have been involved in violent attacks on students with the apparent complicity of elements of the police force," Foley said.

Khatami urged the students Monday to "respect the law ... and avoid violence," Tehran radio reported.

Khamenei, a hard-liner who came under harsh condemnation by protesters, took a conciliatory line towards the students, quoted by IRNA as calling them "my children."

He condemned the hostel raid as "a bitter and unacceptable incident" that "pained his heart" and promised those responsible for it would be punished, IRNA reported.

"We must be tolerant and patient. Even if somebody insults me, I forgive that insult," he was quoted as saying.

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