

# Iran's 'enemies' meddling in protests, leader says

## US calls for emergency United Nations meetings

**Kim Hjeltnes and David Jackson**  
USA TODAY

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini accused Iran's enemies Tuesday of meddling in recent protest rallies, in his first public comments since anti-government demonstrations erupted six days ago.

In the United States, the rhetoric grew more heated as President Donald Trump expressed support for the anti-government activists. "The people of Iran are finally acting against the brutal and corrupt Iranian regime," Trump tweeted Tuesday at the White House.

The U.S. called for the U.N. Security Council and Human Rights Council to hold emergency meetings on Iran. U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley said "the U.N. must speak" on the issue.

"Nowhere is the urgency of peace, security and freedom being tested more than in Iran," Haley said, adding

that U.S. officials "applaud the tremendous courage of the Iranian people." At least 21 people have died and 450 have been arrested in the nationwide protests that began Thursday in Mashhad and spread to other cities, according to Iranian media.

The unrest started over economic issues, such as rising prices and high unemployment, but widened to a general anger over alleged government corruption and discontent with Iran's clerical rulers. Security services have used force and tear gas to disperse crowds.

According to comments published Tuesday on Khamenei's official website, the supreme leader said Iran's enemies had used money, weapons, politics and intelligence apparatuses "to create problems for the Islamic system."

Khamenei, who has the final say on all state matters, did not name a specific country or organization. He said he would elaborate in due course.

Iranian state television reported Tuesday that nine people were killed overnight in Iran's central Isfahan province, about 215 miles south of Tehran,

including a member of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani sought to downplay the significance of the protests in a cabinet session Sunday. Still, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency warned Tuesday that arrested protesters could face the death penalty when they come to trial.

On Tuesday, Trump again blamed President Barack Obama for helping to strike a deal between Iran and six world powers over Tehran's nuclear program.

"All of the money that President Obama so foolishly gave them went into terrorism and into their 'pockets.' The people have little food, big inflation and no human rights. The U.S. is watching!" Trump said.

The Trump administration also called on Iran to stop blocking Instagram and other social media sites and encouraged Iranians to use special software to circumvent controls, such as virtual private networks, known as VPNs, said Undersecretary of State Steve Goldstein.

*Contributing: The Associated Press*

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