

# Israeli Security Expert: This Is a War Between Iran and Western Values



Negar Mojtahedi  
Iran International

May 21, 2024, 21:57 GMT+1

Updated: 16:45 GMT+0

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People hold Palestinian flags in front of the Colosseum during a demonstration in support of Palestinians in Gaza, as the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas continues, in Rome, Italy, October 28.

**A**n Israeli security expert, who served for 15 years as an intelligence officer in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), told Iran International that the war between Israel and Hamas is actually a war between Iran and Western values.

“I truly believe that the ayatollahs of Iran are promoting a campaign which is a threat not only to Israel. It's not just Israel's problem, it's a global threat,” said Sarit Zehavi.

While the world is familiar with ISIS and Al Qaeda as a radical form of Sunni Islam, what is lesser known is the Iranian ayatollahs – not the Iranian people – as a representation of radical Shiite Islam, according to Zehavi. She believes Iran wants to distribute its Islamic Revolution values around the world.

The Iranian regime, for example, has been militarily and diplomatically supporting Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. The alliance between Iran, Russia and China, forming to counter Western sanctions, is another threat to the economic and political basis of existing Western systems. Iran's challenge to the West has only intensified with its controversial nuclear program. During this year's Iranian new year speech, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said the US will have no choice but to leave the Middle East.

The launch of October 7 with Iran as the so-called 'boss' of Hamas, as Zehavi puts it, was just beginning.

“It’s under the same boss: the ayatollahs of Iran that planned this campaign and created the militias, the proxy militias in all over the region that will enable it to carry out the campaign,” said Zehavi.

Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles towards Israel on April 13, nearly two weeks after a suspected Israeli strike on an Iranian diplomatic compound in Syria that killed seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) members, including a very senior IRGC commander Mohammad Reza Zahedi - in his office adjacent to the Iranian embassy in Damascus.

Israel, along with the U.S. and its Arab neighbours intercepted 99 percent of the drones and missiles headed its way.

“This is a very interesting incident because Iran's main goal is to keep the conflict outside of Iran itself and use the proxy militia. I think that the fact that we don't understand completely why they decided to interfere by themselves, but it definitely can indicate the self-confidence of the ayatollahs of Iran that no one will put them at risk,” said Zehavi. ‘

Lieutenant Colonel Sarit Zehavi is the founder of the Alma Centre, which monitors and disseminates information about Israel's security challenges in the North to people outside of Israel. She briefs Washington officials, foreign delegations and policy makers from around the world.

Zehavi is living near the border with Lebanon where Iran-backed Hezbollah militants have increased their presence this past year. She said Hezbollah is so close they can see right into the homes of Israeli residents. Zehavi said she saw Hezbollah's outposts, towers and militants right at Israel's northern border line while out for a walk recently.





Hezbollah militant pictured in Lebanon near border with Israel



## HEZBOLLAH BORDER POST BETWEEN RAMYEH AND AYTA ASH SHAB



35°19'20"E 33°06'11"N

Alma

Hezbollah border post between Ramyeh and Ayta Ash Shab.

Zehavi said that October 7 was 'step one' in an execution by Iran to unify fronts to achieve its "goals to distribute the Islamic Revolution values all over the world and to eliminate the state of Israel."

"What we experienced in the first seven months is the execution of the Iranian plan under the name unification of fronts. The Iranians wanted to create a multi-front campaign against the State of Israel and the Western presence here. It started from Hamas. We have Hezbollah launching missiles and drones as we speak," said Zehavi.

Experts like Zehavi said Iran supports Hamas with \$1 billion a year. The Islamic Republic also supports Palestinian Islamic Jihad with tens of millions and is providing Hezbollah with 70 per cent of its budget - and its ideology.

She refers to 'step two' as missile attacks from Hezbollah into Israel, Iran-backed Houthis attacking ships in the crucial shipping channel of the Bad al Mandab in Yemen, and attacks by Iranian-backed militia against U.S. military forces in Syria and Iraq.





Alma Research Center graphic showing the various Iran proxies.

As for a 'step three,' Zehavi said that based on statements from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah, she believes Iran and its proxies will join a full-scale war if the fighting in Gaza reaches new levels.

She said Northerners in Israel are expecting a Hamas-style attack in the region. Zehavi said more than a decade ago, Hezbollah published its offensive plan for an attack on Israel - and she described its similarity to what Hamas did to southern Israel as "astonishing."

“They [Hezbollah] continue to say in Arabic to their own people that they have plans to execute the offensive plan to occupy the Galilee, which is where I live, and many others here in Israel,” said Zehavi.

In an interview with Iran International near the Israel- Lebanon border, Zehavi said what has transpired between Iran and Israel is not just an escalation of tensions, but is rather - war.

“It's war. 60,000 Israelis don't know when they will be able to go back to their homes. You cannot tell them it's tensions,” said Zehavi.

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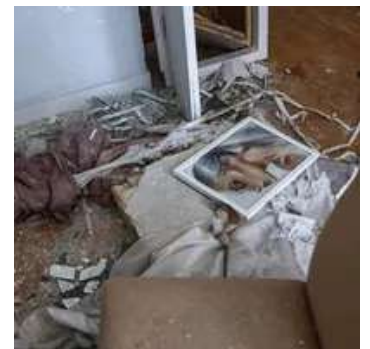
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### Iraq Withholds Payments for Iranian Engineers Killed by ISIS

May 21, 2024, 20:46 GMT+1 • Iran International Newsroom



Iran's Secretary of the Association of Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services has claimed the Iraqi government has failed to settle over a billion dollars in dues owed to Iranian contractors.

Bahman Salehi Javid also revealed that the families of several Iranian engineers who were killed in 2015 during ISIS attacks have not received any of the \$9 million compensation per victim, legally stipulated by Iraqi laws.

During his interview with ILNA, Javid detailed the predicament that began when Iranian contractors entered the Iraqi civil project sector, winning bids and commencing construction.

