Press release | 09.06.2010

Iran

Sanctions are necessary - Iranian leadership must allow election anniversary protests

On the occasion of the UN Security Council's vote on sanctions against Iran and the first anniversary of the protests against electoral fraud during the Iranian presidential elections of 12 June 2009, **Barbara Lochbihler**, Green MEP and chairwomen of the Iranian delegation of the European Parliament said:

"Mock executions, torture, rape, death sentences - the record points to a terrible human rights situation. Since June 2009, when hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Tehran, the Basij militia and other security forces have been harshly cracking down on all opposition forces.

Thousands have been detained and at least one hundred people have been killed as a result of these actions. Courts continue to carry out show trials against critics of the government. In the last six months 17 people have been executed and opponents of the government are attacked in the middle of the street by the regime's thugs.

We welcome the fact that 80 people were released prior to the anniversary of the elections. Nevertheless we demand the immediate release of all those who have been arrested during the peaceful protests. The Iranian leadership must allow the protests that have been announced for the anniversary to take place. Brute force is not a solution to the discontent and disillusionment of many Iranian women and men.

The disputes over the Iranian nuclear programme should not distract from the enormous domestic challenges that Iran is facing today. The EU must focus not only on the nuclear dossier but also respond to all the issues - Iran's internal developments, its economic problems and the security challenges in the region.

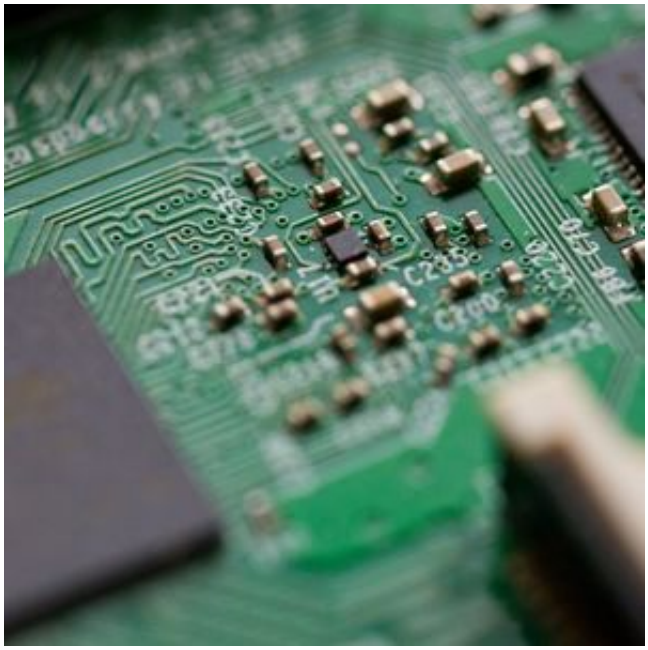
We welcome the negotiating space brought about by the agreement with Brazil and Turkey on the exchange of low-enriched uranium for nuclear fuel. Unfortunately, this agreement cannot dispel the doubts that Iran wants to carry on with its activity to develop weapons grade plutonium. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the planned sanctions can move Iran to make concessions. They are nonetheless expressions of Western mistrust of the Iranian government and should provide food for thought to Ahmadinejad. A positive aspect is that the sanctions should not hurt the population.

The contradictions in Iran have not diminished. The Iranian leadership will have no choice but to accept far-reaching reforms. The country will not live up to the potential of its thousands of years of history, its people and its resources, if the government does not recognise the advantages for its citizens which more freedom would bring about. Only through democratisation will Iran be able to realise this potential - for the benefit of the people and in the interest of stability in the region."

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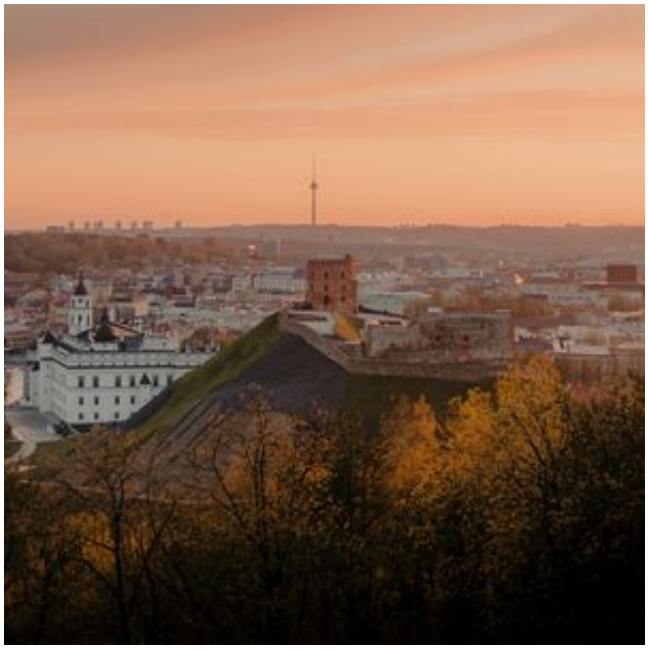
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Barbara Lochbihler

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