# Iranian dissidents in UK warn of rising danger amid alleged plot on Israeli embassy



## Rising Concerns as Iranian Dissidents Warn of Escalating Threats in the UK

Iranian dissidents residing in the UK are increasingly alarmed by what they describe as Tehran's escalating aggression abroad, particularly following recent revelations regarding a terror plot aimed at the Israeli embassy in London. Reports have emerged that four Iranian men are currently under police scrutiny for allegedly planning to target the embassy, a significant concern given heightened tensions surrounding Iranian activities in the region. Security Minister Dan Jarvis emphasised in Parliament that the arrests constitute one of the largest counter-terrorism operations in recent times, underscoring the severity of the threats being faced.

The arrests, which occurred as part of a coordinated effort involving MI5 and various police units, have triggered fears among the Iranian expatriate community in the UK that Tehran's activities may extend to British soil. Vahid Beheshti, a prominent British-Iranian activist who has continuously protested outside the Foreign Office for two years, reported having been warned of a potential assassination attempt against him. Beheshti recounted that law enforcement officers advised him to enhance his personal security measures significantly, highlighting a tangible increase in the perceived threat level. He remarked, "The level of threat has been raised," indicating that as the Iranian regime faces increasing internal challenges, its outward aggression may intensify.

This sentiment is echoed by others in the dissident community, who have warned that Iran’s government has been using manipulation and propaganda to radicalise individuals, often targeting those unfamiliar with the true nature of the regime. Ellie Borhan, who was previously attacked during a protest against the Iranian government, urged the British authorities to treat this threat with the utmost seriousness. The fear is palpable, as many within the community feel increasingly vulnerable, leading to calls for the UK government to respond decisively in light of the current environment of intimidation.

In the backdrop of these developments, MI5's chief, Sir Ken McCallum, highlighted that since 2022, a staggering 20 plots linked to Iranian interests and activities have been thwarted, many aimed specifically at Iranian dissidents. This alarming statistic showcases a persistent and pressing threat landscape where state-sponsored terrorism intertwines with efforts to suppress dissenting voices. The urgency of these threats has prompted discussions within the UK government about engaging with Iran's ambassador to address the ramifications of these operations, pointing to a broader geopolitical context fraught with tension.

The targeting of the Israeli embassy in London fits into a broader pattern of Iranian aggression noted across Europe, where several countries have reported similar security concerns involving Iranian-origin threats. Analysts have suggested that these actions are part of a concerted strategy by Iran to silence critics abroad and exert its influence internationally. In light of growing evidence of Tehran's involvement in orchestrated plots, Richard Pater, director of the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, described the targeting of the embassy as “shocking and disturbing,” but not unexpected given the circumstances.

Despite Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi categorically denying any involvement in the alleged plot, insisting on a need for diplomatic engagement, there remains a palpable undercurrent of distrust. This denial contrasts sharply with the facts as presented by UK authorities, who continue to face criticism for their handling of Iranian intelligence activities within the country. Calls for the UK to proscribe Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist entity have emerged, though the government seems wary of severing diplomatic ties that could prove essential during crises.

