

Honorable Rik Daems
President of the Parliamentary Assembly
Council of Europe, Avenue de l'Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France

January 25, 2021

Dear President,

We, the undersigned write to express our grave concerns on the situation of human rights in Iran. For four decades, the Iranian regime has been brutally oppressing its people and while they have been indiscriminate in stripping citizens of their every individual and social rights, women, youth and minorities have faced the most oppression.

In December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly condemned Iran for its gross violations of human rights for the 67th time. The European Union itself and human rights organisations like Amnesty International have continuously condemned Iran's human rights abuses over the years.

We are also deeply concerned over the continued use of torture and ongoing execution of young protesters who took to the streets in the November 2019 protests calling for freedom in Iran.

The domestic policy of repression and exporting terrorism and fundamentalism abroad have been the foundation of Iran's survival strategy for decades, with the latter having been supported by Iran's embassies in Europe.

On July 1, 2018, German police arrested Assadollah Assadi, a diplomat working at the Iranian embassy in Vienna, in a joint operation between police, the judiciary and security services from Germany, France, and Belgium. Investigations revealed that as a senior Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) agent, Assadi had plotted an attack on the annual gathering of Iran's organised opposition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) in Villepinte, Paris, attended by 100,000 people according to press reports. He wanted to implement this plan together with three other Ministry of Intelligence agents who had received asylum and later granted citizenship in Belgium (Amir Saadouni, his wife, Nasimeh Naami and Mehrdad Arefani). While Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the NCRI's president-elect was the target of the attack, the event was attended by international political figures, parliamentary delegations and personalities from Europe and around the world. If successful, it would have been the largest terrorist attack on European soil and essentially a massacre.

The Belgian National Security Service (VSSE) reported in February 2020 that, "The plans for the attack were developed in the name of Iran at the request of its leadership. Assadi didn't initiate the plans himself." The VSSE emphasized that Assadollah Assadi is an MOIS officer working under the diplomatic cover of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Vienna (Austria).

In another report, the VSSE stated that Assadi carried the explosive device on a commercial flight from Iran to Austria. He handed over the explosives to Amir Saadouni and Nasimeh Naami two days before the attack was to be carried out.

This undeniable evidence calls for a review of policy toward Iran in all areas. Europe must hold Javad Zarif accountable for his diplomat's terrorist act.

The Iranian regime seeks to blackmail Western countries by using dual nationals as pawns in exchange for its terrorists in foreign jails.

While condemning any policy of appeasement and concessions to the Iranian regime, we call for serious and effective measures, including:

- To condition any economic and trade relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran contingent on the improvement of the human rights situation in Iran and an end to the regime's terrorism on European soil.
- In accordance with a statement by the Council of the European Union dated April 29, 1997, agents and mercenaries of Iran's intelligence services with diplomatic, journalistic, and economic cover should be tried, punished, and expelled, and centers with a religious or cultural cover promoting terrorism and fundamentalism should be closed. Granting asylum and citizenship to MOIS agents and mercenaries should be a red line.

We thank you in advance for considering our letter and look forward to hearing from you on this critical matter.

Yours sincerely,

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Member of the national delegation at PACE

Petra BAYR, Member of Parliament – Austria

Member of the national delegation at PACE

Margreet de Boer, Member of Senate – Netherlands

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Member of Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons at PACE

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Second Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

C.C: Honorable Charles Michel, President of the European Council

Honorable Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of EU Commission