

Europe needs to be firm against Iran's state-sponsored terrorism

On November 27 and December 3, 2020, after nearly two and a half years of investigation, the Antwerp Court heard the case of four defendants, including an Iranian diplomat (Assadollah Assadi) for attempting to bomb a large rally of the NCRI (Iran's main opposition) in June 2018 in France's Villepinte. The verdict is expected on 22 January 2021. Regardless of the court final ruling, the scope of crime requires that the European Union reviews its approach to Iran.

Had the terrorist bombing plot in June 2018 at Villepinte succeeded, hundreds of innocents including European citizens and prominent political figures would have been killed in the event. Head of the VSSE, the Belgian State Security Service said, "The plan for the attack was conceived in the name of Iran and under its leadership."

In a report on April 10, 1997, the EU presidency said: "In the findings of the Superior Court of Justice in Berlin in the so-called Mykonos case, the involvement of the Iranian authorities at the highest level was established." On April 29, 1997, The EU Council reaffirmed that any progress in the EU's normal relationship with Iran can be made only if the Iranian authorities respect the norms of international law and refrain from acts of terrorism, including against Iranian citizens living abroad and cooperate in preventing such acts. As such, it decided to expel Iranians with intelligence and security functions. Twelve other countries which were not EU member states at that time, including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, also aligned themselves with this declaration.

23 years later, this time an acting diplomat of the Iranian regime was personally engaged, bringing the bomb from Iran via commercial airline and hand-delivered it to the would-be bombers. Thus, the undisputed evidence in the terrorist Villepinte case indicates that the involvement of Iranian authorities at the highest level not only has not come to an end, but has been upgraded into plans for mass murder. Expulsion of the Iranian ambassador and three diplomats from Albania and three other diplomats from France and the Netherlands following the terrorist acts in Albania (March 2018) and Denmark (October 2018) show that the role of Iranian embassies and diplomats in these acts has been clear to the relevant authorities.

Therefore, we are deeply concerned that the EU has failed to take adequate measures. The EU only designated two people and a section of the MOIS and continued business as usual which is unacceptable.

Europe's lack of proper action has emboldened the Iranian authorities in pursuit of their malign activities including terrorism in Europe, convincing them that they have impunity and whatever they do in Europe, even bombing a peaceful rally which could lead to hundreds of deaths, there will be no consequences. Europe has its own share of responsibility about the current situation.

Hereby, we the undersigned, call on Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, Mr. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mr. David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, as well as the leaders of the EU member states and non-EU states, to take the following actions:

1. Those who have ordered these terrorist acts and are among Iran's high-ranking authorities must be pursued and brought to justice. This is a necessary and deterrent action against the godfather of international terrorism in the world today.
2. Iranian foreign minister, Javad Zarif, must be held accountable for his diplomat's proven role in plotting to blow up a peaceful rally in Villepinte, France. In this respect, the activities of Iran's embassies, religious and cultural centers need to be scrutinized and the diplomatic relations with Iran need to be downgraded and return to normal diplomatic relations be subject to Iran packing-up its terrorist apparatus in Europe and giving assurances that it will never engage in terrorism in Europe again.

3. Designate Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC in their entirety as terrorist entities. Put their agents and mercenaries in European countries on trial, punish and expel them. Granting political asylum and citizenship to these mercenaries in European countries should be a red line. As shown by experience, these facilities are a tool in the hands of the regime for espionage and terrorism.
4. We also stress on the need for a firm approach to any attempt of blackmail, extortion, and hostage-taking by the Iranian regime which has already raised such threats through its arrested terrorist diplomat with the Belgian judiciary. Appeasing this regime is feeding the crocodile.
5. Finally, Iran has resumed enriching uranium to 20% purity in January 2021, yet another breach of the nuclear deal. This should be strongly condemned by European leaders. We will welcome European call for sanctions on Iran.

- **Mr. Giulio Terzi, Former Foreign Minister - Italy;**
- **Professor Horst Teltschik, Former Political advisor to Chancellor Helmut Kohl - Germany;**
- **Mr. Alain Vidalies, Former Minister delegate in charge of relations with parliament and Former Secretary of State for Transport and Fishing - France;**
- **Mr. Alain Vivien, Former Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs - France;**
- **Mr. Traian Băsescu, Former President of Romania;**
- **Mr. Petre Roman, Former Prime Minister - Romania;**
- **Mr. Eduard Kukan, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs - Slovakia;**
- **Mr. John Spellar, Former Minister of State for the Armed Forces and Former Shadow Minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs - United Kingdom;**
- **Lord Frank Judd, Former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth - United Kingdom;**
- **Mrs. Rasa Juknevičienė, Former Minister of Defence - Lithuania;**
- **Mr. Milan Zver, Former Minister of Education and Sports - Slovenia;**
- **Ms. Frédérique Ries, Former State Secretary for European Affairs and Foreign Affairs - Belgium;**
- **Mr. Kimmo Sasi, Former Minister of Trade - Finland;**
- **Mr. Eduard Solnes, Former Minister of Environment - Iceland;**
- **Mr. Eduard Lintner, Former State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Interior - Germany;**
- **The Right Honourable Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International development - United Kingdom;**
- **Mr. Otto Bernhardt, Former Parliamentary State Secretary - Germany;**
- **Mr. John Perry, Former Minister of State for Small Business - Ireland;**
- **Mr. Michał Kamiński, Former Secretary of State for Media Relations in Chancellery of the President - Poland;**