

HASSAN ROUHANI: IDEOLOGY AND POLICIES

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Hassan Rouhani's Record in Office

Hassan Rouhani emerged victorious with 57% of the vote in the May 2017 Iranian election, defeating his primary hardline challenger Ebrahim Raisi and the five other candidates permitted to run out of over 1600 applicants.

Western media accounts of the Iranian election

(See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for a small sampling) incorrectly sought to portray Rouhani as a “moderate” or “reformist,” and erroneously concluded that his reelection would be a harbinger of domestic social reforms and a more conciliatory approach to foreign policy. Characterizations of Rouhani’s “moderation” ignored the reality of [Rouhani’s true nature](#) as a loyal servant of Iran’s Islamic Revolution who is dedicated to the preservation of its repressive, theocratic regime.

Rouhani does not back the transformation of Iran into a more open and liberal society. At best, he is a pragmatist who offers rhetorical support for limited social and economic reforms as a safety valve to reduce public dissatisfaction with a regime that has materially failed to improve the lives of its citizenry. Rouhani’s fundamental goal remains the preservation of Iran’s oppressive regime based on the principles of [Khomeinism](#) – an ideology predicated upon absolute religious authority in government and the rejection of Western interference and influence.

The primary positive development from the election is that the Iranian people signaled their discontent with the regime by picking the most moderate option available to them. Rouhani’s campaign rallies on several occasions [featured subversive chants of support for the imprisoned leaders of Iran’s dissident Green Movement](#), highlighting the pervasive levels of alienation by segments of the Iranian population. However, the Western media does a disservice to the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people chafing under a repressive regime by legitimating Rouhani as a representative of reform.

Cabinet Picks

Rouhani’s cabinet picks set the tone for how his second term would be a continuation of Iran’s illiberal status quo, rather than a harbinger of reform. Rouhani succumbed to pressure from conservatives and hard-liners and reportedly consulted heavily with Supreme Leader Khamenei in the formation of his cabinet, which the New York Times described as [“a delicate mix of older technocrats, don’t rock the boat moderates and even some hardliners.”](#) Rouhani came under criticism from his reformist backers for initially excluding women and minorities completely from his 18-member ministerial cabinet, prompting him to belatedly name two women as vice-presidents.

Among Rouhani’s more controversial cabinet selections were Justice Minister Alireza Avaei and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi. The European Union levied sanctions against Avaei for abuses during his tenure as head of Tehran’s judiciary, alleging [“he has been responsible for human rights violations, arbitrary arrests, denials of prisoners’ rights and increase of executions.”](#) Avaei also is [alleged by eyewitness accounts to have ordered the massacre of political prisoners](#), including juveniles, in Khuzestan province in 1988. Jahromi has come under fire for his previous role in Iran’s feared intelligence ministry, and is alleged to have taken part in surveillance operations and harsh interrogations of dissidents during the regime’s 2009 post-election crackdown. By his own admission, Jahromi boasts, [“I wasn’t responsible for](#)

[surveillance, but rather I was in charge of the technical infrastructure for the surveillance industry, and I consider it an honor,"](#)

Revived Protest Movement

On December 28, 2017, protests against the Rouhani administration's socioeconomic policies erupted in Mashad and quickly spread across the country, with many protestors soon demonstrating against Iran's revolutionary Islamist regime itself. The protests were ultimately quelled by Iranian authorities after over 3000 arrests were made and roughly two dozen protestors killed.

Rouhani himself offered some conciliatory language to protestors defending their rights to peacefully protest, but also [threatened](#), "The nation will themselves respond to the rioters and lawbreakers... Our nation will deal with this minority who chant slogans against the law and people's wishes, and insult the sanctities and values of the revolution."

During his reelection campaign, Rouhani offered criticisms of the [IRGC](#) and [hard-line establishment](#), expressed hope that circumstances would permit the [release of political prisoners](#), and called for [women and minorities](#) to be elevated into managerial roles at the national level. Since his reelection, however, he has largely ignored the constituencies which put him in power and instead sought reconciliation with hardliners. Rouhani has [praised](#) the IRGC, installed a hardline cabinet [devoid of minority representation](#), and ignored the plight of [political prisoners](#).

The mass uprising demonstrated that Iranians clearly see through the image of Rouhani as a reformer. Slogans such as "Not Gaza, not Lebanon. My life only for Iran," demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the Rouhani administration's backing of Iran's foreign policy adventurism while also failing to deliver on social and economic promises. Another refrain, "[Reformists, hard-liners. The whole game is over](#)" reflected the protestor's view of Rouhani as part and parcel of the revolutionary system that oppresses them.

Acceleration of Malign Activities

After reaching a nuclear deal with the P5+1 that provided Iran sanctions relief in exchange for temporary restrictions on its illicit nuclear program during his first term, Rouhani oversaw the further deterioration of Iran's human rights situation, the advancement of Iran's ballistic missile program, and increasing belligerence in Syria, Yemen, and throughout the Middle East. Rouhani campaigned for a second term on the promise of securing the lifting of all remaining non-nuclear sanctions still in place against Iran but proved unwilling and unable to rein in Iran's malign regional activities, which have remained the chief impediment to Iran's full reintegration into the global marketplace.

