

Timeline of Iran's Political Events

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1979

Jan. 16 – The shah and his family went into exile.

Feb. 1 – Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran after 14 years in exile in France and Iraq.

Feb. 11 – Mehdi Bazargan appointed interim prime minister.

March 30-31 – In a referendum, voters overwhelmingly approved the creation of an Islamic Republic. Khomeini declared April 1 the first day of “the government of God.”

May-June – Five prominent clerics close to Ayatollah Khomeini established the Islamic Republican Party.

June 14 – First official draft of the constitution was published. It did not include the position of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist).

Oct. 24 – New constitution, with *velayat-e faqih*, is approved by referendum after months of debate over the role of Islam in the state. The new constitution went into effect in early December, and Khomeini became supreme leader.

Nov. 4 – Students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The hostage crisis dragged on for 444 days.

Nov. 5 – Interim Prime Minister Bazargan resigned along with his cabinet to protest the hostage seizure.

1980

Jan. 25 – Abolhassan Bani-Sadr was elected Iran's first president.

March-May – The first parliament was elected. The Islamic Republican Party had the most members, but other parties such as the Freedom Movement also had significant representation. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected speaker.

March 21 – The Cultural Revolution began. In June, Khomeini ordered formation of the university jihad and began the “Islamization” of universities. Around 20,000 teachers were fired.

Aug. 28 – Amnesty International appealed to Iran to end executions and imprisonments, after citing at least 1000 post-revolution executions.

Sept. 22 – Iraq invaded Iran. The war lasted until August 1988.

Feb. 4 – Khomeini told squabbling politicians to stop “biting one another like scorpions,” followed by a warning to clergy in government one week later that they “should by no means interfere in areas outside their competence.”

June 21 – President Bani-Sadr was impeached; he fled the country in late July. Iran banned all political parties except the Islamic Republic Party.

June 28 – A bomb at the Islamic Republic Party headquarters killed 73 officials, including Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, four cabinet ministers and 27 members of parliament. The Mujahedin el-Khalq organization was believed responsible.

Aug. 15 – Mohammad Ali Raja’i became president, but was assassinated on Aug. 30 in a bombing that also killed Prime Minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar.

Oct. 2 – The third presidential election in 21 months – and the second in 10 weeks – was held. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was elected president for the first of two four-year terms.

Oct. 31 – Mir Hossein Mousavi was appointed prime minister.

1982

April 10 – Former Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh and more than 1,000 others were arrested for plotting to assassinate Ayatollah Khomeini. He confessed on television. Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Shariatmadari, who advocated separating mosque and state, was implicated by Ghotbzadeh under torture and stripped of his religious rank. Ghotbzadeh was executed in September.

Dec. 15 – Ayatollah Khomeini outlined an eight-point human rights platform and warned the judiciary and Revolutionary Guards against abusing individual rights in arrests, searches and seizures. On Dec. 22, he said, “We should not engage in oppression. We should not investigate what is going on in people’s homes.” On Dec. 28, the Tehran and Qom prosecutors were dismissed. On Jan. 1, 1983, further purges of revolutionary tribunals were undertaken.

1983

May 11 – Ayatollah Khomeini appealed for an end to disagreements among government officials. On Aug. 23, Khomeini pledged that the clergy would retreat

from political life when the public “gets on the right track.” In an Oct. 5 speech to clerics, he warned against “satans” fomenting discord.

Dec. 8 – Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, later to become Ayatollah Khomeini’s heir apparent, urged government reforms, criticizing the revolution for lacking “a certain moral courage.”

1984

April – In the second parliamentary elections, the Islamic Republican Party dominated, but divisions remained between the conservatives associated with President Ali Khamenei and leftists associated with Prime Minister Mousavi.

1986

Sept. 5 – In a clandestine broadcast, Reza II, son of the late shah, declared himself ruler of Iran and called for overthrow of Ayatollah Khomeini’s regime.

1987

May – Ayatollah Khomeini disbanded the Islamic Republic Party because of internal conflicts.

1988

Feb. 6 – Khomeini established the Expediency Discernment Council to mediate conflicts between the Guardian Council and the parliament, and to advise the supreme leader.

