

## What Is Happening in Iran?

*A six-part series on the state of the government and church in Iran*

History is in the making in Iran. As the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the anniversary of the Islamic revolution approaches, we are seeing the end of this regime. Much is happening in Iran today politically, socially, and spiritually. I believe we will see a major change in Iran soon and it will be in weeks, months, but not years.

There is much news daily about Iran. Following the news carefully and being constantly and directly in touch with the people of Iran has given me a perspective that might be helpful to those who want to understand what is going on. So each day for the next week, I will provide a short commentary on **what is happening in Iran**.



### Part 1: What Is Happening with Iran's People?

Since December 2017, citizens have protested almost daily on the streets of many Iranian cities. These protests are intensifying. What is the main reason people protest, knowing that they may be arrested or even killed? It is the economy.

Iran is a rich country. It has the second largest gas reserves and fourth largest oil reserves in the world. But corruption and mismanagement have deteriorated the economy to a point where millions struggle to meet basic necessities such as bread, milk, eggs, and meat. Many cities have no water or electricity during this hot summer. The unemployment rate is high and jobs so scarce that even those with higher education have no jobs. People with master's and doctorate degrees are willing to drive cabs and wash dishes in a restaurant, but they cannot find even that work.

Last week, the Iranian Parliament admitted that 50 percent of the population is under the poverty line. Others put that number at 80 percent.

### ***Why are the people of Iran so angry?***

1. **Terrorism prioritized over people.** They are angry because they see that their government is not using its income to build its economy but to finance its agenda in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and Yemen. People get angry when they see money spent to help Syrian Bashar Al-Asad stay in power. They get angry when they see their government helping the needy children in Palestine and Lebanon but not in Iran.

2. **Unchecked government corruption.** They get angry when almost weekly for the last three years, they have heard about multimillion-dollar embezzlements by government officials. (After the removal of sanctions by the Obama administration, the government saw a sudden jump in its income, which fueled many large embezzlements by well-known government officials.) What makes the people even angrier is that these government officials have not been prosecuted but keep their positions. Yet, a [thief's hand is amputated](#) for a small crime.
3. **Religious double standards.** They get angry when they see that the government's morality police prosecute the people over the slightest infraction of dress code, but the children of those in power host illegal parties (posting clips on social media) with no consequences. The people see that double standard and get mad when they see a [teenage girl publicly prosecuted](#) on television because she posted a clip of herself on Instagram dancing.
4. **Vast economic inequality.** They get angry when they see the lifestyle of those in power and their families. They see many Maseratis and Lamborghinis on the streets of Tehran, they see other luxurious trappings of the few in power, they look at themselves struggling with basic necessities, and they get angry.

## Part 2: What Is Happening with Iran's Government?

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) is in trouble. It is facing problems that cannot solve even if it decides to do so.

1. **It has totally lost its credibility with the people of Iran.** Nobody trusts the government anymore, and there is nothing they can do to win back that trust. Even reforms will not work at this point. Every move and decision of the government is looked at with suspicion and is rejected as "another ploy to deceive us."
2. **It is facing financial troubles.** Mismanagement of the country's income; widespread embezzlements; an 80 percent loss of its money value; and an over commitment to helping Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Yemen has drained the government's cash. It is struggling to meet its monthly payroll.
3. **Sanctions will add pressure.** Even without the sanctions, the IRI is in big trouble. The sanctions that started this week and the oil embargo starting in November will yet be another big financial hit and will speed up the downward spiral of its demise.

4. **The people no longer support this regime.** In the previous round of sanctions imposed by the Obama administration, the government's rhetoric was, "America is our enemy and wants to destroy us by sanctions. So if you are under financial pressure, it is the US's fault. Let's be united and suffer in silence so that we will not let our enemy USA win." This approach no longer works. Today, the people say, "We are in trouble because of you and not the US. America is not our enemy, you are." Many Iranians even support the sanctions saying, "Yes, we are willing to suffer a little more from sanctions because it will bring down the government faster!"

Sunset is fast approaching for this regime. Its members will try to present a calm face to the world, but its day of power is almost over.

### Part 3: What Is the United States Doing?

Trump and his administration are following three main plans to push out the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI):

1. **Pressure with sanctions.** The US is putting more financial pressure on the already pressured government of Iran through sanctions and an oil embargo. Trump may talk of violence, but he will not enter into a full-fledged war with Iran because all he needs to do is just wait for sanctions to effectively destroy the IRI.
2. **Approach Iran from a point of strength.** Trump's constant threat to engage in military action puts extra pressure on the IRI. Iran's government knows its military is no match to the power of the USA and Israel. They know that if a war starts, their people will not support them as they did in the eight-year war against Saddam in the 1980s. Obama negotiated from a point of weakness: he begged Iran not to start a war and bribed it merely to slow down its development of nuclear bombs. But Trump approaches the IRI from a point of strength. Many Iranians living inside Iran are pleased with and support Trump's approach because they feel Obama threw the IRI a lifeline to survive, but Trump has pulled it back.
3. **Keep open the possibility of negotiation.** Trump says he is open to negotiation but wants Iran to take the first step. Trump is a strong negotiator—as shown in his book *The Art of the Deal*—and knows the one who first breaks down and asks for a meeting has a weaker position in negotiation.

