





Users on social media also slammed the execution(<https://www.dw.com/fa-ir/%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%B3%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%8F%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B4%D8%AF/a-68064696>) of Farhad Salimi, a Sunni Kurdish man.

- Salimi was executed after 14 years in prison, with Amnesty International labeling(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/7580/2024/en/>) his trials as "grossly unfair" and tainted by torture allegations.

Following the two executions, Human Rights Watch (HRW) raised(<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/23/iran-2-detainees-executed-11-await-imminent-execution>) concerns about 11 other prisoners at "imminent risk" of facing capital punishment in a statement on Jan. 23.

- The rights group said eight of those at risk are Kurdish and noted that there had been a rise in the number of executions of members of ethnic minorities.

The executions come as Iran is slated to hold parliamentary polls concurrent with elections for the 88-member Assembly of Experts. The latter oversees the supreme leader's performance and selects his successor.

Sparking consternation, the website of Hassan Rouhani announced(<https://www.rouhanihassan.com/Fa/News/106708>) on Jan. 24 that the moderate former president (2013–21) had been disqualified from defending his seat in the Assembly of Experts.

- In a statement(<https://www.rouhanihassan.com/Fa/News/106738/%DA%86%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%84-%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%86%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%DA%AF%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%9F-%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%86%DA%AF%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AC%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A3%DB%8C%D9%88%D8%B3%E2%80%8C%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C%E2%80%8C-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%88%DB%8C%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AA-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%AA%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%D9%88-%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C->), Rouhani criticized the Guardian Council, accusing the conservative-dominated watchdog of being "politically motivated" in its disqualification of candidates.
- Rouhani charged that a "ruling minority" wants reduced voter turnout in the upcoming elections to "determine people's fate" by itself.
- The former president nonetheless called on people to cast ballots in the Mar. elections.



### Iran's Assembly of Experts

Executive board, 2016-23

**Ahmad Jannati**

**Ebrahim Raisi**

**Hashem Hosseini Bushehri**

**Ahmad Khatami**

Chairman of Assembly of Experts

President of Iran

Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom

Friday Prayer Leader

Source: News agencies • Collated by: Amwaj.media

**The context/analysis:** Qobadlou is the ninth protester [executed\(https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32787757.html\)](https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32787757.html) for alleged crimes committed during the nationwide unrest in 2022.

- According to Amnesty International, Iran [recorded\(https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/death-penalty-2022-executions-skyrocket/\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/death-penalty-2022-executions-skyrocket/) at least 576 executions in 2022—the second-highest number in the world after China.
- Iran [executed\(https://www.hra-news.org/periodical/a-154/\)](https://www.hra-news.org/periodical/a-154/) at least 746 people last year, according to the foreign-based human rights news agency HRANA. The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights of the UN [reported\(https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/un-experts-urge-iran-respect-international-law-and-stop-horrific-executions#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20are%20dismayed%20by%20the,protests%2C%E2%80%9D%20the%20experts%20over%20834%20executions.](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/un-experts-urge-iran-respect-international-law-and-stop-horrific-executions#:~:text=%E2%80%9CWe%20are%20dismayed%20by%20the,protests%2C%E2%80%9D%20the%20experts%20over%20834%20executions.)

Though Iran continues to punish dissidents, some within the political establishment sense a need to curry favor with the public as key elections draw near. Other circles of power are less concerned with voter turnout.

- There are already fears of a low turnout on Mar. 1. Of note, a state-linked polling agency in Dec. 2023 [projected\(./media-monitor/iran-faces-conundrum-as-most-voters-projected-to-skip-upcoming-polls\)](https://www.media-monitor.com/iran-faces-conundrum-as-most-voters-projected-to-skip-upcoming-polls) that most eligible voters would abstain from voting.

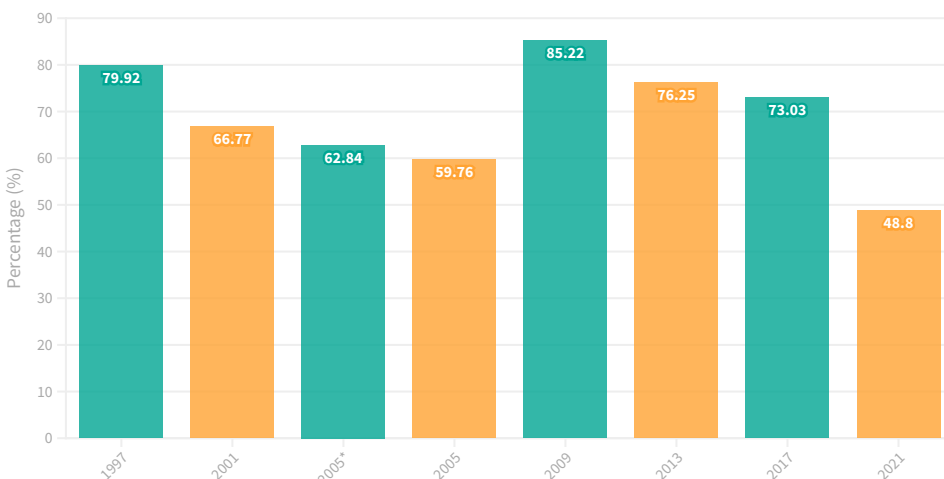
Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other top officials have long pointed to voter turnout as an indicator of the Islamic Republic's legitimacy.

- As recently as Jan. 16, Khamenei urged Iranians to cast ballots, [describing\(https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/26917/\)](https://www.leader.ir/fa/content/26917/) voting as "both a duty and a right."
- But the range of voices which are permitted to run in elections continues to grow more and more narrow. Many pro-reform and centrist politicians were barred from contesting the 2020 parliamentary elections and 2021 presidential polls.
- While the mass disqualifications of moderates and pro-reform candidates in recent years have led to a conservative takeover of all branches of power, the legitimacy of the takeover has also been tainted by record-low voter turnout(<https://www.irna.ir/news/83687482>).



### Voter turnout in Iran's presidential elections, 1997 - 2021

In percentages (%)



The Guardian Council's decision to bar Rouhani from defending his seat in the Assembly of Experts is likely to toughen criticism from pro-reform factions.

- Reformist media have previously [charged](#) that the upper echelons of power are being further streamlined towards conservatism ahead of the Mar. 1 polls.
- The Reform Front, a major pro-reform entity, has already [stated](https://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/759313/%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AC%D8%A8%D9%87%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D9%86%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B4%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D9%86%DB%8C%D9%85) it cannot participate in the upcoming elections under current conditions, saying that many of its candidates have been disqualified.

**The future:** Encouraging voters to cast ballots is becoming a growing challenge for the Islamic Republic, which has long prided itself on high voter turnout in national elections.

- The historically low turnout in general polls since 2020 suggests a broader trajectory in which major segments of Iranian society no longer wish to participate in the political process. This dynamic holds the potential for triggering further and more violent unrest down the line.
- As Iran continues its crackdown on dissent and streamlines candidates to concentrate power in the hands of conservatives, the establishment may not be overly concerned about voter turnout. However, the likely destabilizing effects of the latter should not be underestimated.
- Given Khamenei's old age and the eight-year terms of the Assembly of Experts, the next assembly is likely to select Iran's coming supreme leader. In this context, the disqualification of Rouhani indicates that conservatives are not taking any chances when it comes to leadership transition.

[Execution, Protest, Mahsa Jina Amini, Assembly of Experts, Guardian Council, Hassan Rouhani, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#)