

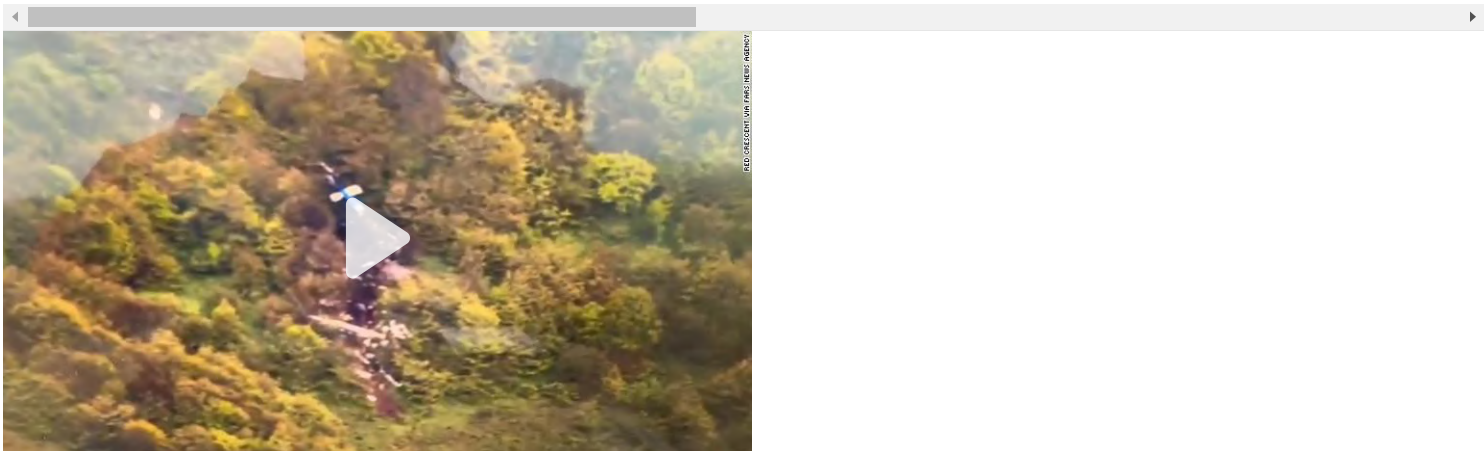
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Drone video shows apparent crash site of Iranian president's helicopter 01:04

LIVE UPDATES

Iran's President Raisi killed in helicopter crash

By Kathleen Magramo, Deva Lee, Rhea Mogul, Jerome Taylor, Antoinette Radford and Rob Picheta, CNN

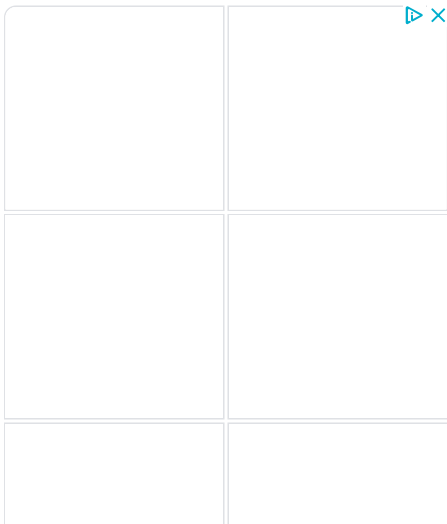
Updated 1336 GMT (2136 HKT) May 20, 2024

What we're covering

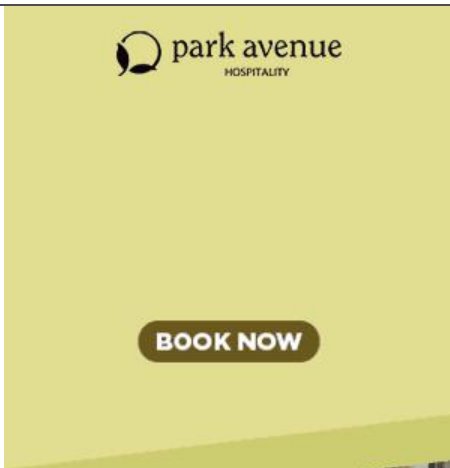
- Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi **has died** in a helicopter crash at age 63, the government confirmed. The country's foreign minister and seven others were killed after the crash in a remote, mountainous area of Iran's northwest.
- Raisi was the second-most powerful person in the Islamic Republic after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran's **First Vice President** Mohammad Mokhber is now acting president, and **top negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani** has been appointed acting foreign minister.
- The president's death comes at a **fraught moment in the Middle East**, just weeks after **Iran launched a drone and missile attack** on Israel in response to a deadly strike on its diplomatic compound in Damascus.
- Hardliner Raisi became president in a historically uncompetitive election in 2021. He has overseen **intensified repression of dissent** in a nation convulsed by youth-led protests against clerical rule.



