

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

AD-HOC DELEGATION TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Report of the visit of the Ad-hoc Delegation of the European Parliament to the Islamic Republic of Iran 16- 21 July 2002

Submitted by Mr Elmar Brok, Chairman of the Committee and head of the Ad hoc
delegation

1. Introduction

On 13 December 2001 the European Parliament held a detailed debate on the basis of a report by its Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy (A5-0418/2001; Rapporteur: Michael Gahler) on EU relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and recommended, in the accompanying resolution, that an ad hoc delegation be sent to Tehran in order to gain an independent view of the political situation there, and also to examine opportunities for the development of parliamentary relations between the European Parliament and the Iranian Parliament (Majlis).

The delegation's visit took place from 16 to 21 July 2002 at the invitation of the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Security of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Dr Mohssen Mirdamadi Najafabadi, and on the basis of a decision of the Conference of Presidents of 11 April 2002.

The head of the delegation was Mr Elmar Brok, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy; the other delegation members were Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, 1st vice-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr Michael Gahler, rapporteur on relations with Iran of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr Glyn Ford and Mr Demetrio Volcic, members of the Foreign Affairs Committee (see Annex 1).

2. Programme (see Annex 2)

The programme included political discussions in the Iranian Parliament, with the delegation's host Mr Mirdamadi in his capacity as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, with a group of women MPs, and with the Speaker of the Majlis, Mr Mahdi Karroubi.

From the government the delegation held discussions with the Foreign Minister, Mr Kamaal Kharrazzi and with the State President Mohammed Khatami.

From the religious leadership, the delegation met Ayatollah Taskiri.

The delegation also held discussions with representatives of the journalists' association, the state Narcotics Control authority and the Iranian environmental office, and visited a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts.

In Shiraz, southern Iran, the delegation met representatives of Fars Province and visited an Iraqi refugee camp managed by the AMAR International Charitable Foundation, whose President is Baroness Emma Nicholson.

Briefings and debriefings took place in Tehran at the beginning and end of the visit with the EU ambassadors, under the Presidency of the Danish Ambassador, Mr Reimers.

3. Briefing with the EU ambassadors

The ambassadors informed the delegation that Mr Gahler's report of December 2001 had given rise to some irritation in Iran in view of its criticisms of the regime and of the human rights situation, but that on the other hand there was much interest in a trade and cooperation agreement with the EU. What the EU now needed to do, following the issuing of the negotiating mandate on 17 June, was to set up the negotiations on three parallel negotiating pillars, which should then be linked together:

- the trade and cooperation agreement, including a human rights clause and a clause on illegal immigration;
- EU-Iran political dialogue, covering topics such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drugs, the Middle East and Afghanistan;
- cooperation in the battle against terrorism.

The ambassadors recommended that the delegation investigate their interlocutors' willingness to enter into a dialogue on the following questions: human rights, weapons of mass destruction, Middle East and terrorism.

The Ambassadors also referred to the various centres of power within the system: on the one hand the Parliament, the Government and the State President, and on the other the power structure of the religious leadership, the army, the justice system, the Council of Guardians and the Council of Experts, which were not strictly separated but were interwoven by personal and family relationships.

In other words, the messages sent in discussions in the Parliament would certainly also be heard within the power structure of the 'Nomenklatura'.

There was approval of the key question formulated by Mr Gahler: How is it possible to support reforming forces without playing into the hands of the traditionalists?

A majority of the ambassadors considered that engagement was better than confrontation and that the dialogue needed to be carried on in a critical and constructive manner. More

transparency needed to be demanded of the regime. Religion played an important role, but for the first time the possibility of separating religion and state would also be discussed.

The estimated duration of the negotiations on the trade and cooperation agreement was of the order of 5-6 years.

4. The discussions

4.1 Dr. Mohssen Mirdamadi, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Iranian Parliament (17 July)

Mr Mirdamadi stressed the Parliament's support for the development of civil society and the democratisation of the country with strict application of the rule of law. This meant it gave its full support to President Khatami's policy, but this development plan required patience, and each step had to be taken with caution and foresight. On Iranian foreign policy, the country was striving to reduce tension in the region and develop a good relationship with neighbouring countries. Iran was paying particular attention to Afghanistan and to strengthening the central government there, since its own national security was closely linked to that of Afghanistan.