Counter-terrorism efforts in the UK are framed within the context of broader geopolitical struggles, as many European nations grapple with similar threats emanating from hostile states. Amid ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, particularly involving Iran, analysts warn the potential for increased aggression on foreign soil has never been greater. As the UK grapples with these complex challenges, the stakes remain high not only for the dissident community but for the nation as a whole, reinforcing the imperative for vigilance and a robust response to the growing spectre of state-sponsored threats.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/08/dissidents-in-uk-warn-of-growing-iran-danger-amid-alleged-israel-embassy-plot), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/d22733a4-979d-4324-89b0-607b6485efac)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/08/dissidents-in-uk-warn-of-growing-iran-danger-amid-alleged-israel-embassy-plot), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/413f6efa-2466-4b9f-b345-47a4615da1c6), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/1e46a5aad07ae6a54e0aba04a6df7718)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/08/dissidents-in-uk-warn-of-growing-iran-danger-amid-alleged-israel-embassy-plot), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/413f6efa-2466-4b9f-b345-47a4615da1c6), [[7]](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2025-03-06/debates/0AD4E229-2565-490E-AFEF-BC79846589BE/details)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/1e46a5aad07ae6a54e0aba04a6df7718), [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/936d7c24d303ffea41f6b1cef7c7b814)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/413f6efa-2466-4b9f-b345-47a4615da1c6), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/d22733a4-979d-4324-89b0-607b6485efac)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/08/dissidents-in-uk-warn-of-growing-iran-danger-amid-alleged-israel-embassy-plot), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/20/iranian-official-in-uk-warns-of-danger-of-israel-hamas-escalation)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/08/dissidents-in-uk-warn-of-growing-iran-danger-amid-alleged-israel-embassy-plot> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.ft.com/content/413f6efa-2466-4b9f-b345-47a4615da1c6> - The UK government plans to discuss recent counterterrorism operations with Iran's ambassador following the arrest of eight Iranian nationals. Security Minister Dan Jarvis informed Parliament that these arrests, among the most significant recent counter-state and terrorism-related actions in the UK, involved five men apprehended in various UK cities on suspicion of plotting terrorist acts targeting specific premises. A separate group of three Iranians were arrested in London under the National Security Act for suspected activities linked to foreign powers. The operations were coordinated through the Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre, established in 2021 and working with Five Eyes allies. MI5 chief Sir Ken McCallum previously reported that since 2022, UK authorities have thwarted 20 lethal plots linked to Iran, primarily targeting Iranian dissidents in Britain. The Iranian embassy has yet to comment on the arrests.
* <https://apnews.com/article/1e46a5aad07ae6a54e0aba04a6df7718> - UK counterterrorism officers have arrested seven Iranian men in two significant operations addressing terrorism and national security threats. Five suspects, aged between 29 and 46, including four confirmed Iranian citizens, were detained under the Terrorism Act for allegedly preparing a terrorist act targeting an undisclosed location. Arrests occurred across England, notably in Greater Manchester, London, and Swindon, with forensic searches ongoing. Local witnesses described heavily armed police raids, including a dramatic arrest in Rochdale. In a separate but unrelated probe, three more Iranian men were arrested in London for a national security offense. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper emphasized the operations' significance, labeling them among the most critical in recent years. The incidents come amid growing concerns over Iranian-linked threats in the UK, including 20 foiled plots since 2022 and past attacks on individuals critical of Tehran. The current UK terror threat level remains at 'substantial,' indicating likely risks.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/d22733a4-979d-4324-89b0-607b6485efac> - British counterterrorism authorities arrested eight Iranian nationals, five of whom are suspected of plotting an imminent attack on the Israeli embassy in Kensington, west London. The suspects, detained during coordinated operations across various cities including London, Swindon, Rochdale, Stockport, and Manchester, were reportedly in the final stages of their plan before police intervention. A separate group of three were detained under the National Security Act for suspected foreign power threat activity. While UK authorities had initially withheld details about the plot's target, sources familiar with the investigation confirmed it was the Israeli embassy. Security Minister Dan Jarvis described the arrests as some of the most significant recent counterterrorism actions amid increasingly complex threats blending state-sponsored activities and serious crime. One of the suspects was released on bail under stringent conditions. Iran has denied involvement, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi requesting official diplomatic engagement to assist any credible probe. MI5 chief Sir Ken McCallum previously reported that 20 plots allegedly backed by Iran have been addressed since 2022, mostly targeting Iranian dissidents in the UK. The Israeli embassy has not commented on the matter.
* <https://apnews.com/article/936d7c24d303ffea41f6b1cef7c7b814> - MI5 Director General Ken McCallum announced that Britain is facing an alarming increase in assassination and sabotage attempts by Russia and Iran on U.K. soil. Since 2022, MI5 and police have thwarted 20 potentially lethal Iran-backed plots, largely targeting Iranian dissidents abroad. McCallum highlighted that ongoing Middle East conflicts could further expand Iranian aggression in the U.K. He emphasized a growing threat environment related to hostile states, radicalized individuals, and the Islamic State group. Russia’s military intelligence has been linked to acts of arson and sabotage across Europe, often using criminals for these activities. Additionally, other European countries like Germany and Sweden have identified similar threats from Russia and Iran. While MI5 faces criticism for past failures, it continues to manage an increasing number of state-threat investigations, with McCallum noting an interconnected threat landscape unseen before. Despite these challenges, MI5 and police have disrupted numerous terror plots, saving many lives but highlighting persistent risks from modern extremist ideologies and returning terrorist groups like IS.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/20/iranian-official-in-uk-warns-of-danger-of-israel-hamas-escalation> - At a rare press briefing at the Iranian embassy, Matin said: “The situation in the Middle East is very dangerous and very volatile. Every movement by the Israeli regime including an attack against the people of Gaza definitely escalates the situation and will be expanded to other areas. No one can predict what will happen exactly.” The briefing underscores Iran’s efforts to show it is working in conjunction with Arab states and trying to publicly position Israel as the aggressor. Historically, the relationship between Hamas – born out of the Muslim Brotherhood – and Tehran has not been as ideologically close as Tehran’s ties with some other militant Islamic groups in the region, such as Hezbollah, though Tehran has openly and enthusiastically supported the 7 October attack by Hamas on Israel. Matin claimed Iran had been working hard to build a ceasefire and an alliance for an international humanitarian corridor, saying the present crisis “represents a new chapter for Islamic countries as Palestine is becoming one of the most important issues for the identity of the Islamic world”. Echoing comments made by the regime in Tehran, he attempted to justify the attack by Hamas in which hundreds of Israelis were killed. “All of the things that have been done by Hamas and Islamic groups are just self-defence. The terror, the atrocities, the occupation and apartheid are linked with the Israelis,” he said. He added that his reading of remarks by the Joe Biden led him to think the US and the UK had been counselling Israel in private in recent days not to mount a ground assault on Gaza. Insisting that Iran would take action in the open and would not use surrogates militia such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Matin said: “No one can [tell] the Islamic resistance groups in the Middle East what to do and not to do.” He said his first priority was put a ceasefire in place and start talks. “Our position is to prevent escalation but we are not in a position to control any groups inside the Middle East – Islamic groups or any national groups.” He said Iran had no role in the firing of missiles from Yemen into the Red Sea, or in the original Hamas assault on Israel.
* <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2025-03-06/debates/0AD4E229-2565-490E-AFEF-BC79846589BE/details> - The director-general of MI5 recently stated that since the start of 2022, the UK has responded to 20 Iran-backed plots presenting potentially lethal threats to British citizens and UK residents. The Iranian regime is targeting dissidents, and media organisations and journalists reporting on the regime’s violent oppression. It is also no secret that there is a long-standing pattern of the Iranian intelligence services targeting Jewish and Israeli people internationally. It is clear that these plots are a conscious strategy of the Iranian regime to stifle criticism through intimidation and fear. These threats are unacceptable. They must and will be defended against at every turn. It is testament to our world-leading law enforcement and intelligence services that, through their tireless commitment, so many plots have been thwarted. I am sure that the whole House will join me in paying tribute to the brave men and women of our law enforcement and intelligence agencies, who work day in, day out, to keep us safe.