Iran chaos: Police fire tear gas in brutal protest crackdown as anger rises

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By Ciaran McGrath

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<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1311134/iran-news-iran-protests-police-tear-gas-riots-crackdown-coronavirus>

[Iran](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1309657/iran-news-CIA-spy-dead-world-war-3-donald-trump-missile-spy-latest)'s clerical rulers are desperate to prevent a revival of last November's anti-government [protests](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1230373/world-latest-iran-passenger-jet-black-box-kiev), when more than 1,000 people are thought to have been killed in the deadliest street violence seen in the country since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Tehran says 225 people were [killed](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1217957/iran-news-democracy-protesters-iran-government-crackdown-tehran-amnesty-international), including members of the security forces. On Tuesday, the judiciary said the death sentences of three men who were involved in that unrest had been upheld, triggering a surge of online protests.

In a statement yesterday, the police urged people to "vigilantly refrain from any gathering that could provide a pretext for the counter-revolutionary movement", accusing "enemies" of whipping up discontent.

The statement added: "The police force has an inherent and legal duty to deal decisively with these desperate moves."

Meanwhile a separate statement issued by by Imam Reza Corps in the northeastern Khorasan Razavi province said: "With full mastery and action of the intelligence organisation of Imam Reza Corps of Khorasan Razavi province, a number of the main hostile groups, who were persuading their advocates and people to hold protest rallies on streets via publication of call, were identified and arrested."

Videos posted on social media from inside Iran on Thursday showed protesters chanting: "Fear not, fear not, we are in this together!" Some chanted slogans against top officials.

Clips appeared to show a heavy presence of security forces in several cities, although their veracity could not be independently verified.

Iran's economic situation, already dire in the face of tough economic sanctions imposed by the United States which have hit the country's oil exports, has been made still worse by the coronavirus pandemic.

Officially the country has 269,440 confirmed cases, and 13,791 deaths, although unofficial claims suggest the figure could be significantly higher.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani today estimated 25 million Iranians were currently infected.

Speaking by phone from Tehran, one Iranian man who asked to remain anonymous said by phone: "People are angry.

"The economy is so bad that we cannot survive."

Last year's unrest began with protests over economic hardship and the soaring inflation but turned political, with demonstrators demanding top officials step down.

There were calls on social media for demonstrations across the country on Friday to protest against the three death sentences.

Internet-access advocacy group NetBlocks.org also claimed internet access in Iran's oil-rich Khuzestan province had been disrupted late on Thursday.

Iran has consistently blamed the United States and Israel for domestic unrest.

With reference to last November's disturbances, Iranian authorities have acknowledged that some "rioters" were shot and killed by security forces.

Religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei claimed the unrest was a "very dangerous conspiracy" by Iran’s enemies.

Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Director, said: "Harrowing testimony from eyewitnesses suggests that almost immediately after the Iranian authorities massacred hundreds of those participating in nationwide protests, they went on to orchestrate a widescale clampdown designed to instill fear and prevent anyone from speaking out about what happened.

"Without urgent international pressure, thousands will remain at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

"The international community must take urgent action, including through the UN Human Rights Council holding a special session on Iran to mandate an inquiry into the unlawful killings of protesters, horrifying wave of arrests, and enforced disappearances and torture of detainees, with a view to ensuring accountability."

Citing "credible sources", Amnesty claimed in Raja’i Shahr prison in the city of Karaj, hundreds of detainees, including children, were been brought in trucks to the jail, with handcuffed and blindfolded detainees punched, kicked, and flogged with batons by security forces.