Mr Mirdamadi regretted that the international community had not listened to Iran's early warnings about the Taliban regime.

However, the highest priority for Iranian foreign policy was the development of relations with the EU, which must not be confined to government level but must also be extended to parliamentary relations. The fact that a negotiating mandate had been issued for a trade and cooperation agreement between Iran and the EU, was a matter of great satisfaction.

Mr Brok, head of the delegation, stressed the important role of the Iranian Parliament in the country's institutional structure and in its democratisation. Iran played an important role in the region, and he asked Mr Mirdamadi for his assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, particularly in the light of the ethnic balance in the power structure of the Afghan government and the role of the 'warlords' in the regions outside Kabul. Next he stressed the important role which Iran could play in the Middle Eastern conflict, in which Europeans and Iranians saw the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from different vantage points, but were nonetheless seeking for a solution of the same problem. It was therefore necessary to examine how the EU and Iran could strengthen their relations in a multi-polar world.

Regarding the negotiating mandate for a trade and cooperation agreement, Mr Brok recalled that the result of the negotiation process would be subject to the approval of the European Parliament, and that parliamentary dialogue at an early point was therefore important.

Mr Mirdamadi said the situation in Afghanistan was immensely complex, and highlighted in particular the country's enormous narcotics production as a major problem both for Iran and for Europe.

This presented a challenge to the international community to take joint action.

Very few Afghan refugees had returned to their country; in any case there was already close cooperation with the EU institutions on the treatment of refugees.

After Mr Mirdamadi had expressed once again his satisfaction at the issue of the EU mandate, Mr Brok expressed the European Parliament's interest in inter-parliamentary relations with the Majlis. Baroness Nicholson said she hoped that within the Majlis, which is a consultative assembly, a similar process might take place as in the European Parliament in the past, namely that it might acquire increasing rights and powers. She also referred to Iran's relations with its neighbours Afghanistan and Iraq, and raised the question why there was only one woman in the Afghan government.

Mr Mirdamadi said that whereas in Iran 60% of all students were female, in Afghanistan the educational level of women was very low, and that a cultural process needed to take place in order to establish more women in government posts in Afghanistan.

On Iraq, it was necessary to come to terms with one's neighbours with whom one lived side by side. The pressure of external sanctions affected only the people and not the government, and a military intervention would have serious consequences for the region. Furthermore, military pressure would bring still more refugees into Iran.

Mr Gahler referred once again to the potential role which Iran could play in the Middle East conflict, and stressed that mere passive waiting was not enough for as important a country as Iran. Instead, the country must take a constructive part in the peace negotiations of the international community.

Mr Mirdamadi noted that Iran had given a positive assessment of the EU's role in the resolution of the Middle East conflict, and recalled the EU's Venice declaration of 1980.

The important thing for Iran was to take part in the decision-making process and not only to approve results.

The EU's role in the debate with the Arab states ought to be stepped up, but this was rejected by Israel.

4.2. Mr Mahdi Karroubi, Chairman of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (20 July)

Mr Brok welcomed the beginning of cooperation between the European Parliament and the Majlis, and proposed a return visit of a delegation of the Iranian Parliament to Brussels or Strasbourg.

Mr Karroubi recalled the wealth of Iran's culture and history, he welcomed the dialogue which had been begun, and he asked for his best wishes to be passed on to Mr Cox, President of the European Parliament together with an invitation to visit Iran. He did not pretend that there were no shortcomings or problems in his country, but attempts were being made to resolve these in a pragmatic manner, and to develop a new religious democracy, on the basis of the country's own culture and history. This differentiated from democracies in Europe, and was being represented in a distorted manner by Iranian opposition groups in Western Europe.

Mr Brok promised to pass on Mr Karroubi's greetings to Mr Cox.

Mr Gahler noted that many of the Parliament's legislative proposals had been blocked by the Council of Guardians, and wondered whether the Parliament was intending to re-table these rejected legal initiatives a year later.

