Press release | 04.01.2010

Iran

Tehran blocks EU Parliament delegation visit

In a surprise move, the Iranian ambassador in Brussels - Ali Asghar Khaji - yesterday blocked the planned 7-11 January visit to Iran by a delegation of MEPs representing seven of the European Parliament's political groups. **Barbara Lochbihler**, German Green MEP and Chair of the EP's delegation to Iran, commented:

"I regret this last minute move to block the EU Parliament visit to Iran, which is further proof of the Iranian authorities' blank refusal to allow any serious discussion about the grave unresolved issues in the country.

The delegation's visit to Iran was in line with the regular contacts the European Parliament maintains with countries and its parliaments across the world. The agenda included meetings with representatives from the Iranian parliament, foreign affairs and economy ministries, as well as political opposition groups and civil society representatives.

Given the political upheavals and daily repression by the Iranian government, democratic freedoms and human rights were due to be a key point of discussion with civil society. The isolated voices within the US Congress and EU Parliament who opposed the visit have gifted an easy excuse to Iran to block the trip on grounds of "media pressure". This does a huge disservice to the Iranians who have been bravely demonstrating for freedom and democracy. It is also a blow to Iranian civil society, which had high hopes for a European Parliament visit that would show solidarity with the concerns of millions of Iranians who have supported the so-called "green" movement. The Tehran leadership clearly considered our visit a risk not worth taking.

The European Parliament's Delegation to Iran will not be deterred and will press for developments in the country to remain high on the EU agenda."

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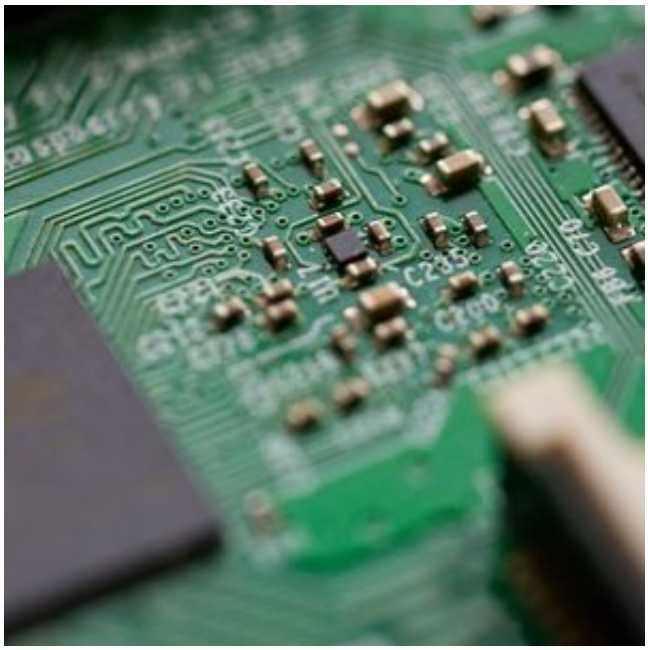


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