March – A political split in the country’s main clerical organization – the conservative Society of Combatant Clergy – led to the creation of a competing radical and populist clerical organization called the Association of Combatant Clerics.

April – In the third parliamentary elections, candidates identified with the leftist Society of Combatant Clerics and non-clerical Islamic Revolution Mujahedin won the majority of seats.

1989

March 28 – Khomeini fired heir apparent Ayatollah Montazeri, who later became the leading dissident cleric and was put under house arrest.

June 3 – Ayatollah Khomeini died.

June 4 – Ayatollah Ali Khamenei became the new supreme leader.

July 28 – A revised constitution eliminated the office of prime minister and made permanent the Expediency Discernment Council. The supreme leader's power was expanded.

Aug. 3 – Rafsanjani was elected president for the first of two four-year terms and launched the era of reconstruction.

1992

April-May – In the fourth parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council for the first time extensively vetted candidates and disqualified 30 incumbents. The conservative Society of Combatant Clergy won two-thirds of the seats. Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri was elected speaker.

1996

March-April – In the fifth parliamentary elections, the conservative Society of Combatant Clergy received the most seats. But candidates of the newly created Servants of Construction, which consisted of technocrats allied with President Rafsanjani, also did well. Nateq Nouri was reelected as speaker.

1997

May 23 – Mohammad Khatami won the presidency in an upset landslide with 70 percent of the vote. The reformist era began. A coalition of 18 organizations and parties identified as reformist formed a front called the Second Khordad Front, named for the Persian calendar date of Khatami's election.

1999

July 8 – Students demonstrated at Tehran University after reformist *Salaam* newspaper was closed by the judiciary. Protests continued for six days. More than 1,000 students were arrested.

2000

February-May – In the sixth parliamentary elections, the reformist Second Khordad Front won 65 percent of the 290 seats. Mehdi Karroubi was chosen as speaker.

April – Widening a crackdown on the burgeoning independent press, the judiciary banned 16 reformist newspapers.

2001

June 8 – Khatami was re-elected president by a landslide.

2003

June 10 – Students led protests against raising university fees and privatization of universities that grew into wider pro-democracy demands. They also condemned President Khatami for failing to support them.

Oct. 10 – Human rights activist and lawyer Shirin Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize.

2004

February – In the seventh parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council disqualified thousands of reformist candidates, including many incumbents. Conservatives took control of parliament. Gholamali Haddad Adel was elected speaker.

2005

June 24 – In presidential elections, conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad defeated Rafsanjani.

2007

June 27 – Protests erupted after the government imposed fuel rationing.

2008

March – In the eighth parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council’s extensive disqualification of reformist candidates assured a conservative victory. But political rivalry among conservatives intensified. Ali Larijani replaced Haddad Adel as speaker.

2009

June 12 – Ahmadinejad won re-election, defeating former Prime Minister Mousavi, former parliamentary Karroubi and former Revolutionary Guard commander Mohsen Rezaei. The election featured the first televised debates. The defeated candidates and many others claimed massive voting fraud.

June 13 – The opposition Green Movement launched the most serious challenge to the theocracy since the revolution. Millions turned out on the streets of several Iranian cities for the next two weeks with banners declaring “Where is my vote?”

June 21 – The cell phone video capturing the shooting of Neda Agha Soltan, a 26-year-old student, was broadcast around the world. She became an international symbol of the Green Movement.

July 29 – Karroubi revealed incidents of death, torture and sexual abuse of protesters at Kahrizak Prison, which was followed by other first-hand accounts. Among the dead was the son of a senior Revolutionary Guards commander. The government closed the facility.

Aug. 1 – The judiciary launched televised trials of well-known reformers and former government officials such as former Vice-President Mohammad Ali Abtahi and Mohsen Mirdamadi, leader of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, the most popular reform party. They were accused of fomenting unrest and other anti-government activities. Five trials lasted into the fall.