Mr Karroubi said that, in disputes between the Parliament and the Council of Guardians, the 'Expedience Council' had to decide; this was a comparable practice to that used in conciliation procedures in other countries.

Regarding the recently published criticism of the present system by Ayatollah Taheri, which Mr Gahler quoted, Mr Karroubi said that while he agreed with the points of criticism in principle, he felt the choice of words and the form of the statements were inappropriate.

Mr Volcic countered that Iran had the option of changing its constitution.

Mr Karroubi agreed that, apart from the Koran, everything could be changed, and indeed 10 years after the revolution parts of the constitution had already been changed. A continuous process of elections had been introduced. It was important, however, in order to safeguard the process of constitutional change, to find concrete solutions to the problem of high unemployment.

4.3 Dr Kamaal Kharrazzi, Foreign Minister (20 July)

At the start of the discussion, Mr Brok expressed the European Parliament's concerns about the human rights situation in Iran.

Mr Kharrazzi admitted that his government too had concerns on this issue, but what was important was how one dealt with them and how one reacted to them. No country in the world could claim to be free of human rights violations. The important thing was to be aware of the cultural background and the cultural standards in question so as to be able to interpret correctly the human rights situation in a given country.

In other countries the development of democracy had taken centuries. The important thing was to agree on the objectives and principles of a system and on how the significant of humanity and the role of the citizen was assessed.

In seeking to assess Iran objectively it was necessary to make a comparison with the other countries in the region.

The dialogue approach also needed to apply to the discussion of human rights as to other matters, and contacts between representatives of the Iranian legal system and constitutional lawyers of the EU could be one helpful contribution to this end.

However, he was happy that a new path was now being trodden of cooperation and dialogue between the EU and Iran.

Mr Gahler noted the very courageous initiatives taken by the Iranian Parliament; as an MEP he would give his full support to these constitutional elements of the Iranian system.

On the other hand there were concrete cases of human rights violations to which he could not avoid referring, such as the case of the Mohammadi brothers, or the quest of the German embassy interpreter Mr Said. It was not the structures and representatives elected by the people which were responsible for such cases, but precisely the structures which had not been elected.

Iranian society possessed very vital human resources. The government must use these properly.¹

Mr Kharrazzi pointed out that one should not punish a society which was seeking to democratise itself; however, even the EU had done this in the past.

‘If there is an evolving society, this society has to be rewarded’, not punished by external intervention, he said. ‘You want to support us, but your support is perceived as intervention.’ ‘Your intentions may be good, but the reaction in our country may be negative.’

Mr Volcic asked what role religious thinking played in everyday life, and how the two systems of religion and democracy were linked in the Islamic Republic.

Mr Kharrazzi considered that there was no contradiction between the values of Islam and those of democracy. There were differing views about the respective legal systems, for example, but neither system could claim superiority, over the other. Certain principles of human rights needed to be generally acknowledged and respected. If there were differences, they would be differences of interpretation.

However, different systems could hold a dialogue, and could arrange cultural exchanges, whether at the level of lawyers, politicians or academics.

Baroness Nicholson asked about Iran’s policy towards Iraq. Were there any signs of steps being taken in Iraq towards a regime change in the hope of a better existence for people in Iraq?

Mr Kharrazzi said the political situation in Iraq was very complicated. A change within Iraq could only come from within. Little could be achieved from outside, particularly not on a unilateral basis. It would be different if an initiative were to come from the UN Security Council. Military operations would at any rate be no solution; people in the region would not understand this. However, as one of Iraq's neighbouring states, Iran had the right to oppose the current regime in Iraq and to work towards a regime change.

Mr Brok asked about Iran’s position on the Middle East conflict and the fight against terrorism.

Mr Kharrazzi took it as understood that all countries had the duty to work towards a lasting peace in the Middle East. However, in the past it was not the aggressor (Israel) but the victim (the Palestinians) who had been condemned. Accordingly the Palestinians had the right to put up resistance to the aggressor.

