**Iran protests turn deadly as 2 killed amid**

**warnings from the regime**

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The growing unrest over the economic woes plaguing Iran turned deadly as two protesters were killed at a rally amid warnings Sunday from the country’s government that anyone who disrupts order and breaks the law “must be responsible for their behavior and pay the price" as Presdient Trump said the U.S. is "watching very closely.”

The deaths were the first of the demonstrations, which began Thursday and appear to be the largest to strike the Islamic Republic since the protests that followed the country's disputed 2009 presidential election.

"On Saturday evening, there was an illegal protest in Dorud and a number of people took to the streets responding to calls from hostile groups, leading to clashes,” said Habibollah Khojastehpour, the deputy governor of the western Lorestan province, according to Sky News. “Unfortunately in these clashes two citizens from Dorud were killed.”

Khojastehpour told state television that "no shots were fired by the police and security forces” and “foreign agents” and “enemies of the revolutions” were to blame.

A Revolutionary Guards Telegram channel blamed the deaths on "people armed with hunting and military weapons" who "entered the protests and started shooting randomly toward the crowd and the governor's building,” according to Sky News, adding that six people also were wounded.

Videos circulating on social media late Saturday appeared to show fallen protesters in Doroud as gunshots sounded in the background, although the footage could not be independently confirmed.

The killings came as interior minister Abdolrahman Rahmani Fazli warned Iranians about participating in the protests.

"Those who damage public property, disrupt order and break the law must be responsible for their behavior and pay the price," Sky News quoted Fazli as saying early Sunday on state television.

The CEO of the popular messaging app Telegram, which protesters have used to plan and publicize demonstrations, according to the Associated Press, also said Sunday that Iran has been "blocking access... for the majority of Iranians." Iranians said the app is now inaccessible by mobile phone networks.

Thousands have taken to the streets of cities across Iran, beginning on Thursday in Mashhad, the country's second-largest city and a holy site for Shiite pilgrims.

At least 50 protesters have been arrested since Thursday, authorities said Saturday. State TV said some protesters chanted the name of the U.S.-backed shah, who fled into exile just before Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution and later died, according to the Associated Press.

The protests have also spread to Iran’s capital of Tehran, and on Saturday, tens of thousands of government supporters marched in cities to show their support for the regime, Sky News reported.

On Sunday, the semi-official ILNA news agency reported that authorities have arrested some 80 protesters in the city of Arak, some 173 miles south of Tehran.

President Donald Trump tweeted Sunday that “people are finally getting wise as to how their money and wealth is being stolen and squandered on terrorism.”

Texas Rep. Will Hurd said a day earlier that the “Iranian regime is of course trying to suppress the fact that protests against their tyrannical reign are popping up across Iran.

“The Ayatollahs are out of touch with their citizens and are exporting terror abroad,” the Republican congressman wrote in a message on his Facebook page. “We should support a free and peaceful Iran. We should support the people of Iran who have had enough.”

But Iran has dismissed American support for the protests.

“Iranian people give no credit to the deceitful and opportunist remarks of U.S. officials or Mr. Trump," Iran Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said Saturday, according to a state television report.

Iran's economy has improved since its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which saw Iran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the end of some international sanctions. Tehran now sells its oil on the global market and has signed deals to purchase tens of billions of dollars' worth of Western aircraft.

That improvement has not reached the average Iranian, however. Unemployment remains high, and official inflation has crept up to 10 percent again. A recent increase in egg and poultry prices by as much as 40 percent, which a government spokesman has blamed on a cull over avian flu fears, appears to have been the spark for the economic protests.

While the protests have sparked clashes, Iran's hard-line paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and its affiliates have not intervened as they have in other unauthorized demonstrations since the 2009 election.

Some analysts outside of Iran have suggested that may be because the economic protests initially just put pressure on the administration of President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate whose administration struck the nuclear deal.