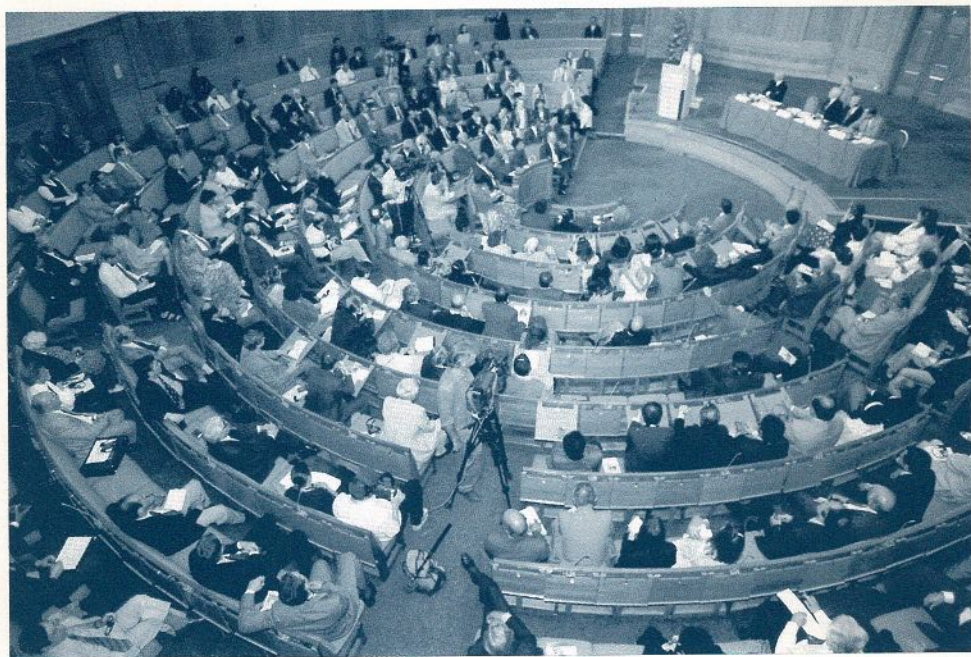


**International Seminar**

# **Terrorism by Iranian Regime Inside and Outside Iran**



The British Committee for Iran Freedom  
London, 26 June 1996

## **Mr Jeremy Corbyn;**

**MP, Labour Party;**

I would like on behalf of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group to welcome everyone here in the spirit which Lord Avebury welcomed everyone this morning. You can see from the introduction of the book which is published today the role and work of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, which draws the attention of the British Parliament and public to human rights abuses around the world and gives support to the principles of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights. We have over a hundred Members of Parliament registered as members of the group, and amongst the activities we do is promoting discussions and seminars like this to give a voice to people who themselves are campaigning against human rights abuses in Iran, to demonstrate that there is support around the world, that there is an outcry around the world about what is happening.

We do our best to influence what happens in this country, and what the British government can and should be doing about the situation in Iran. I represent an inner-London constituency which has become and still is, I'm glad to say, home to many people who have sought political asylum in this country. Many of them have come from Iran over the last 20 years, and it is very instructive to discuss with them the terror and fear they faced whilst in Iran, and how many of their families have been killed by gangs, by police, by the army, and by agents of the regime.

I remember one occasion- it still turns my blood cold- when somebody came to me to say that they were concerned about the possible death of a relative, of a friend in Iran. I said: 'What can I do? Is there any point in sending a fax to the regime?' They said: 'no, don't do anything, because it will make their death more certain if you stand up for them outside of Iran.'

That is the hallmark of the reign of terror that threatens people in that way. Salman Rushdie has been threatened with the death penalty for writing a book. I remember speaking to him at his last public engagement before the fatwa was announced against him, and the fear that he and so many other people have been put through by this terrorist regime.

The abuses of human rights within Iran are well known, and I think they are well documented in the booklet that is published today. The death sentence against Rushdie is something the people of this country and other parts of the world deplore, but the treatment of women in Iran and the power of the mullahs, the power of a particularly obsessive religious order against ordinary people is something that many of us around the world find an outrage.

Too often assassinations are taking place in other parts of the world. I can never forget the death of Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, who took part in negotiations, serious discussions with the regime, and ended up with a bullet through his forehead. And all his assistants were killed at the same time. We had a huge memorial meeting for him here in London. He stood up for the rights of Kurdish people. Those people that led the Communist Party in Iran were likewise assassinated. The terrorism that takes place against the Kurdish people both inside and outside of Iran is aimed against anyone who writes, thinks, paints, or acts in any way that we take as a norm in Western Europe and in this country. And they have acted against those who stood up for the rights of workers in Iran- trade union activists- who have been thrown in

prison and assassinated.

After the fall of the Shah there was a huge growth in trade union activity and trade union membership. Those trade union members, many of them are now dead. Those unions have been destroyed, as their members are expected to pay the price of ever lowering living standards, ever rising prices, ever worsening living conditions, because of the inability of the mullahs to run the economy with any decency or fairness. And these issues have to be addressed also. But I think behind all this we have to be very aware that at the end of the Gulf War, and this is referred to in the report which is published today, there was a number of companies and countries who thought that they could get into economic development in Iran and started putting pressure on Western European and North American governments to go easier on the sanctions, to go easier on their attitude towards human rights abuses in Iran, because they saw the prospect of a lot of fast bucks to be made, ignoring the plight of the Iranian people.

Well I think we are here today to say what comes first and foremost, and what always must be first and foremost are human rights, trade union rights and civil rights for the people of Iran, not the profitability of big business around the world to make money out of the Iranian people while that regime remains in office. And I think it would be very shortsighted and dangerous for any government to go down that way. So the value of today's conference is to bring people together, is to hear these moving accounts of what is happening, but above all to bring these issues to the attention of the rest of the world whilst this evil regime continues its killing and murders around the world, and why Iranians who should be living safely in exile themselves are under threat the whole time from agents of the regime.

That regime must be isolated, the toughest sanctions imposed against it, and the strongest possible support given to those people who are standing up for human rights in Iran both inside

that country and outside. Because that of itself will go a long way towards bringing forward the day when that regime is ended, and we can truly say that the people of Iran have been liberated from the terror which they suffer from at the present time.