The USA was not neutral in this conflict, because it unilaterally supported Israel. On the other hand, the EU had tried to reduce the conflict and exert pressure on Israel, in order to achieve a

¹ Referring to the conversation with Mr Kharrazzi, Mr Brok forwarded on 30 July, via the Iranian ambassador in Brussels, a list of further human rights cases.

withdrawal from the occupied territories. The situation was very dangerous, but Iran was willing to cooperate with the EU in this very important international matter.

Mr Brok insisted that the debate over who was in the right or in the wrong in this conflict must be brought to an end, for it would lead nowhere. Iran too must recognise the right of the state of Israel to exist.

Mr Kharrazzi saw the cause of the conflict as being the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank; Israel must withdraw its military and its settlements from those areas.

Mr Gahler said that it was an abuse of religion if Palestinian suicide terrorists were carrying out attacks on Israeli civilians in the name of Islam. This amounted to the ideological deception of a generation of young people, when everyone knew that any peace settlement would eventually lead to a Palestinian state and an Israeli state coexisting with each other within secure borders.

Mr Kharrazzi pointed to the desperation and hopelessness of many young Palestinians, and to the basic cause of the conflict: the Israeli occupation.

Mr Brok raised the issue of the 1967 or pre-1967 borders. The position of the Arab states was that Israel must withdraw behind its 1967 borders.

Mr Kharrazzi explained that the ideal solution eventually would be a state in which Muslims, Christians and Jews could live together and the Palestinian refugees could return home. In the mean time, however, Iran could live with the position of the Arab states which was based on the existence of two states and the withdrawal of Israel to its 1967 borders. 'We don't mind – we don't oppose', he said.

On the matter of the Palestinian refugees, Mr Brok said that the EU was striving for a just solution, that there was no realistic chance of their return to their original homeland, but that the EU might commit itself financially to an appropriate resettlement in other Arab countries.

In reply to Mr Kharrazzi's objection that the refugees *wanted* to return to their country of origin, Mr Brok said that after the Second World War Germany had renounced the right, in spite of 14 million German refugees, to the restoration of its former territory in order to make a peaceful post-war settlement and a reconciliation between peoples possible.

Mr Kharrazzi replied that this was ultimately a decision for the people themselves. Baroness Nicholson asked in particular about human rights in the Arab countries and the role of women in Saudi Arabia.

Mr Kharrazzi stressed that Iran was working towards a modern interpretation of Islam and was seeking to link Islamic values and democracy together.

This included promoting the role of women in society and, in this connection, carrying out a dialogue within Islam between various Arab states. The Taliban and their medieval regime in Afghanistan had been imported into the country from outside.

Mr Brok said that seminars might be held between the European Parliament and the Iranian Parliament on various topics in order to further the dialogue. He invited Mr Kharrazzi to an exchange of views with the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3.4. State President Dr Mohammad Khatami (18 July)

President Khatami recalled the various historical stages of painful confrontation between the Western and Islamic worlds and stressed that the time for dialogue had now come and that Iran wanted to play a central role in this dialogue.

In the past Iran had suffered under despotism and colonialism, and the aspiration towards freedom was part of human nature. Iran had always striven towards acquiring freedom and democracy, and to overcoming under-development. The country's culture was marked by religion, and a development leading towards greater freedom and democracy was now being sought. Democracy was a process: it had taken Europe 300 years before democracy was incorporated in the constitutions of the Western states. We should therefore not be in a hurry when looking at other countries which had lived long under a dictatorship. Furthermore, it needed to be remembered that there was no one single formula for freedom and democracy.

Democracy in Iran would be based on Islam and on human rights. No-one wanted war and terrorism, but everyone was striving towards peace and justice for all people in the world.

This was a common point of unity, and the dialogue should take place between the elected parliaments.

Mr Brok said that President Khatami embodied a great hope for many people, not only in his own country, and that a tolerant viewpoint should be used in encounters with different cultures. Europe too had suffered in its history from many mistakes, and had had to go a long way to find the tolerance which was necessary for democracy and the rule of law. Iran was heading in the right direction.