Despite their contractual successes, “the Iraqi government has stalled on payments for over a decade,” including during the period of ISIS's control over parts of Iraq.

As ISIS wreaked havoc across Iraq, seizing territories and declaring a caliphate, the group's brutal governance led to significant humanitarian crisis. The international coalition's military efforts eventually recaptured the lost territories by December 2017. Despite the efforts, the remnants of ISIS continue to pose threats, complicating the safety and security of ongoing projects.

Since the US imposed [banking sanctions](#) on Iran in 2018, Iraq has been unable to make cash payments, resulting in approximately \$11 billion in unpaid bills. In June 2023, the Biden administration granted waivers allowing Iraq to settle this debt in Oman, where Iran is expected to use the funds to purchase "unsanctionable" goods.

Critics, however, have condemned the move, pointing out that providing Iran with hard currency could allow it to reallocate other funds towards military expenditures and its nuclear program.

## TV Series on Iran's Last Monarch in the Making


May 21, 2024, 19:33 GMT+1 • **Iran International Newsroom**



A new series will explore the life of Iran's last monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, in the upcoming series *The Last Shah*, *Variety* has learned.

Spanning over four decades, it begins with the Shah's rise to power during World War II and continues until the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the subsequent US embassy hostage crisis.

The [series](#) coincides with the current internal turmoil, which began in 2022, such unrest not seen since 1979.

Morrie Rosmarin, who crafted the pilot and serves as the series' primary writer, emphasized the significance of remembering Iran's more Western-oriented days before the Islamic 

Revolution when women had more freedom and life in Iran was more like Europe than the Islamist regime of today.

"Many people today are not aware that prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, during the reign of the Shah, Iran was one of the most Westernized countries in the Middle East.

"In contrast to the belligerent policies of the current religious theocracy of the Islamic Republic, Iran under the Shah was the strongest ally in the region of both the United States and Israel," she said.

## Iran Intensifies Oppression Under Shadows of Presidential Helicopter Crash

May 21, 2024, 18:46 GMT+1 • Iran International Newsroom



Under the shadows of the helicopter crash that killed President Ebrahim Raisi and other high-ranking officials, Iran's Cyber Police have intensified their surveillance and repression.

Iran's Cyber Police Chief Vahid Majid has declared the initiation of criminal proceedings against numerous individuals for allegedly disseminating "false and insulting" content on social media and online platforms about President Raisi and other officials who perished in Sunday's helicopter crash.

Majid reported that within the last 36 hours, "550 specialized observations" have been made, resulting in the identification of 80 websites and the execution of 35 enforcement measures, including the issuance of summons and court referrals.

The Iranian regime has been secretive about the details surrounding President Ebrahim Raisi's helicopter crash, maintaining tight control over the information that is released to the public.



The opacity includes limiting media access to the crash site and closely monitoring the narrative circulated through official channels.

Shaghayegh Mohammadi, the wife of Esteghlal FC player Mohammad Hossein Moradmand, has reported receiving threats of arrest following an Instagram post she made, which featured a poem by the Iranian poet Hafiz that foretells the downfall of oppressors.

In response to the threats she posted defiantly, "I desire nothing but freedom, which is the right of all humans."

Likewise, journalist and translator Manizheh Moazen is embroiled in a fresh legal conflict due to her reporting on [Raisi's death](#). She recently reshared a tweet highlighting Raisi's involvement in the 1988 mass executions.

Iran's government has declared five days of mourning, calling on the public to attend the commemorative ceremonies. Attendance is typically mandatory for government workers and students, while other citizens do not participate.

In Iran, media control tightens significantly during times of crisis, as the government seeks to manage public perception and maintain stability. Authorities routinely restrict access to the internet and block social media platforms to curb the spread of information that could incite public unrest.

## Explainer: How Does Raisi's Death Impact Khamenei's Succession?

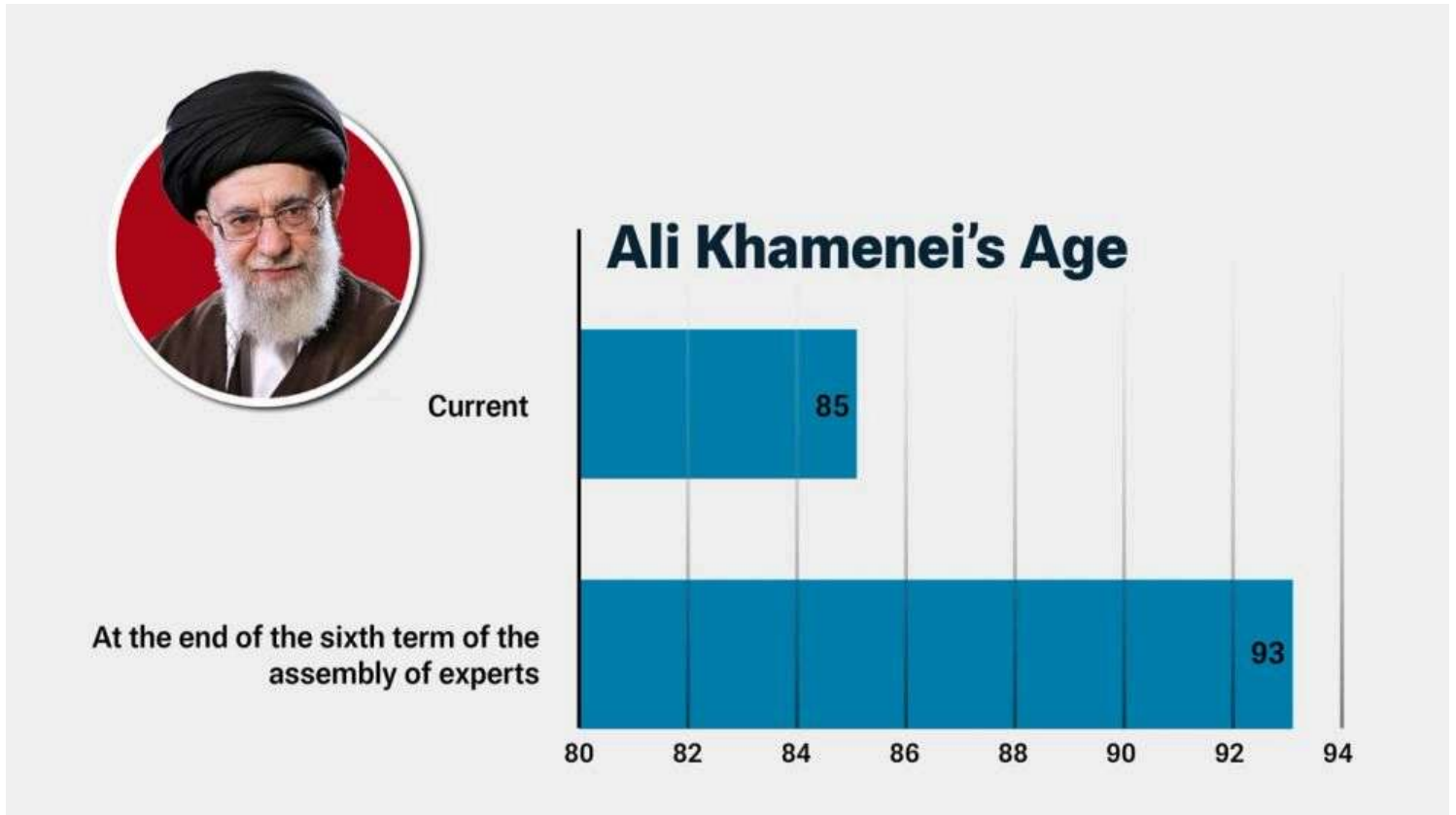
May 21, 2024, 15:45 GMT+1 • Navid Hamzavi



