

IRAN'S NEW PRESIDENT MUST NOT COME TO SCOTLAND

Who will stop a mass murderer from attending the COP26 Climate Change Summit in Glasgow? Ebrahim Raisi, the president-elect of Iran following his sham election, is due to take up his office in August. According to the Tehran Times, he may make Scotland his first international port of call as president. Raisi has apparently been invited to attend the COP26 UN Conference in Glasgow, from 31 October to 12 November this year. The talks will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. 200 world leaders and more than 30,000 delegates are expected to attend.

Raisi is on the US sanctions list for serial human rights violations. He is a murderer and perpetrator of genocide, who has openly boasted of his role as a member of the 'death commission' which oversaw the massacre of more than 30,000 political prisoners in the summer of 1988. Most of those executed, including many teenagers and even pregnant women, were supporters of the main opposition Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK). Raisi was until his elevation to the presidency, chief of Iran's judiciary, where he was able to indulge his expertise as a mass executioner. He has directed the hanging of 251 people in 2019, 267 people in 2020, and scores of executions so far in 2021. According to eye-witness survivors, Raisi often supervised the torture of men and women and then personally attended their execution.

Agnès Callamard, the Secretary General of Amnesty International, has called for Raisi to be investigated for crimes against humanity and for his involvement in murder, enforced disappearance and torture. Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement: "Iranian authorities paved the way for Ebrahim Raisi to become president through repression and an unfair election. As head of Iran's repressive judiciary, Raisi oversaw some of the most heinous crimes in Iran's recent history, which deserve investigation and accountability rather than election to high office."

Raisi will regard a visit to COP26 as vindication of his criminal legacy. The UK Government, who are hosting the summit, and the Scottish Government, must ban Raisi's entry to the UK. He is the pariah president of a pariah state and should be treated as such. Following Raisi's rigged election, the theocratic regime claimed that overall turnout of the

electorate had been 48.9%. Anticipating fake news from the mullahs, resistance units of the MEK had carefully monitored polling stations throughout the country and estimated that the true turnout was less than 10% due to a nationwide boycott. Dozens of MEK operatives were arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) – the regime's Gestapo, for filming and monitoring the polls. The mullahs mounted a huge security operation to try to cover up the fact that the Iranian population were determined to withhold their votes in open protest at the repression, corruption and misrule of the clerical regime. They were incensed that Iran's Supreme Leader, the elderly Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had engineered the election by disqualifying all candidates who may have posed an electoral threat to his favoured nominee, Ebrahim Raisi. Allowing this murderer to come to Glasgow will be a publicity coup for the mullahs and a massive blow to the people of Iran.

Of course, China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin, both allies of the clerical regime, were amongst the first to offer their warm congratulations to the torturer and executioner Raisi. They were quickly joined by the usual suspects from the Middle East, together with Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Belarus, Syria, the Houthi rebels in Yemen, Hamas in Gaza and the terrorist group Hezbollah in Lebanon. This unsavoury collection of totalitarian states, dictatorships, tyrannical autocracies and terrorist groups should sound the alarm about Iran's new president for Western democracies, none of which have offered their congratulations.

But can Raisi attend COP26? It seems that an individual or organisation cannot petition a Scottish court to prevent a national leader from coming to the UK or Scotland. Only the Home Office has that power. They could issue an exclusion order barring Raisi from attending COP26 or from coming to the UK or Scotland. Indeed, if, under the terms of the US sanctions against Raisi, an arrest warrant was issued by a UK agency or the police force, he could be apprehended on his arrival and face charges of crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, no such indictment has so far been issued in the UK and there is no Interpol Red Notice triggering an international arrest warrant. In the UK it would be up to the National Crime Agency to make such a request to Interpol. The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, could also issue an exclusion order against Raisi, on the ground that barring him from the UK would be conducive to the public good. There is no way to appeal such an exclusion order.

It is clear that the SNP government at Holyrood will have to work in close coordination with the UK government to stop this mass murderer from tainting COP26 and sully Scotland's reputation as a country that deplores oppression and injustice. There must be no backtracking on this. He will not be welcome in Scotland. The Scottish people do not like mass murderers. The last mass killer who came to Scotland was Hitler's Deputy Rudolf Hess. He flew to Scotland in 1941, was immediately arrested and spent the rest of his life in prison. Raisi should take note. He will be held accountable for his crimes. There can be no impunity for mass murder and genocide.

The time has come for the UK, UN, US and EU to end appeasement of this vicious regime and to discard all attempts to resurrect the redundant nuclear deal and instead, to seek the urgent indictment of Ebrahim Raisi in the international courts, for crimes against humanity. Iran's new president must never be allowed to set foot in the West, unless he is brought in chains to face a charge of genocide and crimes against humanity in the international courts of justice. Any attempt to bring him to Scotland must be blocked by the UK and Scottish governments working, for once, in harmony.

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Ebrahim Raisi

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