Sept. 18 – On Qods Day (or Jerusalem Day), thousands demonstrated across Iran in support of opposition candidate Mousavi. A dominant slogan became, "No to Gaza and Lebanon. I will give my life for Iran," rejecting the government's support of Palestinian and Lebanese militancy. Qods Day marks the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, which Ayatollah Khamenei had dedicated as a day of solidarity with the Palestinian people

Nov. 4 – On the anniversary of the U.S. Embassy takeover, tens of thousands of protesters gathered across major cities. Instead of chanting "Death to America," protestors chanted, "Death to the dictator," a reference to Iran's supreme leader.

Dec. 19 – Leading dissident cleric Ayatollah Montazeri died, sparking widespread protests across Iran, including in the holy city of Qom.

Dec. 27 – Commemorations on Ashoura, the holiest day for Shiites, turned into violent anti-government protests.

Dec. 30 – Thousands of pro-government forces rallied in response to opposition protests on Ashoura.

2010

January – The parliament and the Guardian Council approved a plan for subsidy reform.

Feb. 11 – Both pro-government forces and members of the opposition movement turned out onto the streets on the anniversary of the revolution. But security forces prevented the opposition from mass protests, marking the success of a crackdown against the Green Movement.

July 21 – Ayatollah Khamenei issued a fatwa declaring that the supreme leader's rule is a direct succession to the Prophet Mohammed and the Shiite imams.

Dec. 13 – President Ahmadinejad sacked Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki without the Supreme Leader Khamenei's approval. Mottaki was considered one of Ahmadinejad's main opponents within the Iranian leadership. Ahmadinejad appointed top nuclear official Ali Akbar Salehi to replace Mottaki.

2011

Feb. 14 - The first mass anti-government demonstrations in a year took place following uprisings throughout the Arab world. Violent clashes with security forces reportedly left two dead. Opposition groups reported that 1,500 people were detained, but authorities said only 150 were detained.

Feb. 28 - The government placed reformist leaders Mir-Hossein Moussavi and Mehdi Karroubi under house arrest for supporting the widespread demonstrations.

Apr. 17 - President Ahmadinejad pressured Intelligence Minister Heydar Moslehi to step down. But he was reinstated by Khamenei. Lawmakers called for the Ahmadinejad's impeachment.

Oct. 10 - Reformist leader Mehdi Karroubi was briefly released from house arrest to celebrate his 74th birthday.

Oct. 11 - The United States accused Iran of involvement in an alleged plot to kill the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington. Tehran denied the claims.

Nov. 29-30 - Iranian protesters stormed the British embassy in Tehran during a demonstration against U.K.-imposed sanctions. Britain evacuated its diplomatic staff and expelled Iranian diplomats from London. But ties were not severed. France, Germany, and the Netherlands also recalled their ambassadors for consultations.

2012

Oct. 3-5 - Iranian riot police broke up demonstrations at a major bazaar in Tehran. Protestors blamed President Ahmadinejad for the plummeting value of the rial. The bazaar closed for three days, due to the demonstrations.

Nov. 9 - Iran announced a ban on over 70 types of foreign luxury goods.

2013

January - Iran arrested 11 journalists accused of working with foreign Persian-language media organizations such as the BBC.

Jan. 28 - The Guardian Council approved amendments to Iran's Election Law that significantly limited the government's role in running elections.

May - More than 500 candidates registered to run for the presidency but only eight men were approved by the Guardian Council, including Mohammad Reza Aref, Saeed Jalili, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Mohammad Gharazi, Mohsen Rezaei, Hassan Rouhani and Ali Akbar Velayati.

May 31-June 7 – State television aired a series of three debates on the economy, social issues and foreign policy. All eight candidates were allotted the same amount of time to respond to questions and each other's responses.

June 15 – Hassan Rouhani won the presidential election with 18.6 million votes, just over half of the votes.

Aug. 3-4– Hassan Rouhani took office at a ceremony in Tehran on August 4 in which Supreme Leader Khamenei endorsed his victory. Rouhani took the oath of office before parliament and foreign dignitaries the following day.

Aug. 15 – Parliament approved 15 of Hassan Rouhani's 18 picks for cabinet ministers. Most of them were ministers or senior bureaucrats with pragmatic outlooks who served during Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency between 1989 and 1997.

September-November – After Rouhani's inauguration, the government announced the release of some 80 political prisoners including noted human rights activist Nasrin Sotoudeh. But only about half had been released by early November.

