Hunger Strike as Last Resort to Proscribe Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

Monday 13 March, 2023

HUNGER STRIKE since 23rd February 2023: Iranian-born British citizen, Vahid Beheshti, 44, journalist and human rights activist, is on a hunger strike outside the Foreign Affairs Office on King Charles St, in London. Currently on Day 19, he is calling on the UK Government to place Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) on the list of International Terrorist Organisations due to the threat they pose, both to the people of Iran and here in the UK.

Vahid Beheshti’s wife, Conservative Coventry Councillor Mattie Heaven, was against the idea at first but is now standing firmly behind him;

‘Naturally I was concerned for his health at first, but given the urgency of the situation it does feel we are left with no choice. The IRGC gained the attention of the world in recent months due to their brutal and often fatal crackdown on the protesters in Iran, led by women fighting for their basic human rights. But their influence is not limited to the borders of their own country, said to be the largest state-sponsor of terrorism in the world, one of the largest state-sponsors of human trafficking and drug trafficking, and responsible for kidnapping & executing journalists & dual nationals, including the assassination of over 540 journalists, politicians and human rights activists outside of Iran. Not to mention the fact that the IRGC is currently supplying Russia with drones and allegedly bullets, rockets and mortar shells to target and kill innocent Ukrainian civilians.’

The British weather has not been supportive so far. Sub-zero temperatures have amplified Beheshti’s already challenging situation in his small tent on King Charles Street. But this is also personal for Vahid Beheshti, who described the horror that he felt when he was informed of the fate of his close friend Rouhollah Zam, who was kidnapped by the IRGC, and ultimately executed through sham trials.

When asked how he is managing to sustain the hunger strike in such conditions he responded;

‘What I’m going through now is nothing compared to what the brave people have gone through in Iran. It is negligible in terms of all the suffering that has been caused by the IRGC both inside and outside of the country.’

Beheshti, whose GP is keeping a close eye on his health, adds;

‘Our freedom and security here in the UK is also under severe threat. The latest example being Iran International TV, which recently had to relocate their Chiswick-based HQ to Washington DC, due to the severity of the security threats posed by the Iranian Regime and their agents acting on UK soil.'

Mattie Heaven has taken a stand against the human rights abuses of the ruling regime of Iran for many years, having spoken on the matter at the UN, the UK parliament and the European Parliament on a number of occasions. So when the world woke up to the plight of women in Iran, highlighted by the killing of Mahsa Amini at the hands of the IRGC in September 2022, she felt a heightened responsibility to be their voice outside of Iran. Since Beheshti started his hunger strike, Heaven has ramped up her efforts, desperate for people in the UK to understand the gravity of the situation;

“We must remember that in January MPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of proscribing the IRGC. Factually speaking the IRGC ticks every box on the UK Govts criteria for recognising it as a terrorist organization, so there is no justification for any delay. Doing so is only giving the Iranian Regime time to double down on its lobbying efforts, in order to hold on to whatever remaining semblance of power it has.”

The UK debate was led by Conservative MP Bob Blackman who urged the UK government to proscribe IRGC as terrorist without delay, but support came from both sides of the house with Labour’s John Cryer, for example, calling the IRGC “a bunch of clerical fascists who rape, kill, maim their way around Iran and outside Iran's borders.”

Conservative Bob Stewart added that “if any of us were to make a speech like we've made this morning or this afternoon in Iran, we’d be dead meat very quickly.”

While it seems that talks to proscribe the IRGC remain on ice within the UK Govt, Beheshti is hoping that

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the ice around his tent will thaw, enabling him to sustain his hunger strike long enough for the officials in the building opposite him to take note of his plea.



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