

# Ex president of Iran says Khomeini gave order for killings

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IRAN's exiled former president, Mr Abolhassan Banisadr, told a heavily guarded Berlin court yesterday that the Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, ordered the assassination of Kurdish dissidents four years ago.

Mr Banisadr was giving evidence in the trial of an Iranian, Kazem Darabi, and four Lebanese charged with murdering three Iranian Kurdish leaders and their translator at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin on September 17th, 1992.



Two masked men armed with machineguns burst into the restaurant and opened fire on a group of Iranian dissidents sitting around a table. The victims were members of the opposition Iranian Democratic Party of Kurdistan, but Tehran has denied ordering the murder.

Mr Banisadr said that a "council for special operations", led by Ayatollah Khomeini but outside the official political structures, ordered the attack and that it was approved by President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"After this council works out a plan and it is approved by Khomeini, it is handed over to Rafsanjani. No political assassination is possible without the approval of the leader," he said.

Mr Banisadr named four other members of the "council for special operations", including the Iranian intelligence minister, Mr Ali Fallahijan.

Germany issued an arrest warrant for Mr Fallahijan last March. This earned a sharp rebuke from Tehran, with which Bonn has strong trade links.

A former supporter of the Ayatollah Khomeini, Mr Banisadr was Iran's president from 1980, until 1981, when he fled to Paris. He has lived there under heavy guard ever since, and yesterday expressed fears for his safety while in Germany.

He claimed that Tehran had sent two squads of assassins to Berlin to intimidate him while he gave evidence.

Mr Banisadr told the court that he maintained a network of contacts both inside and outside Iran which gave him a clear insight into the structure of power in Tehran.

His appearance in court is embarrassing for the Bonn government, which opposes the United States policy of ostracising Iran and punishing countries that do business with it. Mr Banisadr yesterday criticised Bonn's policy of "critical dialogue" with Tehran, saying that it was neither critical nor a dialogue.

Meanwhile a Hamburg court yesterday convicted the American neo-Nazi leader, Gary Lauck (43), of inciting racial hatred and publishing fascist material. He was sentenced to four years in jail.

Prosecutors claimed that Lauck, who runs the National Socialist German Workers' Party Foreign Organisation (NSDAPAO) from his home in Lincoln, Nebraska, is the main source of neo-Nazi propaganda in Germany.

The defence had argued that under the American free speech code, Lauck had not broken the law of his own country. Lauck was arrested during a visit to Denmark last year and was later extradited to Germany.

Although he has spent his entire life in the United States, where he is known as "the firm belt Fuhrer", Lauck sports a Hitler moustache and speaks English with a pronounced German accent. He leapt to his feet when the verdict was announced, yesterday, shouting, The fight will go on.

Lauck's lawyer, Mi Hans Otto Sieg, vowed that he would appear, arguing that his client should have been set free because he had not committed any offence under German law.