# UK politicians urge ban on Iran’s IRGC amid rising security threats



The UK government is facing mounting pressure to proscribe Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation, as highlighted by a letter signed by over 550 MPs and peers. This call has gained urgency in light of Iran's oppressive "hijab and chastity law," which has sparked widespread protests and rebellions against the ruling regime’s hardline stance on women's rights. Politicians, including prominent figures from both Conservative and Labour parties, argue that the IRGC plays a crucial role in suppressing dissent and that its proscription is vital for safeguarding democratic values and global security.

The letter states that the IRGC's mandatory hijab policies are actively suppressing women who are at the forefront of the resistance against the regime, further fueling the urgency for action. A collective of political leaders has expressed that “appeasing this faltering regime betrays democratic values,” underscoring the view that failing to act only emboldens Tehran's oppressive measures and its nuclear ambitions.

Compounding these concerns, three Iranian nationals—Mostafa Sepahvand, Farhad Javadi Manesh, and Shapoor Qalehali Khani Noori—were charged under the UK's National Security Act with espionage and conspiracy to commit serious violence against journalists affiliated with Iran International, a Persian-language media channel critical of the Iranian government. These arrests, conducted by anti-terror police on May 3, are emblematic of increasing security concerns regarding Iranian state actors operating within the UK. The suspects, who allegedly participated in surveillance activities targeting journalists, entered the UK illegally between 2016 and 2022, illustrating the complexity of national security challenges posed by foreign actors exploiting asylum systems.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has highlighted the need to enhance national security laws and has promised a review of the UK’s counterterrorism strategy concerning state threats, especially those emanating from Iran. There are fears that the activities of Iranian operatives in the UK have evolved beyond traditional espionage, as recent incidents reveal a pattern of violence against those critical of the Iranian regime. This includes the stabbing of Pouria Zeraati, an Iranian journalist living in London, which is being investigated under counter-terrorism protocols, solidifying perceptions that the Iranian government employs covert tactics to silence dissent abroad.

Despite the government’s internal debates regarding how to respond to these provocations, calls for the IRGC's proscription have been bolstered by international parallels. Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has demanded solidarity from the UK, framing the ban as a necessary measure against Iranian aggression. The British Jewish community has likewise expressed a direct threat posed by the IRGC, advocating for action to protect both Jewish citizens and Iranian dissidents within the UK.

Historically, the UK has shied away from classifying the IRGC as a terrorist group, preferring to implement targeted sanctions against specific Iranian entities and individuals. This reluctance stems from the fear of deteriorating diplomatic relations with Tehran, which could be compounded by fears of retaliation. However, as the Iranian regime intensifies its assertiveness through military actions in the region and by sponsoring militia groups, arguments for a more robust approach continue to gather momentum.

As the situation evolves, and with the IRGC's involvement in acts of state terror increasingly exposed, the UK government's next moves will be closely scrutinised. The urgency for legislative change is matched by a growing public and political consensus that the Iranian government’s actions—both domestically and abroad—must be met with firm and decisive resolve.

Political leaders are calling on the government to act not only to safeguard democratic values but also to counteract the broader implications of allowing such a potent force to operate without restriction. As these debates unfold, the implications for British foreign policy and national security will undoubtedly remain a pivotal concern in the coming months.

