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WORLD | MIDDLE EAST

Iran Protests Enter Third Straight Day as Students Join In

The protests started on Sunday after merchants were angered by the Iranian rial's falling value

By [Benoit Faucon](#) [Follow](#)

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Iranians protested for a third straight day over mounting frustration with a spiraling economic crisis that has gripped the country since its war with Israel.

On Tuesday, university students in Tehran joined the protests, which began earlier this week after merchants angry over the Iranian rial's falling value took to the streets in several cities.

At the University of Science and Culture in northwestern Iran, students chanted "death to the dictator," in videos posted on social media and verified by Storyful, which is owned by [News Corp](#), the parent company of The Wall Street Journal. At a market for iron near Tehran's main airport, traders gathered to protest, footage verified by Storyful showed.

A carpet seller at Tehran's central bazaar said he saw the market shut down this morning.

Protests have also taken place on Qeshm Island, on Iran's Persian Gulf coast, and in Hamedan, in western Iran.

The continuing protests add more pressure on the government struggling to contain widespread discontent. Iran is facing a weak rial, extremely high inflation and international sanctions. It is also running out of water, and power shortages are widespread and frequent.



People walk past closed shops in the Tehran Grand Bazaar in Tehran, following protests over a plunge in the currency's value. MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA/REUTERS

The short June war with Israel also exposed the government's weakness and its inability to protect itself from infiltration by Israeli spies. It devastated Iran's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles programs and shattered its air defenses.

"The Iranian government has had an annus horribilis. Its deterrence against foreign adversaries was shattered, and every one of the grievances it faces at home has gotten worse," said Ali Vaez, Iran project director at International Crisis Group. That puts "the country's domestic and diplomatic policies in a state of perpetual damage control."

Since the war, the government has been carrying out a [widespread crackdown on dissidents](#), arresting opponents and executing more people this year than at any point in nearly four decades, in an effort to prevent a popular uprising. At the same time, it has tried to ease the pressure on some of its strict moral codes.

It wasn't clear how many people had attended the protests. The Fars news agency, which is affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said antigovernment gatherings had taken place at Tehran universities and at the iron market but said they were small.



Iranian lawmakers participate in an open session of parliament in Tehran. ICANA/ZUMA PRESS

The drop in the currency is a particular sore spot, undermining people's savings and raising costs. Iran's rial has lost 60% of its value since the June war with Israel.

A 41-year-old real-estate agent in Shiraz said the currency drop is exacerbating food-price inflation. His savings have been depleted. Money that comes into his account fades instantly as its value drops, he said.

Central to Iran's economic problems are tight international sanctions. Earlier this year, Tehran and Washington engaged in talks over Iran's nuclear program that could have led to relief. The talks made little progress and haven't resumed since the war with Israel.

A parliament dominated by conservatives is examining a budget that increases military spending and gives priority to payments to public servants rather than infrastructure and job creation. The budget has been fiercely criticized by Iranians on social media and under debate by lawmakers.

"The government is relying on patronage for its power base in the clergy and military," said Saeid Golkar, an associate professor at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. For the rest of the population, its "only strategy is repression."

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Videos