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, a leading candidate to succeed the Supreme Leader of Iran, was killed in a helicopter crash, the details of which remain unclear.

In the wake of Raisi's death, the recently elected sixth Assembly of Experts for Leadership convened as scheduled on May 21.





The Assembly of Experts is the only constitutional body in Iran endowed with the authority to appoint and dismiss the Supreme Leader. Each term spans eight years, and given that Khamenei is 85 years old, it is highly probable that this assembly will be tasked with selecting his successor.



## Seat of the Assembly of Expert (2 Vacant)

Ebrahim Raisi and Ali Al-Hashem, elected members of the sixth term both killed in a helicopter crash

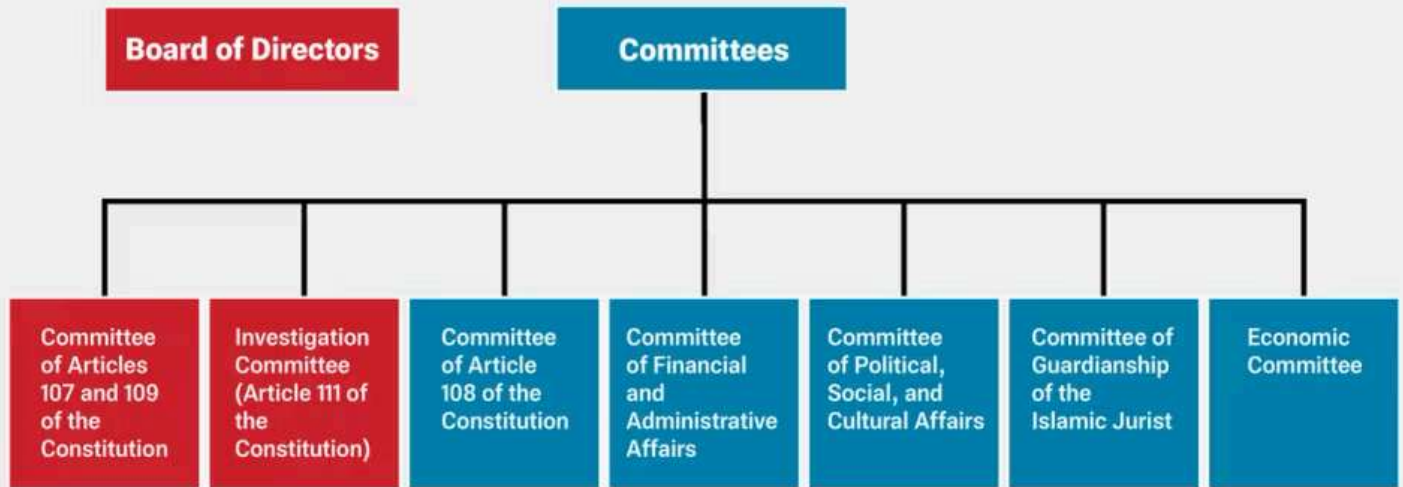


The body consists of 88 members, all Islamic scholars. President Ebrahim Raisi and Ali Al-Hashem, elected members of the sixth term, were both killed in a helicopter crash, resulting in two vacancies.

The Assembly of Experts operates like an enigmatic vault. Before 1989, its sessions were completely shrouded in secrecy. However, under Khamenei's leadership, detailed minutes from these sessions have been classified as either confidential or highly confidential.



# Structure of the Iran's Assembly of the Experts



The most important components of the structure of the Assembly of Experts are the Board of Directors, the Investigation Committee responsible for overseeing the Leader, and the Committee of Article 107 and 109 of the Constitution, tasked with determining the next leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In practice, the Investigation Committee has never challenged the Supreme Leader.

With no strong rivals, Raisi was in a prime position to become the president of the Assembly of Experts, making his future leadership a distinct possibility.

Raisi and Mojtaba Khamenei, the Supreme Leader's own son, were frequently regarded as the top candidates to succeed Khamenei.