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Body of President Raisi to be moved to city of Mashhad on Tuesday

From CNN's Adam Pourahmadi

The body of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and the other victims of Sunday's helicopter crash will be transferred on Tuesday from Tabriz to the northeastern city of Mashhad, where Raisi was born, according to Fars news.

A large public ceremony is scheduled to take place at a prayer hall in Tabriz at 4 p.m. local time on Monday, Fars news reported.

At 9 a.m. local time on Tuesday, a large procession will accompany the bodies of Raisi and the other victims from Tabriz Martyr's Square to the city's airport. From there, the bodies will be moved to Mashhad, according to Fars.

Raisi was born in Mashhad in 1960. He ran the powerful charity known as Astan-e Quds-e Razavi, which manages the huge Imam Reza shrine, a major Islamic holy site in the city.



1 hr 6 min ago

Iran's president has died. Here's what we know about what comes next

From CNN Staff



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi at Saadabad Cultural & Historical Complex in Tehran, Iran, on April 29, 2023. Sakineh Salimi/Borna News/Aksonline ATPImages/Getty Images

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi was confirmed dead by state media on Monday morning, after a helicopter he was traveling in alongside Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and seven others crashed in foggy conditions in the country's remote northwest on Sunday.

Here's what to know now:

Acting president: In the wake of Raisi's death, Vice President Mohammad Mokhber has been **appointed as acting president**.

Acting foreign minister: Ali Bagheri Kani, who has led Iranian delegations through indirect negotiations with the United States over nuclear issues and prisoner exchanges, has been **appointed acting foreign minister** after the death of **Amir-Abdollahian**, state news agency IRNA reported.

New elections: The Iranian constitution mandates that the three heads of the branches of government, including the vice president, speaker of the parliament, and head of the judiciary, must arrange for an election and elect a new leader within 50 days of assuming the role of acting President. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a message to state news agencies that Mokhber was responsible for organizing **elections for a new president** within that time.

Public mourning: Ayatollah Khamenei has announced **five days of public mourning** after the crash, and expressed his condolences. **All cultural and arts activities** have been canceled in Iran for the next seven days.

Global reaction: The loss of Raisi — a conservative hardliner and protege of Ayatollah Khamenei — is expected to sow further uncertainty in a country already buckling under significant economic and political strain, with tensions with nearby Israel at a dangerous high. His death has already triggered international reaction with **Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India and the UAE** leader expressing their condolences for his death. Lebanon has **declared three days of mourning**.

Militias respond: Iran-backed militant groups **Hamas, the Houthis, and Hezbollah** have sent condolences to Tehran over the death of Raisi.

near the village of Uzi, in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province on Sunday, May 19. The helicopter was on its way to Tabriz, returning from a ceremony to open a dam on Iran's border with Azerbaijan. Eight other people were on board.



Correction: A previous version on this graphic misstated the date of the incident.

Sources: CNN, Iranian news agencies IRNA and Tasnim
Graphic: Henrik Pettersson, CNN



4 hr 5 min ago

Iran cancels all cultural and arts activities for seven days

From Negar Mahmoodi

All cultural and arts activities in Iran will be suspended for seven days following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, the Ministry of Culture announced on Monday.

Raisi died in a helicopter crash at age 63.

The country's foreign minister and seven others were also killed after the crash in a remote, mountainous area of Iran's northwest.



1 hr 7 min ago

Judiciary branches

From Alireza Hajhosseini



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber speaks during Iran's government cabinet in Tehran, Iran, on May 20. Iran's Presidency/WANA/Reuters

Iran's acting president Mohammad Mokhber held an "extraordinary meeting" on Monday with the heads of the legislative and judicial branches following the announcement of President Ebrahim Raisi's death, according to Iranian state media.

Mokhber spoke with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Hujjat al-Islam Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i, the head of Iran's Judiciary, according to Iran's semi-official Tasnim News.

