
German government's meeting with Iranian dissident ends in acrimony

'If German policy is all about feminism, then I want to see actions,' said prominent Iranian activist Masih Alinejad.



Masih Alinejad is an exiled campaigner for democracy and women's rights in Iran | Remko de Waal/ANP via Getty Images

BY PETER WILKE

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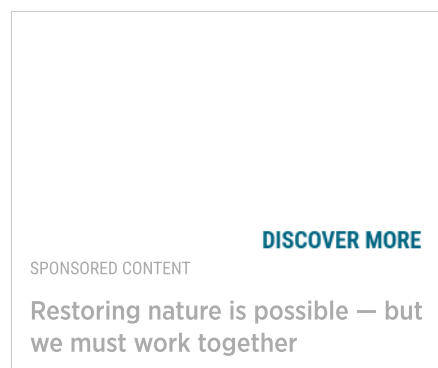
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A planned meeting between prominent Iranian dissident, Masih Alinejad, and senior German officials collapsed in acrimony on Thursday over the government's alleged insistence that the meeting be kept confidential.

Alinejad, an exiled campaigner for democracy and women's rights in Iran, said she confronted German officials over the condition that the meeting be kept secret.

"The German government publicly and openly meets with our oppressors, but they want to hide us?" Alinejad said in an interview with POLITICO. "I have nothing to shy away from. I have to stand by my people because I am proud of them. I can't have a meeting behind closed doors. If German policy is all about feminism, then I want to see actions."



Alinejad appeared to be referring to German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's "feminist foreign policy," a set of guidelines her ministry says are aimed at achieving equality for women worldwide.

"We integrate the perspectives of women and marginalized groups into our global work for peace and security," [say the guidelines](#).

German officials defended their handling of the planned meeting, saying both sides agreed to confidentiality ahead of time.

"In my experience, conversations that take place confidentially are more substantive," Luise Amtsberg, Germany's commissioner for human rights, based in the foreign ministry, posted on X,

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formerly Twitter. “I very much regret that Ms. Alinejad linked a conversation to the publication of its content and broke off the discussion at the beginning.”

Alinejad, who was one of twelve women featured in TIME magazine’s 2023 Women of the Year list, had come to Berlin to attend an award ceremony hosted by the Axel Springer Freedom Foundation. (Axel Springer is POLITICO’s parent company.)

Alinejad was born in Iran, but was exiled a decade ago. She is one of the most outspoken critics of the Iranian regime.

Last January, the U.S. Justice Department charged three men in an alleged plot that originated in Iran to assassinate her.

In recent days, she has met with two federal cabinet ministers, leading members of various German parties and the chairman of the Munich Security Conference, Christoph Heusgen. All those meetings were in public view.

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