The European Parliament was keen to see a dialogue on matters of mutual interest, e.g. combating the narcotics trade, combating international terrorism or the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The most important item on the common agenda should be a solution to the Middle East conflict. After a thousand years of fighting over Palestine it needed to be recognised that it was the homeland of three religions: of Jews, Muslims and Christians, all of whom had the same God. With an open mind, without prejudices, it was possible to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

President Khatami approved the proposed framework for a future exchange of views based on the three principles of 'freedom, human rights and self-determination'. To achieve these objectives, neither side should impose its own criteria on the other – this could lead to Taliban-style developments. If there were to be too much freedom in Iran, this could be misused by certain groups. Iran was having to deal with a population explosion, and each year it had to create 1 million new jobs. The country therefore needed foreign investment, capital, science and technology. In order to maintain peace in Iranian society and to promote its development, the government's first priority must be to create jobs.

On the Middle East Mr Khatami said that Iran was not intervening in the conflict, but was providing moral support. The future of the Palestinians would be determined from within, not from outside; but it needed to be recognised that there could be no real peace as long as the

question of Palestinian refugees had not been resolved. He urged Europe to become still more active in the region.

4.5 Ayatollah Taskiri (20 July)

(The meeting with Ayatollah Taskiri was included as an extra item in the Tehran programme at the request of the delegation, and with the help of Baroness Nicholson's contacts)

Ayatollah Taskiri began the meeting by saying that cooperation between the West and Iran could contribute to peace in the world. Respect for human rights was a major concern for Iran and the country was worried about human rights violations against Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mr Brok asked about the dual power structure in Iran and noted: 'We must understand your way of thinking if we are to understand this country.'

Ayatollah Taskiri noted that there were three levels of power in the state: the State President at the head of the executive, the Speaker of Parliament at the head of the legislature and the Supreme Judge at the head of the Judiciary, with the Supreme Leader – elected by the Council of Experts, which in turn was elected by the people – as a kind of coordinator over all of them.

The Supreme Judge was appointed by the Leader, the Members of Parliament were elected, and the Ministers had to face a vote of confidence.

Baroness Nicholson asked about the differences in democratic practice in Iran and Saudi Arabia, and what changes had taken place since 11 September 2001.

Ayatollah Taskiri noted that all Arab countries had condemned the 11 September attacks and said that international terrorism had to be combatted by the international community.

On Saudi Arabia, he said that Islam imposed certain general rules, for example on the role of the family, but that there were differences in the interpretation of these rules in various countries; in that respect, Saudi Arabia was not really an Islamic country.

Mr Volcic asked whether any legitimacy was conferred on suicide bombers by Islam.

Ayatollah Taskiri replied that the actions of these young people were not covered by the principles of Islam, but these oppressed and desperate young people were concerned to regain their honour and their dignity.

Mr Gahler asked whether the inner circle of clerics was aware of people's wishes, and what his position was on the recent statements by Ayatollah Taheri in Isfahan.

Ayatollah Taskiri said that the Council of Experts was elected by the people and sought to implement the acts of the Leader. He himself was responsible for the area of research. Of course there were shortcomings and economic crime in society. In addition, the 4 million refugees were a heavy burden for the economy of the country, and Iran was the largest transit country for drugs on the way to Europe.

Baroness Nicholson noted the financial aid given by the EU to the Palestinian authority and called on the Ayatollah to acknowledge that the young Palestinians needed to be told that suicide attacks had nothing to do with the values of Islam.

Ayatollah Taskiri stressed that the occupation of the Palestinian territories was the real cause of the conflict and of the 2nd Intifada. This cause needed to be removed, distinguishing between terrorist actions on the one hand and resistance to occupation on the other.

Mr Brok stressed that the past had to be forgotten and a new beginning made. Everyone had to try to exert a positive influence in their own sphere. Many people had confidence in Iran. What was at stake was the security of two future states – Israel and Palestine – and the Middle East conflict also had an important role to play in bilateral relations between the EU and Iran.

The European Parliament would accord significant financial aid annually to the Palestinian Authority. Accordingly Iran should recognise the existence of Israel within secure borders. Only in this way could peace be created by joint action.

Ayatollah Taskiri agreed that peace in the Middle East could not be created either by the USA or the EU alone, but required cooperation by the international community.