**Ebrahim Raisi**  
Iran's President



**Mojtaba Khamenei**  
(Son of the Supreme Leader of Iran)

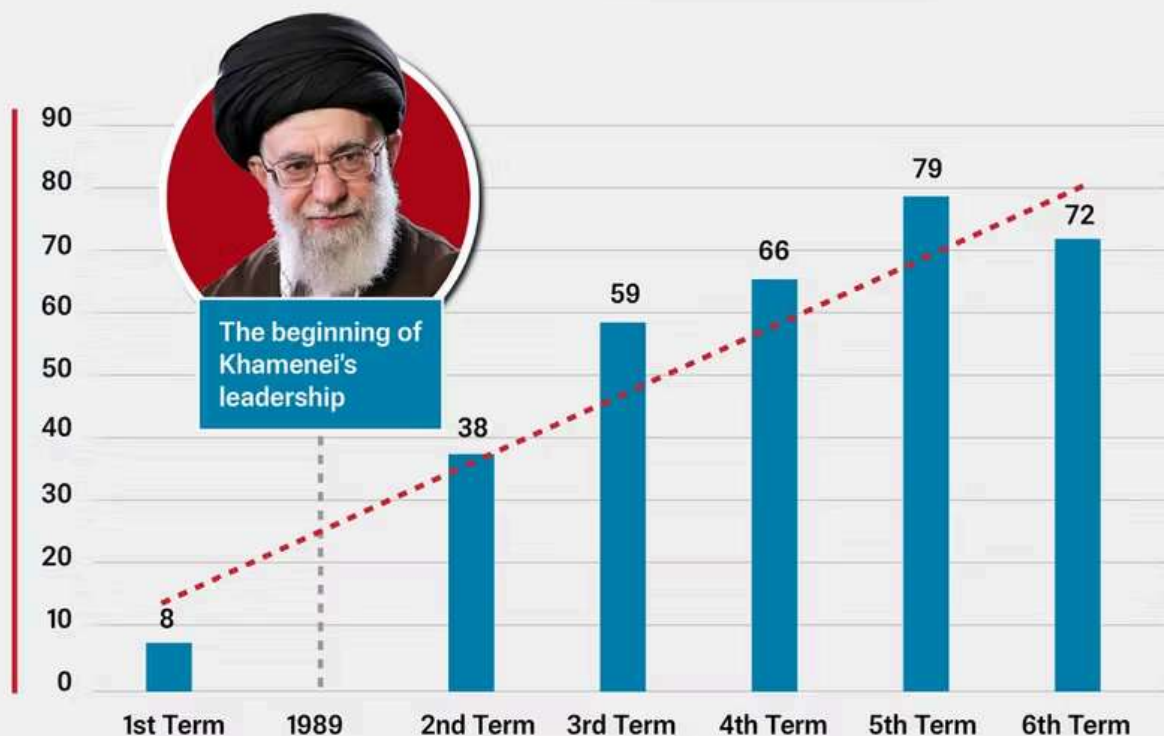
### **Speculations Around Raisi's Sudden Death**

Although not prominently, there have been some speculations surrounding the sudden death of Raisi.

Some argue that he may have been assassinated to clear the path for Khamenei's son to ascend to leadership. This argument aligns with the pattern of candidate disqualifications observed during Khamenei's tenure as Supreme Leader.



## The percentage of disqualified candidates in the Assembly of Experts elections



The trend of increasing disqualifications of candidates for the Assembly of Experts has been noticeable since Khamenei assumed leadership in 1989.

The impact of disqualifications has also affected high-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic. Notable individuals whose eligibility to participate in the Assembly, which selects the next leader, was rejected include Hassan Rouhani, the former president and ex-member of the same Assembly, and Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of the founder of the Islamic Republic.

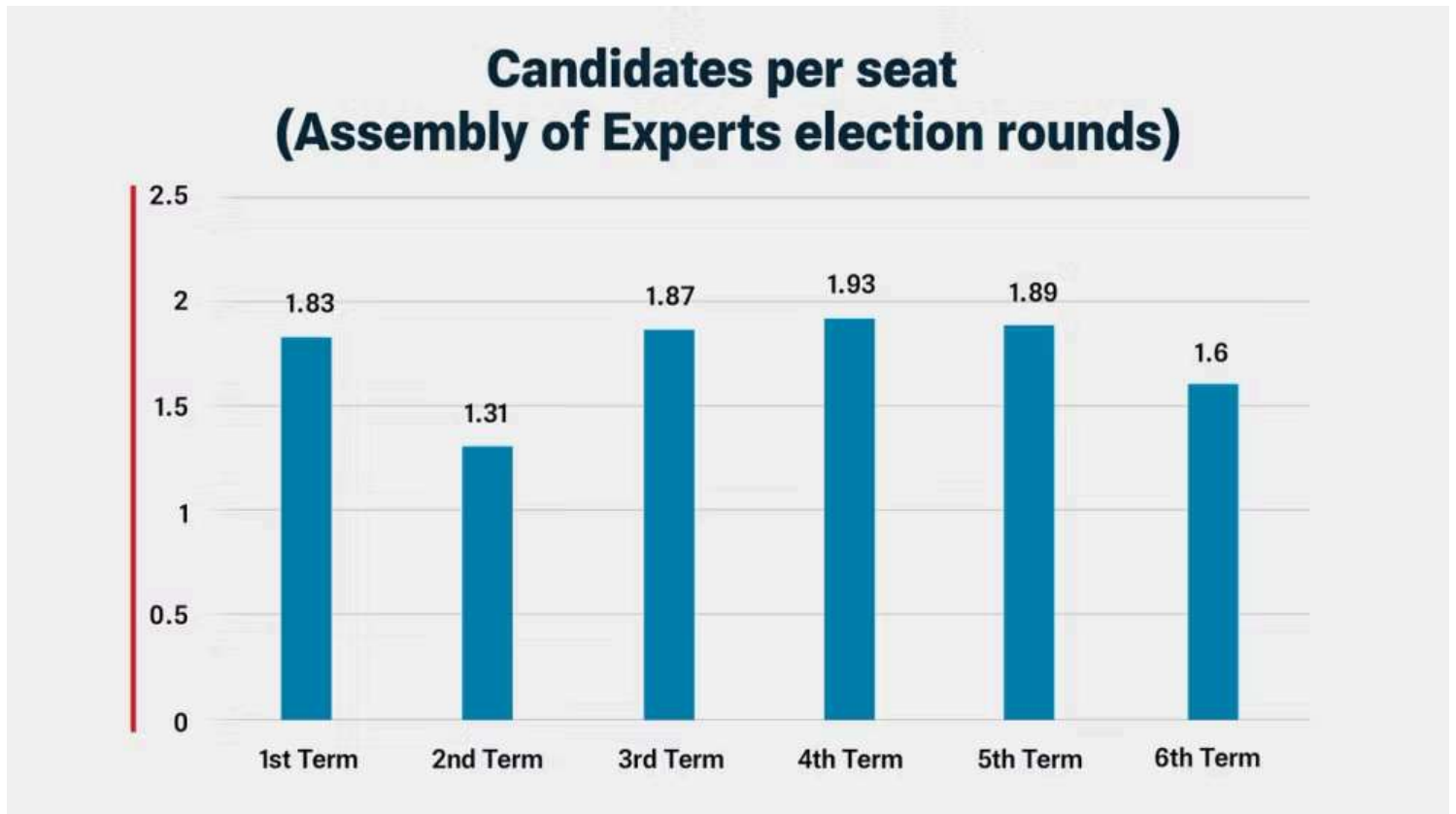
Until 1989, the eligibility of candidates for the Assembly of Experts elections was determined by senior Shia clerics.