Nov. 24 – Iran and the P5+1 countries – Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States – announced the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA), an interim deal that sanctions relief for Iran in exchange for nuclear concessions while a final deal was negotiated over the next six months.

2014

Aug. 20 – Parliament dismissed Science Minister Reza Faraji-Dana for his support of students involved in the 2009 demonstrations. The science minister's responsibilities include overseeing universities and Faraji-Dana's decision to allow students previously expelled for their involvement in the protests to return to classes angered many conservatives.

Oct. 21 – Chairman of the Assembly of Experts, Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, died after being in a coma following a stroke on June 4. Mahdavi Kani became Chairman of the Assembly of Experts in 2011 following the resignation of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. A member of the Combatant Clergy Association, Mahdavi Kani also served as Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Justice. Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi became the acting Assembly of Experts chairman after Mahdavi Kani fell into the coma.

Nov. 24 – Officials from Iran and P5+1 missed the deadline for a deal and announced that talks would be extended by seven months, with a political agreement to be in place by March 2015.

2015

Jan. 21 – Mohammad-Reza Rahimi, former first vice president under Ahmadinejad, was sentenced to five years in prison and fined approximately \$1 million. Rahimi was convicted of corruption charges related to insurance embezzlement as part of the so-called *Fatemi Circle*.

March 10 – Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi was elected Chairman of the Assembly of Experts following the death of the previous chairman, Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi Kani, the previous October. Yazdi defeated previous chairman Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani after two rounds of votes.

April 2 – Zarif and E.U. foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini issued a joint statement announcing that Iran and the P5+1 had reached an understanding on key parameters for a comprehensive nuclear deal, with the final agreement to be drafted by June 30.

June 8 – Former Ahmadinejad vice president, Hamid Baghaei, was [arrested](#) on unspecified charges.

July 14-20 – Iran and the P5+1 announced that they reached a final deal on Iran’s nuclear program, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the U.N. Security Council subsequently adopted Resolution 2231 to endorse the deal.

2016

Jan. 20 – The Guardian Council vetted prospective candidates for the parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections. Although a full list of disqualified candidates was not publicized, many of them were reportedly [reformists](#). In response to criticism of Guardian Council, Ayatollah Khamenei publicly [announced](#) his support for their judgement.

Jan. 26 – In an [Instagram](#) post, the son of Hassan Khomeini, a grandson of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, [announced](#) that his father was one of the more than 600 candidates barred from running for a seat in the Assembly of Experts. A week later Khomeini received the public [support](#) of former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to be allowed to run.

Feb. 6 – The Guardian Council [reversed](#) the disqualification of more than 1,500 previously barred candidates.

Feb. 10 – Hassan Khomeini’s appeal to the Guardian Council for permission to run in the Assembly of Experts election was [rejected](#).

Feb. 18-24 – Candidates campaigned for the parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections.

Feb. 26 – A loose group of reformists, centrists and moderate conservatives, known as the [List of Hope](#), scored a decisive [victory](#) by securing a majority of the seats decided in the first round of voting of Iran’s legislative election. The results were [similar](#) in the Assembly of Experts. In the Tehran election, reformists took all but one seat with reformist former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani receiving the most votes while the previous assembly president and hardliner Mohammad Yazdi missed the cut off.

April 3 – Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian dual national working for the Thomas Reuters Foundation, was [arrested](#) on charges of spying and sentenced to five years.

April 15 – After winning a seat in Parliament, female reformist candidate Minoo Khaleghi was retroactively [disqualified](#) in a controversial move by the Guardian Council. The Council did not give an official reason for her disqualification, although some speculated that a photo of her shaking hands with a man and not wearing a hijab might have triggered the decision.

April 30 – The List of Hope [failed](#) to win the seats needed in the runoff elections to take a majority the parliament. But they won enough to form the largest bloc.

2017

Jan. 8 – Former president and moderate leader Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani [died](#) of a heart attack at age 82.

Jan. 10 – More than 2 million people reportedly participated in former President Rafsanjani’s [funeral](#) procession, including top political figures. Some mourners took the opportunity to [protest](#) by chanting pro-opposition slogans so loudly that state television played music during the broadcast to drown the sound out.

