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Iran Protests Update

February 18 – 23, 2026

On December 28, 2025, protests against the Iranian regime erupted across Iran in response to the country's economic collapse. JINSA will release weekly updates covering the demonstrations as long as they continue. The update below reflects information as of February 23, 2026, at 12:00 pm ET.

Overview

Protest activity intensified during the February 18–23 reporting period, marked by renewed large-scale mobilization tied to the conclusion of the 40-day mourning period for demonstrators killed on January 8–9. CTP-ISW recorded 19 anti-regime protests across eight provinces on February 19—the highest single-day protest activity since January 11—followed by 20 protests on February 20, with five demonstrations on each day reportedly involving at least 1,000 participants, the first protests of that size in more than a month. Universities reemerged as focal points of dissent as campuses reopened on February 22–23, with anti-government protests reported at multiple universities in Tehran, Mashhad, and Isfahan. HRANA also released a new report stating that between December 28, 2025, and February 16, 2026—the first 50 days of the current protest wave—676 protests occurred across 203 cities.

Protests

- HRANA released a new report [stating](#) that between December 28, 2025, and February 16, 2026—the first 50 days of the current protest wave—676 protests occurred across 203 cities.
- On February 22–23, as universities in Iran re-opened, anti-government protests occurred at least [five](#) universities in Tehran, [one](#) in Mashhad, and [one](#) in Isfahan.
 - » Student protestors chanted: “[Death to the child killer regime](#)”; “[This is the final battle, Pahlavi will return](#)”; “[Woman, Life, Freedom](#)”; and “[We will take Iran back](#).”
- CTP-ISW’s analysis [recorded](#) 19 anti-regime protests across eight provinces on February 19—the highest single-day protest activity since January 11—followed by 20 protests on February 20, indicating renewed mobilization tied to the conclusion of the 40-day mourning period for demonstrators killed on January 8–9.
 - » Reported protests occurred across eight provinces, including [Tehran](#), [Fars](#), [Isfahan](#), [Razavi Khorasan](#), [Kurdistan](#), [Bushehr](#), [Gilan](#), and [Alborz](#).
 - Protest chants included: “[Long Live the Shah](#)”; “[Pahlavi will return](#)”; “[We are a great nation, we will take back Iran](#)”; “[Death to the dictator](#)”; and “[Death to Basiji](#).”
 - » The 40th day of mourning, which marks the end of the initial mourning period in Shia Islam and is traditionally observed through public commemorations, served as the [primary catalyst](#) for mobilization.

- During the reporting period, Iranians gathered to hold memorial ceremonies marking the end of the 40-day mourning period for protesters killed in early January in which funeralgoers were heard chanting “[Death to the dictator](#)”; “[Long live the Shah](#)”; “[This is the final battle, Pahlavi will return](#)”; “[We will not forget the bloodshed](#)”; and “[We are a great nation, we will take Iran back](#)” while holding images of slain protesters.
- On February 22, five Kurdish Iranian opposition groups [formed a coalition](#) against the regime in Iran. The coalition includes the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KPIK), and the Khabat Organization of Iranian Kurdistan.

Regime Retaliation

- As a result of new protests at universities, the Iranian regime has begun new retaliatory measures:
 - » On February 22–23, during student protests at [Ferdowsi University](#) and the [University of Tehran](#), Basij forces attacked student protesters. The current president of Sharif University of Technology in Tehran and former government official, Masoud Tajrishi, [warned](#) protesting students on Monday that legal authorities could intervene and that some could face entry bans if demonstrations continue.
 - » On February 23, *Iran International* [reported](#) that a detained protester from Mashhad died in the hospital after sustaining severe torture in custody, causing him to become comatose.
 - » On February 21, security forces [blocked](#) exits at Amirkabir University of Technology in Tehran and detained students.
- On February 19, security forces [arrested](#) the family members of slain protester Karim Alizadeh as they gathered for his memorial ceremony in Tehran.

Regime Responses

- On February 21, Iran’s Foreign Ministry announced that it would take [reciprocal measures](#) against the navies and air forces of European Union (EU) member states following the bloc’s designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization.
- On February 21, following President Donald Trump’s comments on Iran’s protest death toll, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [responded](#) on X, writing: “Iran’s Government has already published a comprehensive list of all 3117 victims of recent terrorist operation [sic], including about 200 officers. If anyone disputes accuracy [sic] of our data, please share any evidence.”

U.S. Responses

- On February 20, Trump [stated](#) that the Iranian regime killed 32,000 people during protests, while adding that the regime paused plans to execute 837 protesters two weeks earlier following his warning that the United States would strike Iran without waiting for negotiations if the executions proceeded.
- On February 18, the U.S. Department of State [imposed](#) visa restrictions against 18 Iranian regime officials and telecommunications industry leaders, as well as their immediate family members.

International Responses

- On February 23, Iranians [received](#) a mysterious mass text in Farsi addressed “to the oppressed people of Iran” stating that Trump is “a man of action” and calling for the protesters to “wait.”
- On February 21, Iranians in London, Newcastle, Munich, Copenhagen, and Berlin [held gatherings](#) in support of the nationwide protests in Iran.
- On February 21, the chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Security and Defense, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, [voiced support](#) for expelling Iranian diplomats from Europe.
- On February 19, the EU formally [designated](#) the IRGC as a terrorist organization, effectively freezing its assets within EU member states and prohibiting EU entities from providing funds or economic resources to the IRGC.