Critics slam UN after it lowers flag to half-staff in honor of 'mass murderer' Iranian president

May 21, 2024

By [Chris Pandolfo](https://www.foxnews.com/person/p/chris-pandolfo)

Fox News

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/critics-slam-un-lowers-flag-half-staff-honor-mass-murderer-iranian-president>

The [United Nations](https://www.foxnews.com/category/world/united-nations) flag was lowered to half-staff Tuesday in honor of the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash Monday.

Raisi, nicknamed the ‘Butcher of Tehran’ for his oversight of mass executions of political prisoners in 1988, died along with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other Iranian officials who were in the helicopter when it crashed in a mountainous region to the country's northwest. Several U.N. member nations have offered condolences to the Iranian regime – a show of support for the state sponsor of terror that has outraged human rights activists and Iran hawks.

‘One might say this sign of U.N. respect for mass murderers and terrorist executioners is not a surprise,’ said Anne Bayefsky, director of the Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust, and president of Human Rights Voices.

‘The U.N. Security Council or General Assembly has refused to condemn the terrorist organization Hamas and its October 7th atrocities, orchestrated through Tehran. Iran is the leading state sponsor of terrorism, but the U.N. has no definition of terrorism because Islamic states claim killing Jews and other targets, including Americans, isn't terror,’ Bayefsky said in a statement to Fox News Digital.

Thousands of miles away from the U.N. headquarters in New York City, mourners in black began to gather Tuesday for days of funerals and processions in Iran to honor the dead. The mass demonstrations will be policed by the Shiite theocracy, with prosecutors already having warned people against any public signs of celebrating his death and a heavy security presence seen on the streets of Tehran since the crash, The Associated Press reported.

Raisi, 63, was seen as a possible successor for [Iran's supreme leader](https://www.foxnews.com/category/world/conflicts/iran), the 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. His death now throws that selection into question, particularly as there is no heir-apparent cleric for the presidency ahead of planned June 28 elections.

It is unclear what international presence the funeral in Tehran will draw, as Raisi faced U.S. sanctions for his part in mass executions in 1988 and for abuses targeting protesters and dissidents while leading the country's judiciary. Iran under Raisi also shipped bomb-carrying drones to Russia to be used in its war on Ukraine.

‘I don’t feel comfortable sending condolences while Iran is sending drones that are used against civilians in Ukraine,’ wrote Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis in an X post.

United Kingdom Security Minister Tom Tugendhat made similar comments in an X post. ‘President Raisi’s regime has murdered thousands at home, and targeted people here in Britain and across Europe. I will not mourn him,’ he wrote.

The United Nations on Monday held a moment of silence for Raisi at the request of Russia, China and Algeria representatives. United States Deputy Ambassador to the U.N. Robert Wood and others stood at the U.N. Security Council for a minute to honor Raisi. The support shown for the Iranian leader has dismayed Bayefsky and others who closely follow the regime's human rights abuses.

‘The most troubling aspect of now honoring Raisi is that the U.N. operates on a herd mentality and the Biden administration – head of the greatest and most powerful democracy on earth – thinks it is part of the herd,’ Bayefsky told Fox News Digital.

She called Monday's moment of silence, ‘A shocking disservice to all the victims of Raisi's reign of terror and oppression both inside and outside of Iran.’

Israeli U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan, who called the moment of silence a ‘disgrace,’ slammed the international body for continuing to honor the ‘mass murdering’ president of Iran by lowering the flag.

‘What will it be tomorrow? Will a U.N. hall be named after him? The U.N.’s moral compass is in the gutter and the organization is an offense to true human rights supporters,’ Erdan said.

Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Fox News Digital the honors given to Raisi were an insult to the Iranian people.

‘The U.N. and the Biden administration should honor the victims of the Iranian regime, not the Butcher of Tehran. Tributes to Raisi are a slap in the face to all those who suffered under his reign,’ Scott said.

Another committee Republican, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said ‘the worked is better off with Ibrahim Raisi dead.’

‘Known as the ‘Butcher of Tehran,’ he was a mass murderer repeatedly sanctioned for his atrocities. He called for murdering Jews and murdering American officials. With this action, the UN has utterly beclowned itself — flying the flag at half-mast to honor a murderous, totalitarian monster is simply disgraceful,’ Cruz said.

[State Department](https://www.foxnews.com/category/politics/foreign-policy/state-department) spokesperson Matt Miller addressed the U.S. participation in the moment of silence at an afternoon press briefing.

Asked if the participation was appropriate, Miller clarified that ‘we have been quite clear that Ebrahim Raisi was a brutal participant in the repression of the Iranian people for nearly four decades.’

‘Some of the worst human rights abuses occurred during his tenure as president, especially the human rights abuses against the women and girls of Iran,’ Miller said. ‘That said, we regret any loss of life. We don’t want to see anyone die in a helicopter crash. But that doesn’t change the reality of his record, both as a judge and as the president of Iran.’