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July 23, 2008

Dear colleagues,

On 17 July 2008, Ms. Beer and a handful of other members distributed a letter about the recent victories of the main Iranian opposition, the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI/MEK). In it, they seemed expressly troubled about the removal of the PMOI from the list of proscribed organisations in the United Kingdom, and warned their colleagues not to "misunderstand" the UK decision.

The letter's publication date (15 July), less than seventy days after the UK Court of Appeal ruling and three weeks after the unanimous votes in both houses of the country's Parliament, which resulted in the removal of the PMOI from the UK terrorist list, only serves to reveal the extent of its writers' apprehension, who cannot help but hopelessly watch their investments on making deals with the religious dictators of Iran completely squandered.

On paper, the letter's signatories acknowledge "the lack of democracy, the grave violation of human rights and the authoritarian elements" of the Iranian regime. But, the surprising degree of their enmity towards Iran's leading opposition, firmly seats them shoulder-to-shoulder with those "authoritarian elements" in practice. We all remember quite well that last December while Ms. Beer was busy carrying out stage-managed meetings in Tehran with associations affiliated with the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) the mullahs hanged six prisoners in various Iranian cities. In an interview with the BBC Persian service, she blamed this situation on "foreign pressure." Her statement was tantamount to whitewashing the mullahs' reprehensible crimes. To cement her disgraceful policy of appeasement, she also reportedly claimed, on behalf of the EP, that the EP's policy "toward [PMOI] is to reject and avoid contacts with it." Why? What has the PMOI done in the eyes of Ms. Beer that makes it worse than a regime which has subjugated an entire population for nearly 30 years?

Before criticizing the PMOI, one must remember the utterly undemocratic and unjust manner by which the UK government and the EU Council placed, and subsequently continued to maintain, this organization on their respective blacklists. This was explicitly noted in the British Court of Appeal's ruling released in May, which stated, "*It is a matter for comment and for regret that the decision-making process in this case has signally fallen short of the standards which our public law sets and which those affected by public decisions have come to expect*" (paragraph 57).

It is crystal clear that the PMOI was blacklisted at the request of the Iranian regime, as well as to serve the political considerations and economic interests of the EU Council vis-à-vis that brutal regime. Since the EU listing was based on the UK's decision as a competent national authority, it is now legally unjustifiable and must be annulled. Anything less is a blatant violation of the rule of law in Europe.

It is also not an accident that the letter's publication coincides with the day on which the EU Council, due to the constant demands and pressures emanating from Tehran, maintained the PMOI on the blacklist. The letter is meant to justify that unjustifiable action by the EU Council.

We do not intend to defend the PMOI here, or to respond to the allegations made in the aforementioned letter, which in our view do not merit a reply anyway. We simply wish to address the unjustifiable manner by which the letter's writers have joined hands with the cruel dictators in Iran to further suppress and demonise the legitimate opposition against the mullahs. We reiterate that a regime which has executed more than 100.000 of its political opponents, officially denies the Holocaust and calls for the elimination of Israel, is not legitimate and stands against peace and all democratic values that our Parliament is established to safeguard.

Some of us took part in the large rally on 28 June, where 70 thousand Iranians gathered in Villepinte, north Paris, to express support for the PMOI and the third option it represents. The third option rejects both appeasement and military intervention and stands for a democratic change in Iran. The vast dimension of this rally alone, supported by over 100 MEPs, suffices to contradict Ms. Beer claim that the PMOI is an isolated "psycho-sect" with no public support. No logic or impartial observer would back the claim that the opinion of thousands of exiled Iranians is diametrically opposed to those of the people inside Iran. The thousands of mainly middle-class Iranians we saw in Villepinte on 28 June, closely mirrored millions of Iranians inside Iran who, even according to the regime's own figures, widely boycotted the parliamentary elections in March.

The mere act of keeping this organization on our blacklists has been one of the mullahs' consistent and high priority demands during all negotiations with their foreign interlocutors. This is in itself a clear indication of the PMOI's influence and significance in Iranian politics as well as for that country's public opinion.

As far as the inner workings of the PMOI and its presence in Iraq are concerned, Friends of Free Iran (FOFI) has made a number of investigative visits to Camp Ashraf, Iraq, where several thousand members of the PMOI currently reside. FOFI has also met with officials of the PMOI and the coalition of National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) in Europe and the U.S. It has conducted careful and detailed investigations regarding all aspects of this movement. Our clear conclusion has been that the Iranian Resistance is a democratic movement, which adheres to the very values and principles we defend and hold dear in Europe.

The letter refers to some "former members" of the PMOI who were invited to this Parliament last year to testify. It is worth noting that one of these "former members", Mohammad Sobhani - a well known agent of the regime's Intelligence Ministry - was invited by Ms. Beer in February 2007, and sat in a panel with her. He was later arrested by French police after a knife-wielding attack against Iranian refugees at a meeting in southern Paris on 17 June 2007.

The experience, competence and the impartial and pluralistic composition of FOFI, whose members have no particular interests but to defend human rights and democracy in Iran, are by no means comparable to that of the signatories of that letter but we, along with our colleagues in other European capitals, are nevertheless quite capable of comprehending the facts, and frankly, do not need the aforementioned letter to guide us out of a "misunderstanding."

Thousands of MEPs and other well-known parliamentarians around the world, including the majority of parliamentarians in the UK, Belgium and Italy, have lent support to the PMOI. Most recently, on 16 July 2008, an all-party majority (290 MPs) in France's National Assembly signed a statement declaring support for the Iranian Resistance and demanding the removal of the PMOI from the EU terror list.

We urge our colleagues at the European Parliament to insist on the implementation of the rule of law by calling for the removal of the PMOI from the EU terror list.

- Alejo Vidal-Quadras, Vice President of the European Parliament, PPE-DE
- Struan Stevenson, Vice President of PPE-DE and Co-chair of Friends of a Free Iran (FOFI)
- Paulo Casaca, Member of the Iran Delegation and Co-chair of Friends of a Free Iran (FOFI), PSE
- Mogens Camre, Vice President of UEN
- Erik Meijer, GUE-NGL
- Eva-Britt Svensson, Vice President of GUE/NGL
- Piia-Noora Kauppi, PPE-DE
- Rihards Pīks, Former Foreign Minister of Latvia, PPE-DE
- Tunne Kelam, PPE-DE
- Jaroslav Zverina, PPE-DE
- Stephen Hughes, PSE