

# US accuses Iran of 'nuclear extortion' with enrichment step

Author:

Wed, 2019-11-06 01:19

WASHINGTON: The United States accused Iran on Tuesday of "nuclear extortion" and vowed no let-up in pressure after the clerical regime said it would resume uranium enrichment at the key Fordow plant.

"Iran has no credible reason to expand its uranium enrichment program, at the Fordow facility or elsewhere, other than a clear attempt at nuclear extortion that will only deepen its political and economic isolation," a State Department spokesperson said.



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The enduring stain of the 1979 Iran hostage crisisIran bans cooperation with British Council

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# The enduring stain of the 1979 Iran hostage crisis

Wed, 2019-11-06 01:10

DUBAI: Forty years ago, a mob of Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran and took dozens of staff members hostage. On Monday, demonstrators chanting "Down with USA" and "Death to America" gathered in front of the same building as state TV aired videos from other Iranian cities.

Many of the ugly sentiments from 1979 remain today amid renewed tensions between the two countries, following the unraveling of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal and the re-imposition of US sanctions on the Iranian economy. "Thanks to God, today the revolution's seedlings have evolved into a fruitful and huge tree. Its shadow has covered the entire Middle East," said Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi, the commander of the Iranian army, in what was a clear allusion to the "crescent of power" that today stretches from Tehran all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.

There is no denying that 40 years after the Islamic Revolution, Iran's "shadow" covers large expanses of the Middle East. It has expanded since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. But to those living under Iran's shadow, the "fruitful and huge tree" stands for a combination of religious fundamentalism, cross-border terrorism, domestic repression and foreign meddling.

Iraq and Lebanon are witnessing massive anti-government demonstrations. While those protests are fueled by local grievances and mainly directed at political elites, they pose a clear danger to Iran, which backs both governments and powerful militias in each country.

"Although many originally came out over issues of jobs, the cost of living and failing services, the protests evolved into an existential confrontation with the agents of Iran and their malign impact on society," wrote political commentator Baria Alamuddin for Arab News.

If there is a specific date for the beginning of Iran's "malign impact," it is arguably Nov. 4, 1979.

## **FORTY YEARS OF ANIMOSITY**

**1979** – The Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, forced to leave country on Jan. 16 after months of protests and strikes.

**1979** – US diplomats and citizens taken hostage after Iranian students seize US Embassy on Nov. 4 in Tehran in violation of Vienna Convention, demanding return of the shah to stand trial.

**1980** – US cuts diplomatic ties with Iran, seizes Iranian assets and restricts trade with the Islamic Republic. Failed US mission on April 24 to rescue the hostages results in several deaths.

**1981** – On Jan. 20, 52 US hostages freed after spending 444 days in captivity as part of a “final complete agreement.”

**1984** – Iran listed by the administration of US President Ronald Reagan as a state sponsor of terrorism.

**1985-86** – Iran-Contra scandal sheds light on secret deal during Reagan’s presidency to ship weapons to Iran in exchange for help in freeing US hostages held by Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

**1988** – Mistaking an Airbus A300 for a fighter jet, warship USS Vincennes shoots down Iran Air flight in the Gulf on July 3, killing all 290 on board.

**2002** – Iran, along with Iraq and North Korea, branded “axis of evil” by US President George W. Bush.

**2002** – Iran accused by US of having a clandestine nuclear weapons program after opposition group reveals details of uranium enrichment facilities.

**2012** – New law allows US President Barack Obama to sanction foreign banks if they fail to reduce their Iranian oil imports.

**2013** – Obama speaks by phone with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in September.

**2015** – Iran signs deal – called JCPOA – with world powers, including the US, to limit its nuclear activities and allow international inspectors.

**2016** – US lifts nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. **2018** – US President Donald Trump abandons nuclear deal and reinstates sanctions against Iran and countries that trade with it.

**2019** – In April, US designates Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organization. Additional sanctions imposed in May.

**2019** – Iran shoots down US military drone over Strait of Hormuz on June 20.

**2019** – Iranian demonstrators mark 40th anniversary of hostage crisis with slogans of “Down with USA” and “Death to America” in front of the former US Embassy in Tehran.

The assault that day on the US Embassy in Tehran was the culmination of protests by supporters of the revolution, demanding the extradition of the shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who was in the US receiving treatment for cancer.

According to an AP report from the time, “a mob of Iranian students overran US Marine guards in a three-hour struggle Sunday and invaded the American Embassy in Tehran, seizing dozens of staff members as hostages, Tehran Radio reported.” After seven days, the women and African-Americans were freed. In April 1980, US President Jimmy Carter cut diplomatic ties with Iran, imposed more sanctions and ordered all Iranian diplomats to leave the US. The same month, a failed US mission to rescue the hostages resulted in several

deaths, including eight US soldiers.

Finally, on Jan. 20, 1981, after secret negotiations that resulted in the signing of an agreement to free Iranian assets, the remaining 52 Americans were flown to Wiesbaden air base in Germany.

The hostage-taking marked the moment US-Iranian relations began deteriorating sharply.

## Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Under the shah, relations were good, as Iran was more or less Washington's main strategic ally in the region, having a status equivalent to, if not higher than, Israel.

The release of the hostages marked the end of a traumatic chapter in US diplomatic history, but for the rest of the Middle East, it marked the beginning of an era of terrorism, sectarianism and conflicts that continue to this day.

A demonstration on Monday outside the Iranian consulate in Iraq's holy city of Karbala saw protestors spray-painting "Karbala is free, Iran out!" on walls. Posters of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have been burnt – the protests have cost the lives of more than 250 people.

In Lebanon, a movement against corruption and the official confessional system has paralyzed the country for three weeks. Along with demands for a non-sectarian government, protesters have aimed anger at Tehran. "Iran wants to close its ears as it has caused poverty, militia dominance in other countries and government failure. The accusations match reality," wrote Arab News columnist Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed on Oct. 31.

