

# What a trial in Iran means for Israel, Europe, and the West | Aggies GO

Jonah Carlson

12/14/2023



A picture from the Iranian Supreme Court, June 2020.

Jonah Carlson - Iran recently accused a Swedish individual working with the EU of spying for the Israeli government and thus arrested him, sparking outrage across the Western world. Last Sunday, his trial began. The act raises important questions about Iran's relational power and the importance of blocs and regions in understand the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas and how it relates to the wider world. *Reuters* explored the incident in an [article](#) published December 10<sup>th</sup>.

The arrest and trial resulted in heavy-handed comments from Sweden geared towards Iran, but it's not the first example of a citizen from Europe or the United States being detained in Iran on minimal accusations. Numerous Western governments have [accused](#) the Iranian government of detaining their citizens without sufficient justification. If Western governments despise this, how is Iran able to do it? Part of the reason is due to Iran's [relational power](#). Iran, with close relations to both Russia and China, has "friends" in high places that prevent Western states from applying additional pressure on Iran, practically pushed to its [sanctions](#) limit already. Frankly, the detainees are not worth raising tensions with military powers that could start a regional, or wider, war. Furthermore, the United Nations international framework, a byproduct of West's ideological power after World War II, strongly discourages an aggressive response to Iran's detentions. The result is the West with their hands tied: unable to free their citizens, but unable to put forth greater pressure. The result is often a difficult, and tiring,

diplomatic back-and-forth that takes months, if not longer, to free detainees.

The incident also exposes the complexity of understanding [regions](#) in geopolitics. Developing EU policy towards the Israel-Hamas conflict encouraged the detention of the Swedish national, who Iran accused of "operat[ing] through projects by U.S. and European institutions to gather intelligence for Israel." The move also highlights how the Israel-Hamas conflict, though its own story, also relates to decades of strategic competition in the Middle East between Iran and Israel, a story of conflict that extends well past the Levant.

Photo [source](#). Tasnim News Agency, [CC BY 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons.