



A protest by the students of Tehran's Sharif University

Crackdown, Bleak Prospects Force Iranian Students To Migrate

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Many had warned of a potential mass migration of Iranian elites due to the suppression of dissent and neglect of young Iranians' demands over the past year.

A recent photo that went viral on social media shows 13 students of the prestigious Sharif University at the Tehran International Airport before leaving the country for good. Sharif University is one of the best of its kind in Iran and many of its graduates have relocated to the United States to continue their studies.

During the Women, Life Freedom protests in October 2022, security forces violently attacked the university in downtown Tehran and injured and arrested several dozen students.

A report on Khabar Online website told the story of Sharif University students at the airport and quoted one of the students as saying that "at least 10 of them left Iran on that night." He said, "With the students who were there to see off their friends, the departure hall looked more like the Sharif University than the Imam Khomeini Airport."

The report added that up to 100 of the 120 students admitted to Sharif University last year have left Iran for good. The viral photo which was mainly posted by reformist politicians on X, Instagram and Telegram, and the comments made by social media users have created a wave of sad sentiments on social media.



A group of students of Sharif University at the Tehran International Airport before leaving Iran

The exact number of students who left the country that night is a matter of dispute, but there is no doubt that scores have left in the past few weeks.

Accounts by Sharif students indicated that many more of their classmates have already left or planning to leave. Mohammad, one of the students, told Khabar Online that when he entered the airport hall, it looked like the university's courtyard. Upon his arrival, Mohammad saw some 20 of his classmates as well as many graduates of other universities who were all waiting to depart and fly to a third country before the last leg of their travel to the United States. He said with a degree of certainty that at least 6 of those in the picture left that night.

Earlier, Shahin Akhundzadeh, a professor at the Tehran University's school of medicine told Khabar Online that at least 50 of the students that were admitted to that school in 2014, later left Iran for good. However, according to the report, there is no reliable official statistics about student migration.

Mohammad told Khabar Online that some of the student resolved to leave Iran after the security police locked them in the university last October and badly battered them. He said during the past years, some of the students left Iran with a clear intention to return after graduation, but their families encourage to stay abroad.

Earlier in September, Iran's former **President Hassan Rouhani criticized** the harsh treatment of the elite, alleging that some officials are pleased that they are leaving the country. Rouhani added that an expatriate, apparently with high qualifications, who returned after this meeting with Iranian students in the

United States in 2014 was arrested at the airport, presumably by security forces taking their orders from places other than his government.

Shahriyar Haydari, the deputy chairman of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has said: "We would not be facing this level of emigration if effective action had been taken by the government," adding that "Most of the emigrants are gifted and expert individuals."

Meanwhile, Dr Saeid Moidfar, chairman of the Iranian Sociological Association, told the press early September that a new wave of emigration, sparked by the crackdown on last year's nationwide protests and a deep economic crisis, is reaching a critical point. Moidfar warned that Iran is now on the threshold of a very intense wave of emigration because those who want to leave believe that political and economic circumstances are not going to improve in Iran, the society's values are degrading, and corruption and crime are on the rise.

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