Iran protests: Over 300 killed and thousands arrested in violent crackdown, Amnesty says

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<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iran-protests-death-toll-arrest-government-crackdown-amnesty-a9249351.html>

At least 304 people were killed and thousands more injured during anti-government protests across [Iran](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/Iran) last month, according to [Amnesty International](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/AmnestyInternational).

The UK-based human rights organisation said the latest death toll was based on credible reports and eyewitness testimonies it had compiled.

But the real number is likely even higher as security forces used lethal force to crush the protests.

Iranian officials have acknowledged that a number of people, including what they referred to as innocent bystanders, have been killed, but they have not yet announced the total figure.

Authorities have stated that over 7,000 people were arrested during the protests. They include journalists, activists, and students, and now human rights groups are raising an alarm that the detainees could be subject to ill-treatment and abuse.

Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa director at Amnesty International told The Independent that detainees included children as young as 15, who are being held with adult detainees in facilities notorious for torture, such as Fashafouyeh prison in Tehran province.

“We have verified and analysed video footage showing security forces beating, punching and kicking handcuffed detainees. In dozens of other cases that we have documented, detainees have had little or no contact with their families since their arrest. Some are held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance, meaning that the authorities have detained them but are refusing to give their relatives any information on their fate or whereabouts,” Mr Luther added.

The [United Nations](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/UnitedNations) has condemned the violent crackdown of protests and stated that there were children among those who were killed. Amnesty International says a 15-year-old boy was shot in the heart in the city of Shiraz as he passed by the protests on his way home from school.

Nationwide protests broke in dozens of cities across Iran last month after the government suddenly hiked the price of fuel overnight. Security forces brutally suppressed the demonstrations, and internet access was cut for a few days in most parts of the country.

A senior member of a moderate political party in Iran, who did not want to be identified for security reasons, told The Independent that protests were a result of government corruption, incompetence, poverty and above all, people’s sense of inability to change the status quo, and that the response to protests has been severe and unprecedented.

“We have never experienced this level of violence, from both the protesters and the state. We are dealing with a state that is unable to control the situation and is also not willing to accept any protest to this situation,” he told The Independent, adding that the demonstrations may have ended for now but they may re-emerge in the future since the grievances are still in place.

Tehran has been under severe economic sanctions from the United States since [Donald Trump](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/DonaldTrump) pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal last year. Washington has called its policy “maximum pressure campaign” aiming to curb Iran’s behaviour in the Middle East and to bring Iran to the negotiating table to make a new deal with Mr Trump. So far none of the stated goals seem to have been achieved, experts say.

At least 208 killed in protests across Iran, says Amnesty

“The regime, under tremendous outside pressure, decided to adopt an iron fist policy to make itself look strong and in control,” said Sina Azodi, foreign policy advisor at Gulf State Analytics, a Washington risk assessor.

“The premise is that under economic pressure state has further securitised and is willing to use more violence to ensure that it doesn’t lose control. Appearing weak in the face of protests could send the signal that the regime is crumbling under outside pressure – and it’s the last thing they want to do,” Mr Azodi told The Independent.