In response to Iran's escalating aggression, as well as the nuclear deal's numerous shortcomings, the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the deal in May 2018 and subsequently instituted a "maximum pressure" campaign. The Trump administration has re-imposed and expanded sanctions targeting strategic sectors of the Iranian economy in order to compel Iran's leadership to return to the negotiating table for a comprehensive agreement that would shore up deficiencies in the nuclear deal and address the totality of Iran's malign activities.

Despite Rouhani's ruse of moderation, Iran's malign activities have only [accelerated](#) during his second term, and have gone into overdrive since May 2019 in response to the Trump administration's designation of the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization. Rouhani has acted as a cheerleader for Iran's ongoing provocations, warning that Iran would begin [violating its commitments](#) under the nuclear deal, defending Iran's [continued test-launches of ballistic missiles](#) in defiance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231, and lauding Iran's increased [meddling](#) and support for [terrorism](#) around the Middle East. He has also repeatedly upheld Iran's maximalist refusal to re-enter negotiations absent the complete lifting of U.S. sanctions against Iran.

The charts below are meant to hold President Rouhani to account for the disparity between promises he has made in office and Iran's actions to date. It is clear to see that Rouhani's pledges for moderation have been widely disregarded.

Nuclear Program

If a country wanted, with the technical resources it has, to gain an atomic bomb, this deal would have been a very bad deal for it. Because the deal creates limitations from all sides to getting an atomic bomb. But if a country has been after peaceful technology from the beginning, then it has lost nothing. We wanted this incorrect accusation that Iran is after nuclear weapons corrected and resolved and that the goal of Iran is peaceful activity. In this deal, we have accepted limitations for a period of time in order to create more trust with the world. - [September 20, 2015](#) interview with CBS "60 Minutes"

	YES	NO
Has Iran resolved " the outstanding issues, including those related to possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program " in order "to restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program?"		✓
Has Iran " Acted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Additional Protocol to its IAEA Safeguards Agreement that it signed on 18 December 2003 " and " ratified promptly the Additional Protocol. "		✓
Has Iran refrained from " any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using ballistic missile technology? "		✓
Has Iran complied with " the provisions of the modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements General Part to Iran's Safeguards Agreement, " which requires Iran to submit " design information for new facilities as soon as the decision to construct, or to authorize construction of, a new facility has been taken, whichever is the earlier? "		✓

Has Iran provided the IAEA full and direct access to the Parchin site, where intelligence indicates " Iran constructed a large explosives containment vessel in which to conduct hydrodynamic experiments; such experiments would be strong indicators of possible nuclear development? "		✓
Has Iran assented to "anytime, anywhere" IAEA inspections of sites, including military facilities, where nuclear-related activities are suspected to have taken place?		✓

Human Rights

"We want freedom of press, freedom of association, and freedom of thought" – [May 9, 2017](#) at a campaign rally

Executions	2013	913
	2014	964
	2015	1052
	2016	567
	2017	507
	2018	253
Public executions	2013	21
	2014	53
	2015	49+
	2016	33
	2017	31
	2018	13
Political prisoners jailed in Iran		647
U.S. citizens detained in Iran		5
	YES	NO
Has Iran cooperated with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, and allowed her entry into the country?		✓
Has Iran ended Internet censorship and permitted access to blocked social media websites like Facebook and Twitter that regime officials themselves use?		✓

Has Iran released from house arrest Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, the leaders of Iran's opposition "Green Movement?"		✓
Has Iran ended the morality police's harassment of Iranian citizens and routine violations of Iranians' human rights?.		✓
End discrimination and harassment against Has Iran ended discrimination and harassment against persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, particularly the Baha'i?		✓
Has Iran decriminalized consensual same-sex activity between adults?		✓
Has Iran abolished the death penalty for non-violent crimes such as "insulting the Prophet," apostasy, same-sex relations, adultery, and drug-related offenses?		✓

Syria Conflict

"All should know that the Syrian issue has no military solution and must be resolved through diplomatic means," – October 29, 2016 in a meeting with EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini

	YES	NO
Has Iran continued to provide the ruthless Syrian regime, which has used chemical weapons against its own people, with extensive military and economic support in order to keep President Bashar al-Assad in power?	✓	
Has Iran employed Hezbollah terrorists and Shi'a militiamen from Iraq, the Gulf states, Afghanistan and Pakistan to bolster the Assad regime's fighting forces, inflaming sectarian tensions?	✓	
Have Iran's government and IRGC-affiliated entities " <u>signed major economic contracts with Syria, reaping what appear to be lucrative rewards for helping President Bashar al-Assad regain control of parts of his country from rebels?</u> "	✓	

See more at:

<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/rouhani/record#sthash.OUAQjqb5.dpuf>