4.6 Other meetings

The other meetings may be summed up as follows:

a. Women's group in Parliament

The role of women in Iran had been considerably enhanced. 60% of students were female, there was considerable commitment by women in NGOs in the fields of environment and education. Many candidates in the local elections were women. The objective of having one or two women in ministerial posts had not been achieved, but there were many women MPs. The role of women in Iranian society was much more significant than in neighbouring countries. On the stoning of women, it was said that this practice had existed but had now been halted.

b. Journalists' association

The main concern of the journalists was the legal proceedings against those working on reformist papers. These were repeatedly banned, to appear again under new names: everyone knew who was behind them. Since 1999, some 30 journalists had been arrested and 4 were currently in prison. This 'game' of banning, arrests and reappearance under a new name could not go on for ever, and hopefully the option of a further opening of society would prevail.

In Iran people had got used to judging developments in a historical perspective: in other words, democracy would not happen overnight after 2000 years of dictatorship. The reformers' main fear was of a return to dictatorship, as at the time of the revolution. Their hope lay in the fact that the views of young people were formed in the time following the revolution, and hopefully a peaceful development could come about without social upheavals. The political discourse in Iran took place chiefly through editorials in the reformist papers.

Investigative journalism as it was known in the West was difficult in the light of internal circumstances. This was only possible in an independent legal system; Iran, however, was still in a pre-democratic phase.

c. Narcotics Control authority

The headquarters of the Iranian narcotics control authority appeared very professional. 30% of the drug seizures in the world take place in Iran. The main current of the drugs trade travels via the Black Sea region, and hence not through the Balkans as before, but via Northern Europe. It had not been possible to pinpoint any organised cooperation between the drug barons in Afghanistan and Colombia. Three police cooperation meetings had taken place so far in the field of drugs between Iran and the EU. The most recent meeting had been about the situation in Afghanistan, where the assessments of the EU and Iranian experts largely coincided.

The EU could provide Iran with more technical material for combating drugs, though some Member States had reservations about this on the grounds of 'dual use' possibilities.

d. Human rights commission

The human rights commission is an NGO. Its role and scope for influence, however, are still unclear even after its discussion with the delegation. The commission's representatives admitted that its working conditions were very hard in a country which was in a transitional phase and where the principles of religion had to be respected.

Replying to the question what it could do for journalists in prison, the commission said that the state authorities did not respect human rights and that public opinion was still too weak to exert any pressure on them. The commission had protested, but without success.

The commission's representatives noted that at their election six members of the Council of Guardians had obtained in practice only 39 of the 239 votes in parliament; nevertheless it was still better to seek for an evolutionary change to the system than to make a radical break.

The commission felt that the important thing was to build up initially more transparency and to create more networks of human rights activists in the country.

e. Environmental authority

The European Parliament delegation was very impressed by the professional expertise of the representatives of the environmental authority and its vice-president, Mrs Ma'soumeh Ebtekar, who had taken a decisive role as a member of the Group of 77 in the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, and had been at the forefront of the Johannesburg discussions with EU Commissioner Wallström.

Environmental protection had a solid basis in Article 50 of the Iranian constitution, and the country was concerned, in addition to the need to create 700 000 new jobs annually, not to neglect the protection of its own environment.

It should be noted that the city of Tehran appears very clean, and that attempts have been made in several places to create new green spaces.

5. Conclusions and delegation's recommendations

Iran is a country on the move, which is trying to create an 'Islamic democracy' as part of an ongoing process, and is seeking to find a way out of its isolation and establish relations with the EU.

In many respects the country is more liberal than other Arab states, particularly as regards the role of women, and especially in the field of education.

There are strong democratic features which are manifested principally in the Parliament and a number of critical press media. The latter are continually coming up against the boundaries set by the judiciary and the Nomenklatura. More than 40 papers and periodicals have been banned in the past 2 ½ years. Three days after the delegation's departure from Tehran, its host, the committee chairman Mr Mirdamadi, was condemned to 6 months' imprisonment in his capacity as editor of the paper 'Noruz'.¹

Iran is host to 4 million refugees, 2 million of them from Afghanistan, participates in international cooperation to combat the drugs trade, and, since 11 September 2001, has joined the ranks of the international coalition against terrorism. Iran complains that this is not sufficiently recognised.

