



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 8, 2018

## Iranian Protesters Blame Country's Leaders, Not Trump, for Their Woes

Thanks to social media (outside press isn't allowed to report on Iran's internal affairs), [the world is learning about the growing protests](#) by irate citizens suffering under the country's oppressive regime. The protests predate by months the reimposition of U.S. sanctions, and the protesters are blaming the regime and not President Trump for their troubles.



For example, in one video posted on social media on Thursday, protestors chanted "Death to inflation! Death to unemployment!" while another showed crowds leaving a soccer game at Tehran's Azadi Stadium chanting "Death to the dictator!", referring to the country's President Hassan Rouhani. Still another showed protests in Kazerun, a city in southern Iran, on Sunday night chanting insults about Rouhani's security forces. On Monday the largest demonstration took place in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city, after a local opposition cleric called on them to protest the government's failure to keep its promises.

Those promises made and not kept followed protests earlier in the year by crowds in hundreds of cities demanding restoration of clean water supplies and predictable electricity.

One of the promises broken has idled hundreds of buses, as the drivers don't have the money to buy fuel for them. One social-media entry came from driver Raman Ghavami:

More than 6k bus drivers in Tehran have been waiting for 24 hours to get fuel. But ... the gov hasn't paid back its debts to the company. Tens of thousands of people [are] waiting for these buses to go [back] to work.

Another driver wrote, "Look at our situation. We've been waiting 24 hours. How dare the regime send money to Hezbollah and Palestine when the country is in trouble. Our revolution's aim wasn't to support dirty [Hezbollah leader] Hassan Nasrallah [so] we can be oppressed here. Enough!"

The issues driving the protests are mostly economic, stemming mainly from the country's inflation, caused by its central bank. The rial has lost more than 80 percent of its value in the last 12 months, driving the prices of fruits and vegetables beyond the reach of many of the poorest in the country.



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The economy is projected to decline by more than four percent next year due mostly to U.S. sanctions that will put pressure on Iran's customers to scale back purchases of the country's crude-oil production. When Trump's second round of sanctions hits in November, they will aim directly at Iran's crude oil exports and its related shipping industry.

At the moment Rouhani is unconcerned: "Look how many calls are out there in cyberspace to come out for riots or protests," he said in a televised speech. "Only a small number come. This shows people's patience and awareness. I do not have any national security concerns."

Neither do observers from the *Wall Street Journal*. Wrote Asa Fitch and Aresu Eqball from Dubai, "While the unrest poses challenges to Iran's leaders, experts who watch Iran say it is unlikely to undermine the regime, which has withstood more serious bouts of unrest [in the past]." But, they added: "In a country where the wealthy and well-connected enjoy fast cars and luxury hotels [while] the underclass toils to afford rice, bread and sugar, the social fabric is being strained by the economic threat posed by new U.S. sanctions."

As the latest sanctions begin to bite, and with November's sanctions set to increase the pain, will the protests following them be large enough to be the spark that lights the fuse that ignites the explosion that blows up the present oppressive regime?

It happened before, in 1978, when a pivotal event occurred that historians think marked the point of no return, leading to the abolition of Iran's monarchy a year later. Called Black Friday, it was marked by the shooting of dozens of protesters and ended any hope for compromise with the existing regime.

Image: Screenshot of a [youtube video by aljazeera](#)

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