# UK foils new Iranian terror plots amid escalating diplomatic tensions



On a seemingly ordinary Sunday morning in April 2025, Hossein Abedini, a prominent Iranian dissident, found his world interrupted by alarming news. As he drove to work in the UK, the radio announced the arrest of eight men, including seven Iranians, in connection with anti-terrorism operations across several cities, including London and Manchester. This revelation, while shocking to many, resonated deeply with Abedini, who has long been a target of Iranian state-sponsored terrorism.

Abedini, now the Deputy Representative of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), has personal experience with the brutal tactics employed by the Iranian regime. He has survived multiple assassination attempts, including a harrowing event in Istanbul in 1990 when two gunmen ambushed him after he completed a humanitarian mission. Severely wounded, he spent months in the hospital, with nearly 50 days in a coma, while Iranian agents attempted to finish the job. The chilling reality of his story underscores the high stakes involved in Iranian dissidents' lives.

The recent arrests in the UK come amidst a broader context of escalating Iranian activity in Europe. British authorities have seen a significant uptick in threats and plots orchestrated by Iran, with reports indicating that since early 2022, MI5 and police have thwarted at least 20 serious threats, primarily targeting Iranian dissidents and critics of the Tehran regime. These incidents have heightened tensions between the UK and Iran, prompting British Foreign Minister David Lammy to reaffirm a zero-tolerance policy towards such threats.

Iran's reaction to the recent arrests has been marked by unease and official protest. Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi publicly expressed his concern, stating he was "disturbed" by the detentions and suggested Iran's openness to cooperative investigations, should credible evidence of wrongdoing arise. This diplomatic tension reflects a growing rift between the two nations, as allegations of Iranian interference in UK affairs surface. Iran has summoned the British ambassador to voice its displeasure over what it terms "baseless accusations," framing the UK's heightened vigilance against Iranian activities as a violation of international norms.

This persistent pattern of hostility is not isolated. Reports indicate a systematic approach by Iranian operatives to target individuals labelled as enemies of the state, particularly dissidents living abroad. Abedini's experiences are emblematic of a larger strategy employed by Tehran to suppress dissent and extend its reach beyond its borders. Arrests related to terror plots have drawn further scrutiny, as evidenced by a major operation in 2018 that foiled a planned bombing targeting an NCRI gathering in France. The involvement of an Iranian diplomat in this case raised significant questions about diplomatic protocols and accountability.

In this evolving landscape, the UK is ramping up its defences against Iranian-backed threats. The recent imposition of sanctions against entities linked to Iranian-backed plots underscored Britain's commitment to confronting transnational terrorism. Such responses highlight an ongoing battle between Western states and the Iranian regime, rooted in a complex web of geopolitics, human rights violations, and concerns about terrorism.

As the UK continues to navigate these turbulent waters, the threat posed by Iran remains omnipresent. Abedini's testimony serves as a stark reminder of the risks faced by dissidents and the need for vigilance against external pressures that undermine democratic values and human rights. The increasing frequency of Iranian plots on UK soil, coupled with the regime's aggressive foreign policy, poses ongoing challenges requiring both strategic response and international cooperation to safeguard freedom and security.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 4
3. Paragraph 4, 5
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 4, 5
6. Paragraph 2
7. Paragraph 4

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

## References

* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2053015/iranian-terror-attack-coma> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/iran-says-disturbed-by-uk-arrest-iranians-terrorism-probe-2025-05-06/> - Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi expressed concern over the arrest of Iranian citizens by British authorities, describing himself as 'disturbed' by the news. He indicated that Iran is open to cooperating with British investigations if credible evidence of wrongdoing emerges. This statement follows the recent arrest of eight men, including seven Iranians, by British counter-terrorism police in two major operations. According to the British interior minister, these are among the largest investigations of their kind in recent years. The incident has raised diplomatic concerns between Iran and the UK.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-adds-two-new-designations-its-iran-sanctions-list-2025-04-14/> - On April 14, 2025, the British government announced sanctions against the Swedish-based 'Foxtrot Network' and its leader, Rawa Majid, due to their alleged involvement in carrying out attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets across Europe on behalf of Iran. The sanctions include an asset freeze on the group and an asset freeze and travel ban on Majid. Foreign Minister David Lammy emphasized the UK's zero tolerance for these threats. Although specific incidents were not detailed, this move follows similar sanctions imposed by the United States in March. The UK has reported over 20 Iran-backed plots since early 2022 aimed at kidnapping or harming individuals perceived as threats by Tehran, including British nationals. In response to Iran's increasing hostile activities, Britain introduced measures in March requiring the Iranian state to register all political influence campaigns in the UK for enhanced scrutiny. Iran's embassy in London has not yet commented on the sanctions.
* <https://apnews.com/article/241a2562d04f97c60475ba08bc72a5fd> - The Iranian foreign ministry summoned the British ambassador to Tehran, Hugo Shorter, to protest against what it called 'baseless' accusations from UK officials alleging Iranian interference in the UK's internal affairs. This was reported by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency. The summoning follows a statement by UK Security Minister Dan Jarvis announcing heightened vigilance against Iranian actions, citing increased threats against UK targets, including journalists, dissidents, and Jewish and Israeli individuals. MI5 and police have responded to 20 Iran-linked plots since January 2022, described as serious threats to UK citizens. Iran's foreign ministry condemned the UK's stance, claiming it violates international law and diplomatic norms, increasing distrust among Iranians towards British policies. The British ambassador promised to relay Iran's objections to his government.
* <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://iranfocus.com/terrorism/31261-iranian-dissident-explains-the-regime-s-attempt-to-assassinate-him/> - In mid-afternoon on March 14, 1990, Iranian dissident Hossein Abedini was ambushed in Istanbul. Two gunmen fired nine bullets at him; one gun jammed, and the other missed vital organs. Abedini was gravely wounded and spent four months in the hospital, including nearly 50 days in a coma. Despite the regime's pursuit, including agents posing as hospital staff, Abedini survived and later condemned the regime from his hospital bed. This incident highlights the Iranian regime's history of targeting dissidents abroad.
* <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, media organizations, and journalists reporting on the regime’s violent oppression. It is also known that there is a long-standing pattern of the Iranian intelligence services targeting Jewish and Israeli people internationally. These plots are a conscious strategy of the Iranian regime to stifle criticism through intimidation and fear. These threats are unacceptable and must be defended against at every turn.