



Resolution 2570 (2024)¹

The situation in Iran and the protection of Iranian human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 1678 \(2009\)](#) “Situation in Iran” and reiterates its deep concern with regard to the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the country’s foreign policy.
2. For more than two years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the scene of mass anti-government protests that have spread across the country following the death of Jina Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died in the custody of Iran’s “morality police” on 16 September 2022. Her death led to an unprecedented protest movement, under the motto “Woman, Life, Freedom”, against the Islamic regime as a whole. Faced with this existential threat, the regime reacted with extreme brutality, using violence, torture, kidnappings and death sentences to silence the protesters’ legitimate demands.
3. The Assembly pays tribute to the women and men victims of the Iranian regime and expresses political support to and solidarity with civil society groups and courageous Iranians who stand up against repression and mobilise to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Iran.
4. Ever since the establishment of the “Islamic Republic” in 1979, the people of Iran have been denied basic human rights. Many opponents of the regime had to flee the country and were granted asylum and citizenship in Council of Europe member States. As a result, there are large Iranian communities in many European countries that maintain relations with relatives and friends in Iran.
5. Many Iranians living in exile in Europe, and European citizens of Iranian origin or descent, are opposed to the regime in Iran and support the protest movement against it. They are often faced with threats, intimidation, violence and abductions by the Iranian State structures of repression operating abroad, and some are even victims of assassinations attributable to these structures.
6. The Iranian regime’s persecution of dissenting civil society voices and human rights defenders, both in Iran and abroad, in particular in Council of Europe member States, is a serious human rights concern and a threat to the security of European societies. The Assembly reaffirms its support for all human rights defenders under the jurisdiction of member States and refers to its [Resolution 2225 \(2018\)](#) “Protecting human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States” and its [Resolution 2554 \(2024\)](#) “Protecting women human rights defenders in Europe”. It further refers to its [Resolution 2509 \(2023\)](#) “Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights”, as Iranian human rights defenders in Europe are also targeted. The Assembly invites its General Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and whistle-blowers to address the protection needs of Iranian human rights defenders in exile in Europe.
7. Iran is a direct neighbour of three Council of Europe member States: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Türkiye, and has a significant impact on regional stability and security in the South Caucasus.

1. *Assembly debate* on 1 October 2024 (27th sitting) (see [Doc. 16035](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Max Lucks; [Doc. 16048](#), opinion of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Mariia Mezentsseva-Fedorenko). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 1 October 2024 (27th sitting).



8. With its support to Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and the Assad regime in Syria, and its fierce stance against Israel and the denial of that country's right to exist, Iran is one of the most influential stakeholders in the Middle East, and is a major actor contributing to the destabilisation of the region.
9. As a provider of weapons to the Russian Federation that are used to reinforce its war of aggression against Ukraine, and given its political rapprochement with that country on bilateral and multilateral levels, as well as its strategic ambitions in the Mediterranean, Iran is a threat to European security.
10. The Assembly therefore believes that the situation in Iran and its domestic and foreign policy have a direct impact on, and pose a serious threat to, regional, European and global security.
11. European countries, however, have so far not designed a co-ordinated strategy to counter the Iranian policy to destabilise international order and its subversive activities that threaten European democracies, including as regards the protection of Iranian communities in Europe.
12. The Assembly believes that the Council of Europe, as the key European institution protecting and promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, should play a significant role in guiding and supporting its member States when it comes to developing co-ordinated human rights-based relations with Iran.
13. The Assembly therefore calls upon governments and parliaments of member and observer States of the Council of Europe, as well as parliaments enjoying observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly, to raise awareness of the human rights situation in Iran and to consider, possibly in consultation with Iranian communities in Europe, ways to strengthen solidarity with and support to Iranian civil society organisations, human rights defenders and individuals who stand up to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Iran. The Assembly invites them, *inter alia*, to:
 - 13.1. send, at all levels, a stronger message of political support to and solidarity with Iranians standing up for democracy and human rights;
 - 13.2. introduce and enforce targeted sanctions against Iran's power elite, namely individuals and companies linked to the regime;
 - 13.3. ensure accountability under international law, by introducing targeted sanctions against, and initiating international legal prosecution of, Iranian human rights violators, including those responsible for pervasive institutional discrimination leading to the elimination of the rights of women and girls in Iran, and for the persecution of and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people;
 - 13.4. ensure access to international protection for all those Iranians who manage to escape and cannot return to their country because of fear of persecution, including human rights defenders;
 - 13.5. dispatch independent observers, including the staff of their embassies, to attend the trials of protesters who are detained;
 - 13.6. provide Iranian citizens with free internet access during the regime's internet blackouts during protests, and facilitate access to internet via virtual private networks (VPNs);
 - 13.7. promote international exchanges with Iranian civil society and its constituent women's rights, youth, student and labour movements and consider establishing a "Vienna process-type dialogue" with all relevant human rights interlocutors in Iran and abroad;
 - 13.8. set up targeted assistance, such as support programmes, to ensure the safety of Iranian human rights defenders at risk, including early warning mechanisms;
 - 13.9. protect Iranian human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States from acts of intimidation, harassment and violence, and provide support to them as needed.
14. The Assembly urges the governments and other public authorities and relevant agencies of member States to introduce a coherent and co-ordinated policy to ensure the protection of and the respect for fundamental rights of Iranians who are citizens of, refugees in or under the jurisdiction of Council of Europe member States, including dual-nationals who are held as hostages and used as instruments for pressure, against activities of the Iranian special services. Security measures for the Iranian diaspora in Europe and Iranian human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States, in particular the key opposition figures, must be improved, including in terms of digital and physical security; intelligence gathering on Iran's proxy groups must be strengthened.

15. The Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States that are Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to consider proposing an amendment to that statute aimed at including the crime of “gender apartheid”, which is the institutionalisation of gender-based discrimination and exclusion of women and girls from all spheres of society, and “religious apartheid”, which is the institutionalised discrimination and exclusion of individuals from all spheres of society based on their religious beliefs or ethno-religious identity.

16. The Assembly further calls upon governments and other relevant authorities of Council of Europe member States to draw up a coherent and co-ordinated policy in respect of Iran that should be based on the following principles:

16.1. an active and comprehensive diplomatic engagement in respect of Iran should not be limited to the nuclear deal and should address all issues in a broad and comprehensive manner, and the human rights situation must be made a central topic of discussion;

16.2. the option of downgrading diplomatic and trade relations should be on the table;

16.3. an active feminist foreign policy in relation to Iran, to make the situation of women and girls in Iran a foreign policy priority, which can provide an enabling framework to support Iranian women’s rights defenders;

16.4. Europe should develop its own deterrence capacity and be ready to impose costs on Iran;

16.5. sanctions should be imposed and enforced to specifically target Iran’s power elite;

16.6. in case of renewal of the nuclear deal, the advantages and the collateral damage should be considered;

16.7. active transatlantic co-ordination is needed;

16.8. there should be no diplomatic deals which are harmful to civil society;

16.9. engagement with Iranian citizens should be strengthened;

16.10. dialogue with civil society groups should be developed along with efforts to overcome the fragmentation of the opposition, possibly by facilitating the setting-up of a co-ordination platform for the Iranian opposition abroad;

16.11. a joint strategy should be established among the member and observer States of the Council of Europe to push for the release of citizens held as hostages;

16.12. opposition and democratic forces from Iran should be brought together and their voices heard;

16.13. a mechanism to investigate and register alleged human rights violations in Iran should be established as a complementary tool to the fact-finding mission of the United Nations Human Rights Council;

16.14. the option of qualifying the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and possibly other entities, as terrorist organisations should be considered.