After a revision of the Assembly's internal regulations during Khamenei's leadership, the authority to approve candidates became the exclusive domain of the Guardian Council. This 12-member body consists of six members directly appointed by the Supreme Leader and six selected by the head of the judiciary, who is also appointed by the Supreme Leader.

The revision exemplifies Khamenei's perpetual cycle of control in the so-called elections of the Islamic Republic.

## Minimal Competition for Assembly's 88 Seats

These disqualifications have turned the Assembly of Experts elections into sham exercises.



In the most recent round of elections held in March, 144 candidates competed for 88 seats in the Assembly of Experts. On average, there were approximately 1.6 candidates contesting each seat. This indicates that many seats had only one or very few candidates running for them.

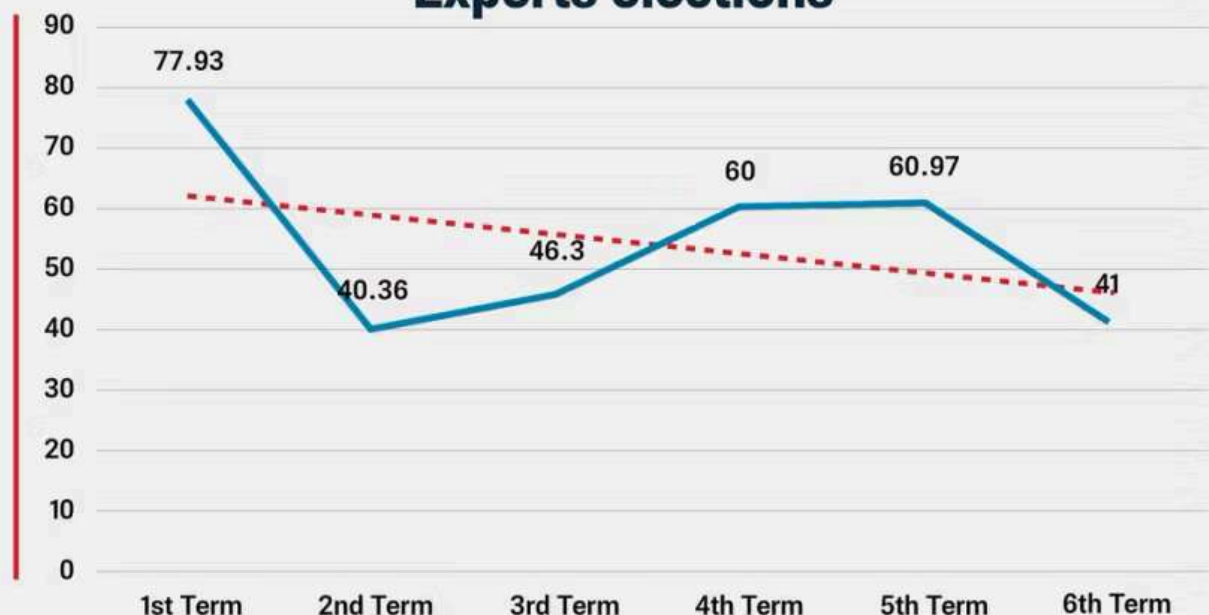
In essence, across all rounds of the Assembly of Experts elections, there has never been genuine competition between even two candidates. It is fair then, to say that these elections are the least competitive within the Islamic Republic.

### Next chapter of the Islamic Republic's rule

The Assembly of Experts has, in its history, elected a Supreme Leader only once. Following the death of Ruhollah Khomeini, Ali Khamenei was chosen as the next Leader of the Islamic Republic in June 1989.



## The percentage turnout in the Assembly of Experts elections



The commencement of the Assembly of Experts for Leadership, which will most likely select the next Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, began with a message from the current ruler, highlighting the selection of the future leader.

Read by his chief of staff, Khamenei's message stated that "the selection of the leader according to Islamic criteria is the responsibility of [the] Assembly, which is itself elected and chosen by the people".

Participation in the Assembly of Experts elections, according to the Islamic Republic's own statistics, has been decreasing. Furthermore, according to the law, the decision made by the Assembly of Experts to appoint the Supreme Leader is more authoritative and final than the majority opinion of the general population.

Now, a new chapter in the era of the Islamic Republic has begun. With the death of Ebrahim Raisi, one of the main contenders to succeed Khamenei, the country's powerful players will enter a new and likely tense phase of political competition for Iran's future leadership.

