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Iran Bars Visits by U.N. Nuclear Inspector Critical of Its Government

By REUTERS

BERLIN, July 9 (Reuters) — Iran has barred a senior United Nations nuclear inspector who has criticized the government from visiting the country, a Western diplomat said Sunday.

The diplomat was confirming a report in the German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*, in which the International Atomic Energy Agency section chief for Iran, Chris Charlier of Belgium, was reported as saying that he had not been allowed into Iran for several months.

"I haven't been allowed to travel to Iran since April," he was quoted as saying. "Since April, I have had no more contact with the Iranian nuclear file."

But a senior diplomat at the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear monitoring arm, said Mr. Charlier was still the chief of the agency's Iran section.

The agency has been inspecting Iran's nuclear program since 2003. Although it has found no hard evidence that Iran is working on nuclear weapons, it has uncovered previously concealed activities linked to uranium enrichment, a process of purifying fuel for nuclear power plants or weapons.

Iran denies pursuing nuclear weapons but refuses to halt its enrichment program temporarily, as demanded by Germany and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Charlier was also quoted as saying he believed that Iran was probably still hiding things from the atomic energy agency.

It was not immediately clear why Mr. Charlier was barred from Iran. But last year, in a BBC documentary on Iran's nuclear program, he complained about the lack of freedom inspectors faced in Iran.

"Whatever we say, whatever we do, they're always behind us with a video camera, with a microphone, trying to record all our movement and all things that we're saying," Mr. Charlier said, according to a transcript of the program.

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