The three expressed their condolences and reaffirmed the three branches of government will continue its duties to the nation "without any interruption," Tasnim reported.



4 hr 25 min ago

Iran appoints top negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani as acting foreign minister, state media reports

From CNN's Mostafa Salem



Iran's Chief Nuclear Negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani leaves the Palais Coburg in Vienna, Austria, on August 4, 2022. Lisa Leutner/Reuters

Ali Bagheri Kani, who has led Iranian delegations through indirect negotiations with the United States over nuclear issues and prisoner exchanges, has been appointed acting foreign minister after the death of **Hossein Amir-Abdollahian**, state news agency IRNA reported.

Amir-Abdollahian was among the nine people killed in a helicopter crash in Iran's remote northwestern mountainous region on Sunday, along with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

"Following the martyrdom of Hussein Amir Abdollahian, the Foreign Minister of our country, with the approval of the Cabinet Board, Ali Bagheri, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs, was appointed as the acting minister of the ministry," state news agency IRNA said.



5 hr 10 min ago

Iran's supreme leader announces five days of mourning for those killed in helicopter crash

From CNN's Alireza Hajthosseini

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei announced five days of public mourning after a helicopter crash killed President Ebrahim Raisi, the country's foreign minister, and seven others.

In a message carried by Iran's state news agencies, Khamenei expressed his condolences over the deaths and confirmed Iran's first Vice President Mohammad Mokhber is now managing the executive branch.

"He is obliged to arrange with the heads of the legislative and judicial branches to elect a new president within a maximum of fifty days."

5 hr 4 min ago

Putin says Raisi was "a true friend of Russia"

From CNN's Seb Shukla and Anna Chernova



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, shakes hands with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi during a meeting in Moscow, Russia, on December 7, 2023. Sergei Bobylev/Sputnik/Reuters

Russian President Vladimir Putin described Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi as an "outstanding politician" and said his death was an "irreparable loss," according to a [statement](#) from the Kremlin.

"As a true friend of Russia, he made an invaluable personal contribution to the development of good neighborly relations between our countries and made great efforts to bring them to the level of strategic partnership," Putin said.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described Raisi and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian as "true, reliable friends of our country" and added that it was "deeply saddened" by their deaths.

"Their role in strengthening mutually beneficial Russian-Iranian cooperation and trusting partnership is invaluable. We sincerely condole with the families and friends of the victims, as well as with all the friendly people of Iran," Lavrov said.



5 hr 24 min ago

"A great loss for the Iranian nation," says spokesperson for Iran's Guardian Council

From CNN's Alex Stambaugh



People pray for the well-being of Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi following the crash of a helicopter carrying him, in Tehran, Iran, on May 19. Majid Asgaripour/WANA/Reuters

The spokesperson for Iran's Guardian Council – a powerful 12-member council in charge of overseeing elections and legislation – has called the death of President Ebrahim Raisi "a great loss for the Iranian nation."

Spokesman Hadi Tahan Nazif said that while Iran is facing a tragedy with the death of its president, Iran's constitution has foreseen the necessary measures for this situation.

"Just as the leader of the Islamic Republic stated, the affairs of the country will not be disrupted," Nazif told Iranian state news agency Press TV.

Iranian constitution mandates that the three heads of the branches of government, including the vice president, speaker of the parliament, and head of the judiciary, must arrange for an election and elect a new leader within 50 days of assuming the role of acting President.

3 hr 5 min ago

It will “not be very difficult” to fill the gap after Raisi’s death, analyst says

From CNN staff



Meir Javedanfar walks near his home in Tel Aviv on April 21, 2006. Gil Cohen Magen/Reuters/File

It will “not be very difficult” to fill the gap after Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi’s death, a Tel Aviv-based analyst told CNN.

“President Raisi was not a very successful president in terms of the economy,” Meir Javedanfar, director of Middle East Economic and Political Analysis Company, told CNN.

“In Iran, the president's hands are usually tied because although they have a lot of responsibility, the authority to carry out things really remains in the hands of the supreme leader.”

He added that Raisi “was not somebody with a background in security,” nor someone “with a background in Iran's bureaucracy.”

“He was a chief for the judiciary. He cut his teeth in the judiciary system of the Islamic Republic. And he was not a man of vision. He was not a charismatic politician who came to change things,” Javedanfar said.

“The economy which he was supposed to manage actually got worse under President Raisi.”



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