In retrospect, the hostage crisis came as a major shock to the West. US intelligence had failed to anticipate it or the revolution. The consequences of that reverberate to this day across the Middle East. Attacking diplomatic posts remains an Iranian tactic. A mob stormed the UK Embassy in Tehran in 2011, while Saudi Arabian diplomatic posts were attacked in 2016.



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Iranian president announces another break from nuclear deal  
Iran bans cooperation with British Council

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## [Lebanese army opens roads closed by protesters amid scuffles](#)

Author:

By HASSAN AMMAR | AP

ID:

1572980722589052500

Tue, 2019-11-05 18:03

BEIRUT: Lebanese troops deployed Tuesday in different parts of the country to reopen roads and main thoroughfares closed by anti-government protesters faced resistance in some areas, leading to scuffles.

In most places, protesters withdrew peacefully as the troops moved in. But in Beirut's northern suburb of Zouk Mosbeh, a scuffle erupted when some demonstrators refused to move away from the main highway linking Beirut with northern Lebanon.

Several protesters were detained by troops. One protester, an older man, fainted and was rushed away in an ambulance; the Lebanese Red Cross later

said he was in stable condition.

9:20pm – Outside Zaytouna bay as protesters chant [#LebanonProtests](#)  
<https://t.co/wl3TMgrtS4> [pic.twitter.com/Orks0ZvjK0](https://t.co/wl3TMgrtS4)

– Arab News (@arabnews) [November 5, 2019](#)

Human rights activist Wadih Al-Asmar said dozens were detained during the scuffles north of Beirut.

Later Tuesday, Moody's ratings agency downgraded the government of Lebanon's issuer ratings to Caa2, saying it remains on review for downgrade. The agency said the downgrade reflects the increased likelihood of a debt rescheduling or other liability management exercise that may constitute a default. Moody's downgraded Lebanon's issuer ratings to Caa1 in January but had maintained it there after protests broke out on Oct. 17.

## Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

It estimates that Lebanon has a foreign exchange buffer of about \$ 5-10 billion and that would likely to be used to service external debt payments. Anti-government protesters have been holding demonstrations demanding an end to widespread corruption and mismanagement by the political class that has ruled the country for three decades. The protesters have paralyzed Lebanon by closing roads inside cities as well as major highways. The protesters rejected an economic reform plan, demanding deeper changes to the government and election laws.

More photos from the protest in front of Nejme Square in Downtown Beirut [#LebanonProtests](#) <https://t.co/wl3TMgrtS4>  
[pic.twitter.com/MXwJGTFZ8p](https://t.co/wl3TMgrtS4)

– Arab News (@arabnews) [November 5, 2019](#)

“We are not defying the army but we want our demands to be met,” said hairdresser Elie Abdu, 29, in Zouk Mosbeh. “We want a technocrat government, we want the poor to have food and medical care.”

The protesters have been demanding the new Cabinet not include politicians but consist of experts who can work on getting Lebanon out of its economic crisis.

Also in Beirut, in the nearby area of Jal el-Deeb, troops chased protesters who were closing a major road, running after them into streets until they rushed into a church and hid inside it.

Troops also opened the highway linking Beirut with southern Lebanon and several major avenues in the capital.

The protesters who have been closing roads for more than two weeks have started holding sit-ins inside and at the entrances of state-run companies and institutions, including the country's two cellular telephone companies as well as the electricity company.

Last week, Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned, meeting a key demand of the protests. The leaderless anti-government movement has united Lebanese from various religious sects in a call for the overthrow of the political system that has dominated the country since the civil war. Decades of corruption and economic mismanagement that followed have culminated in a severe fiscal crisis.

President Michel Aoun has not yet set a date for consultations with heads of parliamentary blocs to name a new prime minister, a procedure that follows the resignation of a Cabinet.





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Aoun tells thousands of supporters Lebanon must unite behind reforms  
Protesters block roads in Beirut, other parts of Lebanon

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## [Iran bans cooperation with British Council](#)

Tue, 2019-11-05 16:19

DUBAI: Iran's intelligence ministry on Tuesday said any cooperation with the British Council was banned and would result in prosecution, the ministry's website reported.

"Britain ... was planning to implement a project for cultural networking purposes in cooperation with the British Council in Iran ... any cooperation with the British Council is prohibited and will result in prosecution," the ministry said in a statement.

In August, Iran's Supreme Court upheld a 10-year prison sentence for spying against an Iranian woman, Aras Amiri, who worked for the British Council in London. Amiri was arrested last year during a family visit to Iran.



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[Aras Amiri](#)

Iran sentences British Council worker to 10 years for spying for UKIran sentences 3 to long prison terms on spying charges

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## [\*\*Erdogan: Kurdish fighters have not left Syria 'safe zone' despite US, Russia deals\*\*](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1572949124566815000

Tue, 2019-11-05 10:15

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia had not withdrawn from a planned “safe zone” in northeast Syria despite Turkey’s agreements with the United States and Russia. Turkey struck two separate deals with the United States and Russia for the YPG, which Ankara views as a terrorist group, to withdraw from the “safe zone” it plans to form in northeastern Syria. While Washington and Moscow have said the fighters left, Erdogan has said this was not the case. Speaking to lawmakers from his AK Party in Ankara, Erdogan said YPG fighters remained in Tel Rifaat, Manbij and to the east of Ras al Ain, which Turkey targeted in its latest incursion. He also said Turkey would abide by its deals as long as the United States and Russia kept their own promises.



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Turkey captures sister of slain Daesh leader Baghdadi in northern Syria  
Turkey-backed fighters kill foreign medic in Syria’s northeast