

Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi jailed for 20 years over attempted Paris bomb attack

From [Deutsche Welle](#)

Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi was convicted of attempted terrorism Thursday by a court in Belgium for his role in a 2018 bomb plot targeting an Iranian opposition group in France. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

The court ruled that Assadi and three others sought to kill top leaders of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) during a rally near Paris. The plot was uncovered ahead of time by German, French and Belgian police.

Three Iranians with dual Belgian citizenship were convicted as Assadi's accomplices. All three have had their Belgian citizenship stripped.

On June 30, 2018, Belgian police officers, tipped off by intelligence services about a possible attack against the annual meeting of an Iranian opposition group, stopped a couple traveling in a Mercedes car. In their luggage, they found 550 grams of the unstable TATP explosive and a detonator. Belgium's bomb disposal unit said that the device was of professional quality. It could have caused a sizeable explosion and panic in the crowd, estimated at 25,000 people, [that had gathered that day](#) in the French town of Villepinte, in the north of Paris.

Among dozens of prominent guests at the opposition rally that day were President Trump's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani; Newt Gingrich, the former conservative speaker of the US House of

Representatives; and the former Colombian presidential candidate Íngrid Betancourt. Five British MPs were also there: the Tories Bob Blackman, Matthew Offord, Theresa Villiers and Sir David Amess, and Labour's Roger Godsiff.

Prosecutors said that Assadi was the operational commander of the attack and accused him of recruiting the couple, Amir Saadouni and Nasimeh Naami, years beforehand to obtain information about the opposition. Both were of Iranian heritage. Three other defendants were also found guilty and received lengthy jail sentences after the court ruled that they belonged to the same network. Saadouni and Naami were sentenced to 15 years and 18 years in jail respectively.

According to the investigation, Assadi carried the explosives to Austria on a commercial flight from Iran and later handed the bomb over to the pair during a meeting at a Pizza Hut restaurant in Luxembourg. The ruling confirmed that the explosives were made and tested in Iran. The fourth defendant, Mehrdad Arefani, was sentenced to 17 years in prison.

Assadi contested all the charges against him and has claimed diplomatic status. He did not attend the hearing today. As Assadi was outside Austria at the time of his arrest, German authorities said his diplomatic immunity as a counselor at Iran's embassy in Vienna did not apply and he was extradited to Belgium. His lawyer, Dimitri De Beco, said he was likely to appeal.