## While Dissidents Rejoice, World Leaders Express Remorse Over Raisi



May 21, 2024, 15:00 GMT+1 • **Negar Mojtahedi**



A tale of two narratives emerged on social media, after Iran's president Ebrahim Raisi, foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and several other senior officials died Sunday in a helicopter crash.

While Iranians opposed to the government rejoiced at the news of their deaths, messages of condolences, and even a moment of silence at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) took place for a man whose legacy has him known as "the Butcher of Tehran."

**Jason Brodsky**

@JasonMBrodsky · [Follow](#)

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The UNSC stands for a moment of silence for [#Iran's](#) regime's president Ebrahim Raisi, the Butcher of Tehran, who represented a government trying to kill Americans and presided over their hostage taking as chief justice. Standing was the US deputy UN ambassador and European [Show more](#)

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11:22 AM · May 20, 2024

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Iranian-Canadian human rights lawyer Kaveh Sharooz says Raisi's hands are "covered in blood."

"He's a man of no particular talent, frankly, except, following the regime's line and carrying out its dirty work," said Shahrooz.

Just after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the clerical regime began killing its political opponents and dissidents, most famously in 1988. Sharooz said that year became known as the 1988 massacre when then Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa, ordering the execution of imprisoned opponents, including those who had already been tried and serving a prison sentence.

Raisi was instrumental in that, said Sharooz.



"Raisi himself, was a member of what came to be known among the prisoners as a death commission. You know, he would conduct 2 or 3 match trials where political prisoners that had already gone through trials several years earlier, would be retried, and most of them were actually sent to hang. And from then on, he sort of continued his policy of murder and torture," said Shahrooz.

Despite having committed what many critics allege are crimes against humanity, the leader of the democratic, free world, the United States officially sent their condolences.

When asked about reports of Iranian people celebrating the death of President Raisi, the State Department's Spokesperson said Monday, "I can certainly understand why people inside Iran would feel that way when you look at the brutal repression that happened under President Raisi's tenure, especially when you look at his abuse of women and girls, I can see why the people in Iran would feel that way in response to his death, but I obviously can't speak for them."


Shahrooz told Iran International "it's shocking to me, that so many democratic countries, are not just giving condolences to the regime, but there are actually saying condolences to the people of Iran as if the people of Iran are in mourning, when in fact, you know, we have evidence that they're actually out there celebrating."






**Iran International English**  

@IranIntl\_En · [Follow](#)

**#BREAKING** The US expressed its "official condolences" Monday for the death of Iran's President Raisi and other officials in a helicopter crash. "As Iran selects a new president, we reaffirm our support for the Iranian people and their struggle for human rights and fundamental [Show more](#)

1:05 PM · May 20, 2024 

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On X, NATO's Spokesperson offered their "condolences to the people of Iran" for the death of Raisi.



Many readers were outraged by the tweet, and responded by adding the following 'context note' below the statement: "Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi killed thousands of innocent people for no reason, earning himself the nickname "The Butcher of Tehran.""

**NATO Spokesperson**    
@NATOpres · [Follow](#)

Our condolences to the people of [#Iran](#) for the death of President Raisi, Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian, and others who perished in the helicopter crash.


 **Readers added context** →

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi killed thousands of innocent people for no reason, earning himself the nickname "The Butcher of Tehran"




[amnesty.org/en/latest/pres...](#)

[forbes.com/sites/maryroel...](#)

Context is written by people who use X, and appears when rated helpful by others. [Find out more.](#)

6:50 AM · May 20, 2024 

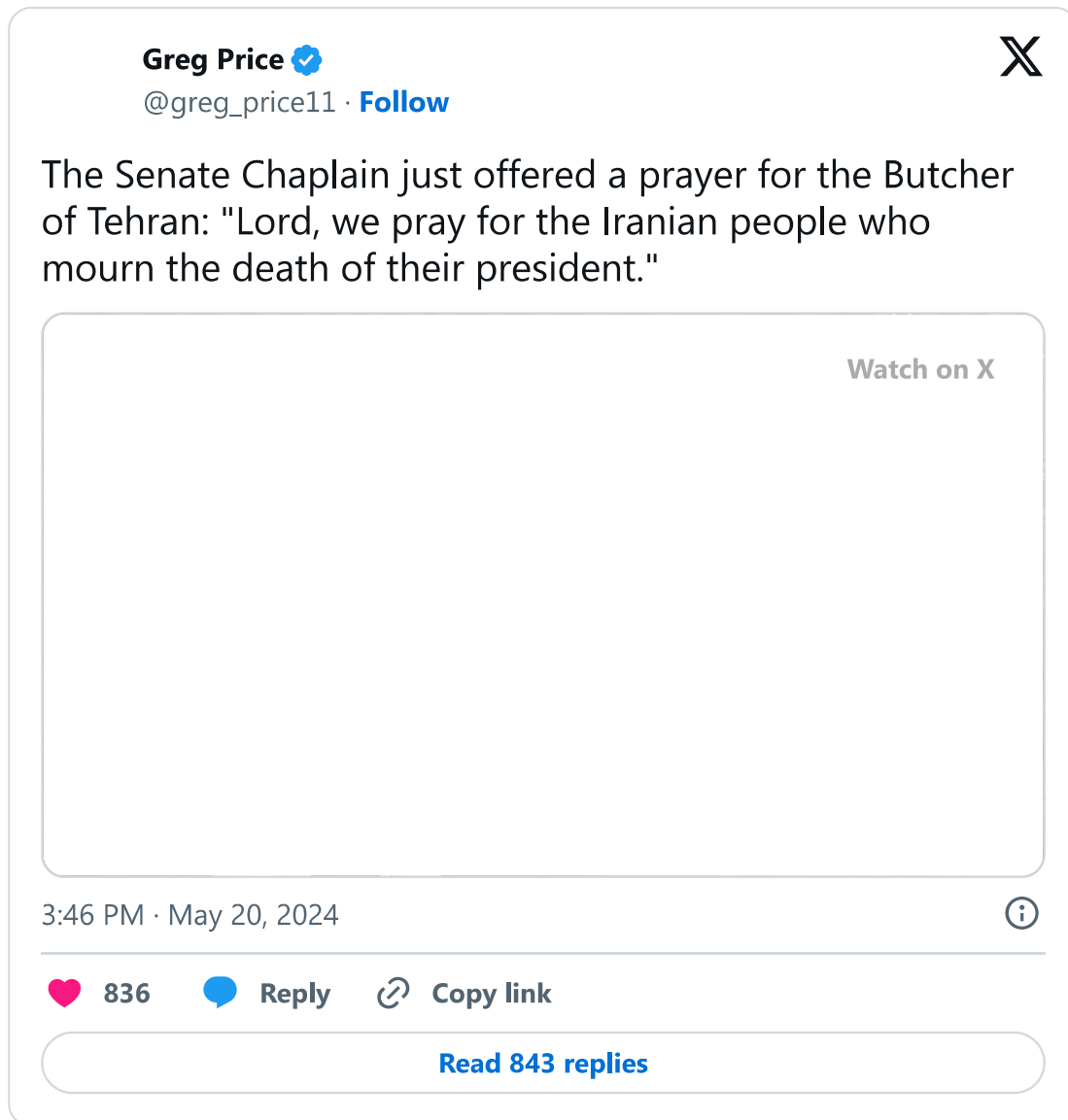
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The US Senate Chaplain offered a prayer for Iran's President, saying "Lord, we pray for the Iranian people who mourn the death of their president."