**Reference Map:**

1. Paragraphs 1-2: Articles (1), (5), (6)
2. Paragraphs 3-4: Articles (2), (3)
3. Paragraph 5: Articles (4), (5)
4. Paragraph 6: Articles (5), (6)
5. Paragraph 7: Articles (1), (5)
6. Paragraph 8: Articles (5), (6)
7. Paragraphs 9-10: Articles (5), (6)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14724203/Ministers-proscribe-Irans-Islamic-Revolutionary-Guard-Corp-terrorist-group.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/5255d2e7fff89683a7a138a477395b76> - Three Iranian nationals—Mostafa Sepahvand, Farhad Javadi Manesh, and Shapoor Qalehali Khani Noori—were charged in London with espionage and plotting violence against journalists from Iran International, a London-based Persian-language TV channel critical of Tehran's regime. The trio is accused of conducting surveillance and reconnaissance activities targeting journalists between August 2024 and February 2025. Sepahvand faces additional charges for planning serious violence. All three suspects, who entered the UK illegally between 2016 and 2022, have been held in custody since their arrests on May 3, 2025. A fourth suspect was released without charge. The charges come amid heightened concerns from British security services about increasing threats from Iranian state actors. Authorities are working closely with Iran International and continue to investigate. Britain’s Home Secretary Yvette Cooper emphasized the need to bolster national security laws and accountability for Iran’s actions, announcing an upcoming review of the UK’s counterterrorism strategy regarding state threats. The suspects are scheduled for a follow-up court hearing on June 6.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/2ef30d59-3777-4741-992e-809030b275a8> - On May 17, 2025, three Iranian nationals—Mostafa Sepahvand, Farhad Javadi Manesh, and Shapoor Qalehali Khani Noori—were charged under the UK's 2023 National Security Act for plotting serious violence against Farsi-language journalists in Britain, allegedly on behalf of the Iranian government. These individuals, all residents of London and asylum seekers who arrived between 2016 and 2022, were originally arrested on May 3 as part of a larger counterterrorism effort involving eight Iranian nationals. The trio is accused of carrying out surveillance and facilitation activities, targeting journalists from Iran International, an independent media outlet based in London. The activities in question occurred between August 2024 and February 2025. Sepahvand faces additional charges for attempted violence. The Metropolitan Police underscored the gravity of the case, calling it a complex and fast-moving counter-intelligence investigation. While the three remain in custody, the other five arrested individuals have been released, with one on conditional bail. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper emphasized the need to hold Iran accountable for its alleged actions. The Iranian embassy has not commented. The National Security Act enables law enforcement to act more decisively against suspected foreign threats without a warrant.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/third-man-arrested-over-attack-iran-international-journalist-london-2025-01-08/> - British police arrested a third man on suspicion of conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm in connection with the stabbing of Pouria Zeraati, a journalist for Iran International, a Persian-language media organization critical of Iran's government. Zeraati, a British citizen of Iranian origin, was attacked near his home in Wimbledon, London, in March. Counter-terrorism police are leading the investigation. Two Romanian men, Nandito Badea and George Stana, have already been charged with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. They are scheduled to appear at London's Old Bailey court on January 17. The recently arrested 40-year-old man has been released on police bail until April pending further inquiries. The investigation also involved searches at four locations in Cricklewood and Finchley. British authorities have expressed concerns over Iran's alleged use of criminal proxies to conduct attacks abroad, accusations which Iran denies.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/apr/15/rishi-sunak-faces-calls-proscribe-iran-revolutionary-guards-irgc> - The shadow defence secretary, John Healey, and the former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith accused the government of being slow to act in the face of evidence of a growing risk to UK interests. Ministers are said to have the issue under review, but it has been argued within government that the security services need to keep points of contact with the Iranian authorities. Healey said the threat to the UK from allowing the IRGC to operate should be sufficient for the government to follow the US government in banning the organisation. He said: “We’ve been arguing this case for well over a year now that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, which was at the forefront of the Iranian attack, should be proscribed to this country. It is responsible; it’s the leading edge of the threat that Iran poses not just to Israel, but to Arab countries and western interests right across the region. “It’s the way that the Iranians sponsor and support violent military militia groups that destabilise the region and threaten other countries as well.” On Sunday, Lior Haiat, a spokesperson for the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, demanded a ban on the IRGC as an “initial price” for its “large-scale and unprecedented” aggression. In a letter to the British prime minister on Monday, the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Marie van der Zyl, wrote of a “direct threat” to the Jewish community and Iranian dissidents in the UK, as she praised the role of the RAF in protecting Israel from the Iranian bombardment on Saturday night. The letter said: “I am also writing on behalf of the British Jewish community to reiterate our request that the Iranian regime’s IRGC – Islamic Revolutionary Guard – be proscribed as a terrorist organisation in its entirety. The IRGC’s role in funding, arming and training a host of terror proxies, including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis is clear.” In April last year, 125 MPs – including more than 90 Conservatives – signed an open letter calling for the organisation to be proscribed. Within government, the security minister, Tom Tughendhat, has been supportive of proscribing the IRGC, while the home secretary is understood to have voiced doubts about such a move.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jul/06/uk-shies-away-from-designating-iran-revolutionary-guards-as-terrorist-group> - The UK has rejected calls to proscribe Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) as a terrorist group in favour of expanding the criteria by which supporters and companies can be put under sanctions. The new sanctions regime will for the first time allow ministers to sanction individuals for their activities inside the UK, and not just in Iran. The announcement to MPs on Thursday by the foreign secretary, James Cleverly, appears to resolve a long-running internal government debate over whether the IRGC, an Iranian state body, should be proscribed on the grounds that it had undertaken terrorist activities in the UK. The IRGC, the Basij Resistance Force, the “morality police”, and Basij commander Gholamreza Soleimani have already been placed under sanctions, but proscription would have made it a criminal offence in the UK to belong to the group, fund or express support for its activities. It would have effectively labelled the entire Tehran regime as a terrorist group since the IRGC is so central in the Iranian military structure. Proscription would probably have led to the expulsion of the UK ambassador to Tehran, the Foreign Office feared. It also knew that the EU was unlikely to take the step. The Foreign Office said it was expanding the sanctions criteria because “Iran has increased its efforts to kill or kidnap individuals perceived to be enemies of the regime outside of Iran, including in the UK. Since the start of 2022, the UK has responded to more than 15 credible threats to kill or kidnap British or UK-based individuals by the Iranian regime”. In particular, there have been claims of plots to assassinate reporters from Iran International, previously based in London, the Saudi-backed satellite channel beaming into Iran. Met police and MI5 foil 15 plots by Iran against British or UK-based ‘enemies’ Read more The Foreign Office added: “The regime has publicly called for the killing or capture of these individuals and in some cases detained and harassed the individual’s families in Iran. The Iranian intelligence services have developed close relationships with organised criminal gangs in the UK and across Europe to expand the capability of its networks.” The refusal to proscribe the IRGC will likely lead to sharp political criticism. The Labour party had called for proscription under the 2000 Terrorism Act, or if necessary through an amendment to make it possible to ban a state organisation. In April, 125 MPs, including more than 90 Conservatives, had also called for the IRGC to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation. The letter sent by the all-party British Israeli parliamentary group said: “The government must follow its earlier decisions to proscribe Hamas and Hezbollah as terror groups by going ‘after the parent organisation’ because it is the ‘primary financier, supplier, and trainer of these dangerous groups’.” The Foreign Office added that following recent Iranian street protests the UK had placed sanctions on more than 70 individuals and entities for human rights abuses, including more than 29 individuals or entities affiliated with the IRGC.