



Iran: MEPs keen to support Iranian civil society

MEPs underlined their wish to support Iranian civil society at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Delegation for relations with Iran on Wednesday. The official spokesman abroad of Mr Moussavi, the Iranian film-maker Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who was invited to address the MEPs, called on the EU to suspend recognition of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The controversial victory of the outgoing president and the repression of protests following the announcement of the presidential election results were the main concern of MEPs.

Richard Howitt (PASD, UK) mentioned the fate of the young French teacher Clotilde Reiss and nine staff members of the British Embassy who are in prison and could face a trial.

Support for civil society

Several MEPs, including Michael Gahler (EPP, DE), Ria Oomen-Ruijten (EPP, NL) and Hélène Flautre (Greens/EFA, FR), argued that support must be given to civil society in Iran. This could mean using the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), said MEPs.

Hélène Flautre, the outgoing chair of the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights, said "we are supporting freedom against repression, not one candidate against another". She also urged the Council to clarify its position on Iran.

Call to suspend recognition of the new regime

Iranian film-maker Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who is the official spokesman abroad of Mr Mousavi, called on "the peoples of the world not to recognise Mahmoud Ahmadinejad officially as the president of Iran, just as the western powers have not accepted the coup d'état in Honduras".

The outgoing chair of the EP Foreign Affairs Committee, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP, PL) voiced disappointment at the absence from the meeting of any Iranian government representatives, who had been invited to take part.

"I personally met the Iranian ambassador yesterday", said Mr Saryusz-Wolski. He added that Parliament could not "remain silent and inactive, in the face of this grave and disturbing situation where the elections have been followed by massive human rights violations and persecution of civil society and the democratic opposition".

Parliament may debate a resolution on the situation in Iran on Wednesday next week in Strasbourg.

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