When asked what could explain such a disconnect or potential failure in diplomacy with the people of Iran, Shahrooz said the West mistakenly believes Iran's regime will change its behavior based on carrots.

"It's a continuation of a policy of appeasement that we've seen for far too long. You know, Iran's regime has been able to get away with quite a lot without, substantial pushback, from the West. They've, attacked Western countries. They recently attacked Israel. And regrettably, the Western policies have simply been to go along in the hopes that, Iran will also play along," said Shahrooz.

Meantime, Iranians inside the country set off fireworks to celebrate Raisi's death and diaspora Iranians took to street parties from the Netherland to Canada.



**The Post Millennial** 



@TPostMillennial · [Follow](#)

People in Toronto holding Israeli and pre-revolution Iranian flags dance together in response to Raisi's death.

Footage by [@BethBaisch](#)



6:44 PM · May 20, 2024



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**Iran International English**  




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Videos obtained by [@IranIntl](#) show Iranians living in the Netherlands dancing and celebrating the death of President Ebrahim Raisi outside the Iranian Embassy in The Hague.

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12:28 PM · May 20, 2024 



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It's not just Iranians celebrating, said Shahrooz.

"I've seen reports of, Syrians, for example, celebrating because they recognize that the Islamic regime and people like Raisi have been responsible for their misery as well," said Shahrooz 


Victims of the Islamic Republic and their families also posted videos to social media rejoicing at the demise of Raisi and his entourage.

**Masih Alinejad** |  




@AlinejadMasih · [Follow](#)

Just a few months ago, Ebrahim Raisi executed her son,  
Now, she's dancing over his death in a helicopter crash.  
I told you Iranian women are wounded, but unbowed to  
their oppressors.  
My social media is flooded with videos of the family  
members of those killed by the President of [Show more](#)

Watch on X

5:58 AM · May 20, 2024 

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**Nazanin Nour** 

@NazaninNour · [Follow](#)

Local media reporting that come nightfall, wild animals are known to roam the mountainous area where Raisi's chopper crashed.

Proving once again that we'd all choose the bear. 🐻

11:47 AM · May 19, 2024 

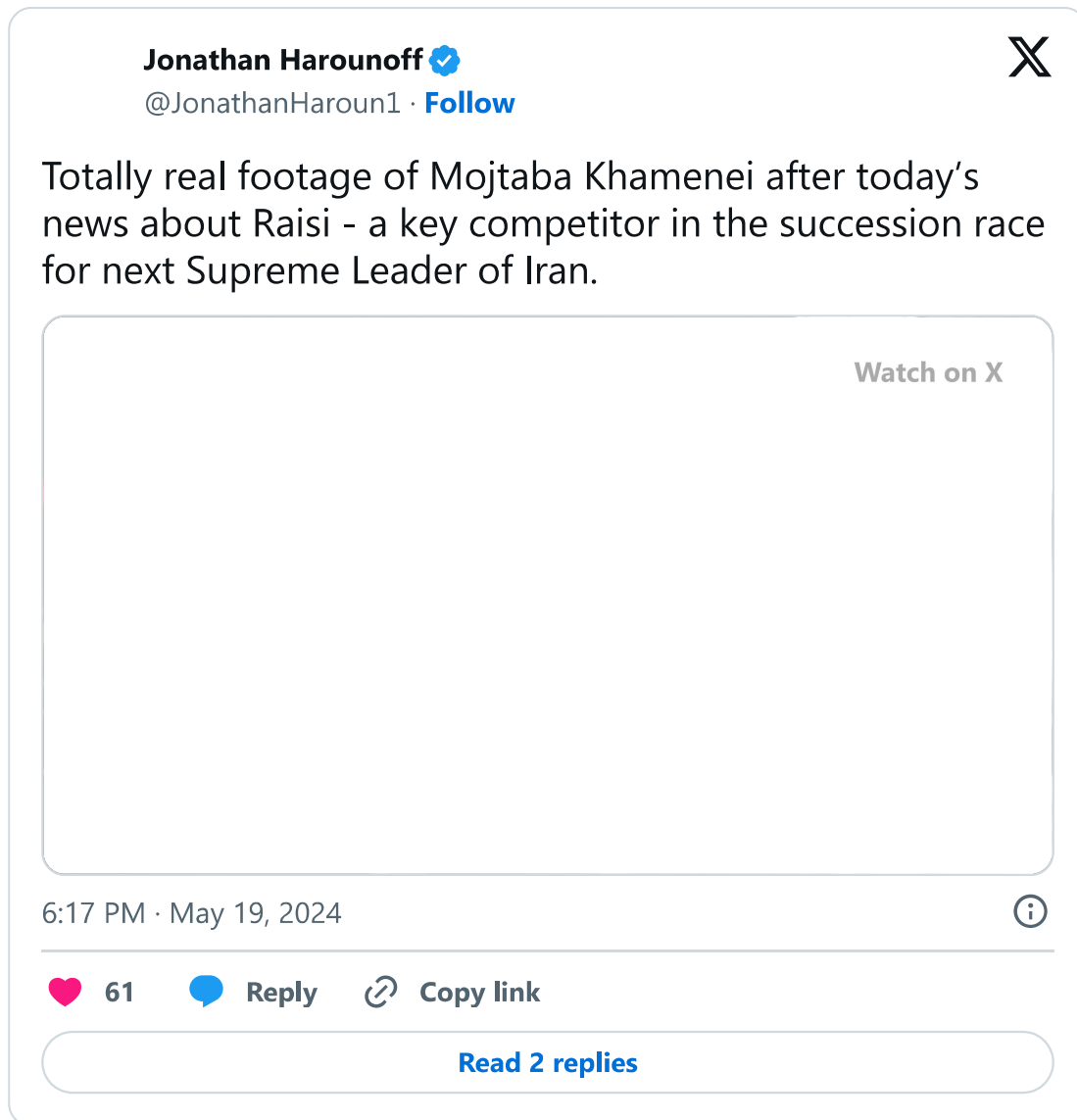
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Speculations and morbid jokes about the circumstances and the cause of the crash flooded the online world. From puns about helicopter crashes to jokes about the succession race like this one posted by Israel-Iran journalist and analyst Jonathan Harounoff.