#### Part 4: What Options for Survival Does Iran's Government Have?

The government of Iran (IRI) is going down with or without sanctions. The sanctions will merely speed up the process. The IRI has few options left:

1. **Try to reform itself.** Reforms will not work because the leaders are too corrupt and disjointed to implement a comprehensive reform and the people of Iran will not buy into any plan that the government supports. The IRI has passed its window of opportunity when reform might have worked.
2. **Try to stifle the protest with violence.** This option has a high probability of occurring. The IRI has shown that it has no respect for lives. When cornered and their existence threatened, they might easily turn to violence. Not long ago, a top clergyman said, "If we have to kill 1 million to keep Islam in Iran, we will."
3. **Save themselves and let the regime collapse.** It is very possible that those in power will abandon their positions and flee the country. Many have already stored their wealth in foreign banks, anticipating the day when they have to flee. The dollar exchange rate tripled recently because those in power were buying billions of dollars to send their wealth abroad. At this point, a military coup is also very possible. If this coup helps dethrone the mullahs and very quickly establishes a secular and democratic government, it could work.
4. **Negotiate with the US government.** I believe negotiation is the number one option for the IRI and they will take it. Of course, they will not do this publicly. They do not want to lose the little respect and credibility they have before their people and the world by admitting defeat. They will ask for negotiations behind closed doors while at the same time bad mouthing the USA and Trump in public and the media.

The IRI has already started planning for reform (option 1). But they are finding fast that they are not capable of doing it and the people will not be fooled by it anyway. I believe that, very soon, unannounced secret negotiations between the IRI and the US will start (option 4)—if they have not started already. These negotiations may prolong the IRI's existence for a time but not indefinitely. Eventually, they will again try violence (option 2) followed by giving up power (option 3).

#### Part 5: What Will Happen to the Church in Iran?

In Iran, Islam has experienced its greatest defeat in its history. According to *Operation World*, Iran currently has the fastest growing evangelical population across the globe. Iran's desperate

situation has caused a perfect storm for the cause of Christ. Millions have rejected Islam and are open to the message of the gospel. There are now over 3 million believers in Iran.

### ***What will happen when the regime changes in Iran?***

1. **Spiritual hunger will suddenly die down.** Iranians will suddenly have another hope besides Christ. Non-believers will be more interested in and focused on bringing a democracy to Iran than considering the claims of Christ.
2. **Iranians will have freedom to assemble and start churches.** The underground believers will gather into large communities and start many churches. Many evangelists will visit Iran to conduct stadium-size gatherings. Many denominations will send their workers to start new denominational churches. Many Iranian believers will start their own independent churches as well. We must bear in mind, however, that the 3 million believers in Iran are mostly new believers. Many will be distracted by the political events. Many will be deceived by cults and will join cultish churches. Many will start weak churches because they do not have any biblical training. So the visible church will suddenly grow—but it will be weak.

Opportunities for expansion of the gospel in Iran will grow, but so will the dangers that can undercut the gospel's power. The Church at large has a responsibility at this historic time to be wise concerning Iran and to redeem the time that God has given us.

### **Part 6: What Should the Church Do Now?**

Too many times in history, the Church has missed open doors for the gospel and arrived too late. Japan wanted the gospel message right after World War II. We missed it. Russia wanted the gospel in the years just before the Soviet Union collapsed. We missed it. Too many times, God has softened hearts through suffering, and the Church has stood on the sidelines and waited until those soft hearts have hardened again more solidly than before.

Let us not let that mistake happen in Iran! Here are steps we can take to honor what God is doing in Iran:

1. **Keep busy evangelizing.** The harvest is ready, but the workers are few. This is the time of the harvest and we must multiply our efforts. According to my experience, these days evangelizing Iranian Muslims living inside the country is very easy. Many Iranians come to Christ even with a simple message. This opportunity will go away when the government collapses. Then workers will come to the field and find the ground bare.

2. **Focus on Bible education and discipleship.** Iranian believers today have a supernatural hunger. They want to know the Bible. They want to grow in their faith and be useful for God's Kingdom. This hunger will lessen in intensity after the government collapses.
3. **Train Leaders.** Training new leaders is the greatest need of the church in Iran today and the most strategic action to prepare for the change of government in Iran. There are many believers in Iran, but they are without shepherds. They are without leaders and elders. We must act now to train leaders. When Iran opens, it will be too late.

At Iran Alive, we pray and ask the Lord to give us the "Issachar" anointing, so we know what to do when. We continue to evangelize using the media. We are preaching and teaching the word of God to masses. But we believe the most strategic thing God is asking us to do is to train leaders now. That is why starting the **412 Leadership School** tops our agenda and focus.

We invite churches, organizations, and individuals to join us in taking advantage of this historic opportunity to build God's church in Iran. The time is short and this window of opportunity is about to close. We must act fast and decisively. We must remember that whatever happens in Iran—good or bad—will impact the whole Middle East.

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*If you wish to partner with us to train leaders and harvest new believers in Iran, please go to [www.iranaliveministries.org](http://www.iranaliveministries.org) and help us fund the launch of the 412 School of leadership.*

*To learn more ways to help, please contact me at [hormoz@IranAliveMinistries.org](mailto:hormoz@IranAliveMinistries.org) or (469) 982-0000. Or text "Iran" to 74784 for more information.*