The human rights situation in Iran remains unacceptable, the death penalty by stoning remains on the statute books and the judiciary acts as the long arm of the religious traditionalists. However, there is a willingness to speak about human rights.

In the light of all this, the Ad hoc delegation recommends that a critical dialogue be continued with Iran at parliamentary level, and proposes:

1. The organisation of a hearing on the state of human rights in Iran, in the context of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy, as a parliamentary contribution to the EU-Iran human rights dialogue.²
2. Recommendation to DG IV (Research) to hold a seminar, perhaps in cooperation with the European University Institute in Florence, with constitutional lawyers from the EU Member States and Iran on the role of religion and state in the context of western democracies and Islamic democracy.
3. Invitation to the Iranian foreign minister Mr Kharrazzi to speak to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
4. Recommendation to President Cox to invite a delegation from the Iranian Parliament to a return meeting in Brussels,

¹ See letter by Mr Cox, President of the European Parliament, to Mr Kharroubi, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Annex 3.

² See letter from Mr Cox to Mr Paulo Casaca, MPE, of 25 September 2002, Annex 4.

5. Recommendation to President Cox, to receive State President Khatami – perhaps in the context of the Conference of Presidents, if he should visit Belgium and request a meeting with the heads of the EU institutions.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



**Ad-hoc Delegation to the Islamic Republic of Iran
16 - 21 July 2002**

Elmar BROK,	Head of Delegation Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy	(EPP-ED)	Germany
Baroness NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE	Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy WHO special envoy for Eastern-Mediterranean region	(ELDR)	United Kingdom
Michael GAHLER	Rapporteur for the relations to Iran Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and and Defence Policy	(EPP-ED)	Germany
Glyn FORD	Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and and Defence Policy	(PES)	United Kingdom
Demetrio VOLCIC	Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and and Defence Policy	(PES)	Italy

EPP-ED = Group of the European People's Party and European Democrats

PES = Group of the Party of European Socialists

ELDR = Group of the European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party

Accompanying Staff:

Norbert GRESCH	Deputy Head of Division Secretariat Foreign Affairs Committee
Hans-Hermann KRAUS	Principal Administrator Secretariat Interparliamentary Delegations

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AD-HOC DELEGATION TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

16-21 July 2002
TEHRAN/SHIRAZ

PROGRAMME

Tuesday 16 July

Arrival in Tehran

Individual arrivals in Tehran :
Hotel ESTEGHLAL
Crossroads of Vali-e-Asr & Chamran Exp. way
Tehran 19395, Iran
Tel: +98 (21) 2040011-15, 2040021-25
Fax: +98 (21) 2047041
e-mail : sales@esteghlalhotel.com

Wednesday 17 July

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| 08.30 | Bilateral Breakfast Meetings with the EU-Ambassadors |
| 09.00 | Transfer from Hotel to meeting place
(transports assured by the Protocol service of the Iranian Parliament) |
| 09.30 | Meeting with H.E. Dr. Mohssen Mirdamadi Najafabadi, Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy of the Islamic Consultative Assembly |
| 11.00 | Meeting with the Ambassadors of the EU |
| 13.00 | Lunch |
| 15.30 | Meeting with the Women's Fraction of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Parliament |

21.00 Official dinner hosted by H.E. Dr. Mohssen Mirdamadi Najafabadi, Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy of the Islamic Consultative Assembly