"Iranian social media has simply lit up with both jokes and humor, but also very poignant messages," said Shahrooz.

Shahrooz said "the jokes are simply a way for people to exert some power because they've been powerless for decades."

A striking image of a women's braided hair taking down a helicopter is also being shared widely on social media.

Commentators online say the image has become a symbol of women taking down the President who enforced discriminatory laws that led to the torture and demise of many Iranians for decades.



**VoiceOfKurdistan**



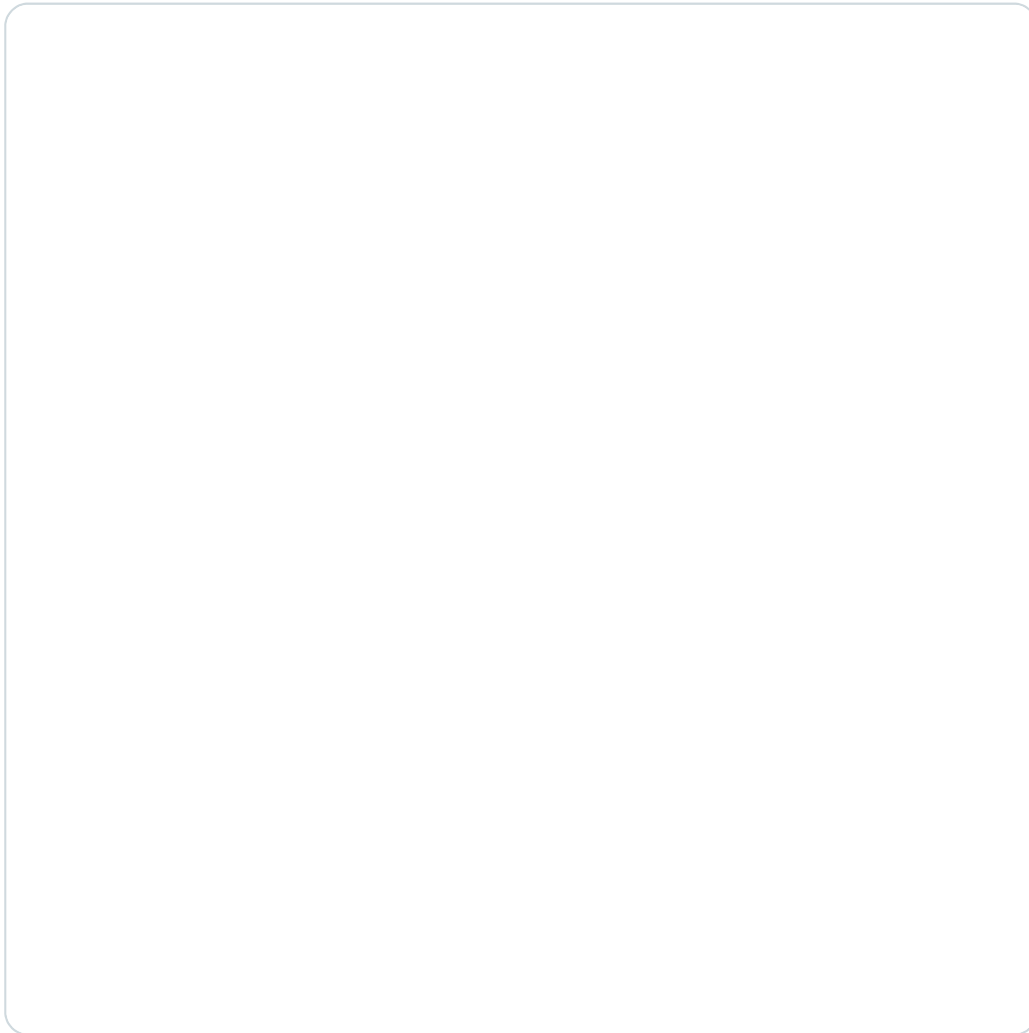
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The women brought down the Iranian president's helicopter with their hair. :)

Die Frauen haben mit ihren Haaren den Helikopter des iranischen Präsidenten runtergeholt. :)

Jinan bi Pora xwe Helîkoptera serokkomarê Iranê anî xwarê. :)

[#jinjiyanazadi](#)



3:18 PM · May 20, 2024



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