

## EU 'closely following' situation in Iran

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News

The EU has voiced concern about the current situation in Iran and called for an end to the continuing violence in the country.



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EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini issued a statement saying, “The European Union is closely following the ongoing demonstrations in Iran, the increase of violence and the unacceptable loss of human lives. For the EU, human rights have always been a core issue in our relationship with Iran.

“Peaceful demonstration and freedom of expression are fundamental rights that apply to every country, and Iran is no exception.”

She said, “In the last days, we have been in touch with the Iranian authorities. In the spirit of frankness and respect that is at the basis of our relationship, we expect all concerned to refrain from

violence and the right of expression to be guaranteed, also in light of the statements made by the Iranian government.”

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The Italian official added, “The European Union will continue to monitor the situation.”

Other leaders in Europe have offered measured responses. Several nations in the region have begun investing in Iran since sanctions were lifted following the 2015 nuclear deal.

French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and expressed concern over the violence and deaths in the past week.

He called for restraint, and the two leaders agreed to postpone the French foreign minister’s visit to Tehran because of the current situation.

Iran has accused the US of “grotesque” interference in its internal affairs in a letter to the UN.

It said the US leadership, in “numerous absurd tweets, [had] incited Iranians to engage in disruptive acts” which violated international law.

Twenty-one people died in six days of protests sparked by Iran’s economic problems, which spanned several cities.

On Wednesday, thousands of government supporters marched through Tehran, state TV IRIB reported, with some chanting “Death to America” after Iranian officials blamed the United States and its allies for provoking the anti-government rallies.

Online state media reported a mix of people - families, senior citizens and students - were among the demonstrators, but images on television were mostly of middle-aged and older men. Many held pictures of President Rouhani and waved national flags.

On Thursday state media focused on pro-government rallies after a second night without reports of major protests.

The unrest was initially over price rises and corruption but the focus quickly turned to the remote elite and particularly Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. They are the largest protests since the disputed 2009 presidential election.

The Russian foreign ministry has urged the US not to interfere in Iran’s “domestic issues”, Russia's Itar-Tass news agency reports.

On Tuesday, US envoy to the UN Nikki Haley branded as “complete nonsense” Iran’s suggestion that external enemies were fomenting the unrest.

She said, "The people of Iran are crying out for freedom. All freedom-loving people must stand with their cause."

### **About the author**

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