April 20 – The Guardian Council [announced](#) the approved candidates for the 2017 presidential election. They included incumbent President Rouhani, hardliner and Khamenei-ally Ebrahim Raisi, and Mayor of Tehran Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf. Most prominent among the rejected candidates was former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who registered against the will of Khamenei.

May 20 – President Rouhani won [reelection](#) over hardliner Ebrahim Raisi, securing 57 percent of the vote in a strong endorsement of his agenda. Rouhani’s campaign emphasized loosening social and political controls and attracting foreign investment.

May 29 – Iran held elections for city and town councils nationwide. Reformist candidates [won](#) a decisive victory nationally, outperforming conservative candidates.

June 7 – ISIS terrorists [conducted](#) a dual attack in the heart of Tehran, targeting the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini and Parliament. The attacks killed 18 civilians and left 50 wounded. Iran responded with surface-to-surface missiles targeting ISIS facilities in Syria.

Aug. 10 – Tehran City Council [elected](#) Mohammad Ali Najafi, a reformist who held various ministerial positions under multiple administrations, to be mayor. Najafi [took](#) office August 29, after the Interior Minister approved his credentials. Najafi took over from Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, who served as Tehran’s mayor for twelve years.

Oct. 9 – The Administrative Court of Justice [suspended](#) Sepanta Niknam, a Zoroastrian member of Yazd city council. A Guardian Council decision, that the election of non-Muslims in Muslim-majority districts was a violation of Sharia, guided the court. The court’s suspension [triggered](#) a jurisdictional battle between Parliament and Guardian Council.

Dec. 27 – The Girls of Revolution Street protest [movement](#) against the mandatory hijab began. Female protesters recorded videos of themselves without a hijab, or waving their hijabs on street corners and other public places.

Dec. 28 – On December 28, 2017, protests broke out in Mashhad, Iran’s second largest city, over economic hardships, corruption, and rising food and fuel prices. The initial protests were [reportedly](#) sparked by [increases](#) of up to 40 percent in staples, including eggs and poultry. Out of a population of 80 million people, about 3.2 million Iranians were jobless, with youth unemployment around [29 percent](#). The protests quickly morphed into anti-government demonstrations that [spread](#) to more than 80 cities. At least 20 people were killed and more than [3,000 arrested](#). The demonstrations were the largest challenge to the government since the 2009 Green Movement. The initial demonstrations lasted for about two weeks.

2018

Feb. 11 – President Rouhani [called](#) for referendums to resolve Iran’s political divisions. The call came during a commemoration of the Revolution, one month after intense protests nationwide.

March 14 – Mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Ali Najafi, [resigned](#) following conservative backlash after he attended an Islamic version of Mother’s Day celebration that featured

a female dance performance. Although the girls were under the age of nine, political opponents seized the opportunity to attack him.

April 7-9 – In a major setback with potential political fallout, the rial [lost](#) 18 percent of its value on the free market between April 7 and April 9. It hit an all-time low against the dollar, which was reportedly being [traded](#) for 62,000 [rials](#) on the free market. The official [rate](#) – set by the Central Bank of Iran – was 37,830 rials. In response, the government decided to finally [unify](#) the free market exchange rate and the official exchange rate – at 42,000 rials to the dollar.

April 18 – Kaveh Madani, deputy head of Iran’s Organization of Environmental Protection, [resigned](#) and left Iran for the United Kingdom following a crackdown on environmental activists. Madani was an award-winning scientist and water conservation expert who returned to Iran one year earlier at the Rouhani administration’s request. Madani was arrested in February in a regime sweep of environmentalists, one of whom died while in custody.

May 8 – President Trump [announced](#) the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and the reimposition of nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. The remaining world powers party to the deal reiterated their support for it. Early signals from Tehran demonstrated a strong willingness to save the agreement.

May 13 – Tehran City Council [elected](#) Mohammed Ali Afshani as mayor of Tehran following the resignation of Mayor Najafi. Afshani, a reformist, was previously the governor of Fars Province. Tehran City Council refused to accept Najafi’s first resignation on grounds of ill health, believing it to be under duress. City Council accepted his second resignation one month later.

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