Thursday 18 July

08.00 Leave hotel for the Society of Journalist Hqs.

08.30 Meeting with the members of the Society of Journalists

10.00 Meeting with Mr Hashemi, Secretary General of the Narcotics Control Headquarters

11.00 Visit of the Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Centre

12.15 Meeting with H.E. Dr. seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

15.15 Departure from Hotel to Airport

16.00 Flight to Shiraz

17.25 Arrival at Shiraz Airport

17.40 Departure for Persepolis

19.00 - 20.00 Visiting Persepolis

20.00 - 21.00 Participate in Light & Sound play in Persepolis

22.30 Reception by the Deputy Governor General of FARS Province, Mr Mohammed Ahmadi

Hotel HOMA SHIRAZ

Meshkinfam St., PO.Box: 71455/364 Shiraz 71455- Iran

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Friday 19 July

08.00 Departure from Hotel for Sarvestan

09.00 - 12.00 Visit of Shahid Beheshti Camp for Iraq Refugees

12.00 Going back to Shiraz

16.30 - 17.30 Visit of the Tombs of Hafez and Sa'adi
18.40 Departure from Shiraz Airport (IR 428) to Tehran
20.00 Arrival in Tehran and transfer to Hotel ESTEGHLAL

Saturday 20 July

09.00 Leave Hotel for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building
09.30 Meeting with Dr. Kamaal Kharrazi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran
10.30 Departure for the Hotel
13.00 Departure for the Islamic Human Rights Commission
13.30 Meeting with Mr Ziaeefar, Secretary General of the Islamic Human Rights Commission
14.30 Meeting with Ayatollah Taskiri
15.45 Meeting with H.E. Mr Mahdi Karroubi, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
16.45 Meeting with H.E. Dr. M. Mirdamadi (Second Round)
17.00 Joint Press Conference Mirdamadi/Brok
18.00 Meeting with H.E. Mrs Ma'soumeh Ebtekar, Vice-President & Head of the Environment Organisation
21.00 Reception by the Danish Embassy in Tehran

Sunday 21 July

07.30 Departure for the Mehrabaad Airport
09.15 Departure from the Airport

Pat Cox
President of the European Parliament

H.E. Mahdi Karroubi
Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
Islamic Republic of Iran
Tehran

309755 13. IX 2002

Mr Speaker,

It is with great concern that I have learned of the prison sentence handed down to Mr. Moshem Mirdamadi, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of your Assembly.

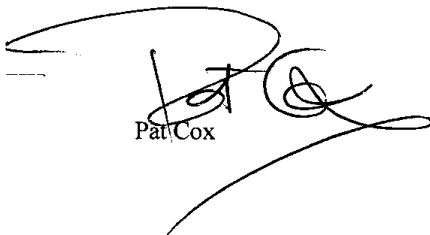
Although it has not yet been executed and the charges do not concern Mr Mirdamadi's activities as parliamentarian but as chief editor of the newspaper "Noruz", the European Parliament considers the sentence to be a serious violation of the right to freedom of expression and an attack against freely-elected parliamentarians.

I would appeal to you, therefore, as Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, to exert your influence to bring about a revision of this sentence.

I would like to assure you that the European Parliament attaches great importance to the continuation of the dialogue between our two Parliaments which began successfully during the visit of our ad hoc delegation to Tehran from 16-21 July 2002, and with the substantive exchange of views held with you.

However, progress in the areas of human rights and fundamental democratic values is a necessary condition for any future contractual relations between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, in the end, will have to be ratified by the European Parliament.

Yours sincerely,



Pat Cox

Pat Cox
President of the European Parliament

Mr Paulo Casaca
Member of the European Parliament
ASP - 15 G 154
B-1047 Brussels

25.SEP 2002 20462C

Dear Colleague,

Thank you very much for your letter of 27 August 2002 drawing my attention to the prison sentence of Mr Mirdamadi, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Iranian Parliament.

I have addressed a letter to the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Mr Karroubi, in which I strongly condemn this sentence, and a copy of which you will find enclosed.

With regard to the practice of stoning in Iran, the European Parliament has always been opposed to the use of cruel and discriminatory punishment. In its annual report on human rights in the world adopted at the April session this year, the European Parliament condemned capital punishment by stoning according to the penal codes in several countries including Iran.

In this respect, I very much support the statement made by Commissioner Patten in Plenary on 5 September 2002 whereby he expressed his hope "that in the course of the next months we will be able to begin a comprehensive human rights dialogue with Iran" and I am sure that the European Parliament will be able to make a serious contribution to this human rights dialogue.

Yours sincerely,


Pat COX

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