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Iran

Iranian regime crushes popular uprising

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The balance sheet of the violent crackdown on the Iranian protesters is difficult to establish. Various NGOs, including Amnesty International, advance figures of 100 to 200 deaths, thousands of injuries and more than 5,000 arrests in less than a week. A violence that speaks volumes about the fears of the regime facing a new uprising, almost two years after the winter of 2017-2018, against the cost of living and, more generally, against the regime itself.

Like in Lebanon, Chile and Ecuador, the recent revolt in Iran began following the announcement of price increases. On 15 November, the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) announced a sharp increase in fuel prices: 50% for the first 60 litres a month, 300% for the following, with the indirect consequence of raising the prices of many other products. A surprise announcement, which elected representatives in Parliament found out about at the same time as the people, and which immediately aroused a wave of protest throughout the country.

An ultra-violent but weakened regime

In the hours following the announcement, rallies and spontaneous demonstrations were organized in several major cities of the country and, by contagion, in dozens of other cities, small and medium, the next day. The slogans were obviously about the rise in the price of fuel and, beyond that, the price increases and the high cost of living. But, more generally, all the policies of the government were questioned, with slogans against the regime, against President Rohani and against Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, of whom any criticism is strictly illegal.

In a number of cities, the demonstrations, which remained largely peaceful, turned into riots, with attacks on public buildings, banks, post offices, service stations and so on. Notable fact: the demonstrations and riots are much more diffuse, throughout the territory of Iran, than during the revolt of winter 2017-2018, and the participants are, according to testimonies and images, significantly more numerous. A sign of the weakening of the regime, indirectly confronted, moreover, with popular movements in Iraq and Lebanon.

Faced with this phenomenon and the fear of contagion, the regime has chosen bloody repression by calling the movement "rebellion" (a capital crime) with brutal interventions by various armed forces, use of snipers to shoot at crowds, and curfews imposed by the Revolutionary Guard. All in a terrible information vacuum since, from November 16, the regime has cut off access to the internet, preventing information and images from circulating for several days during which the regime claims to have "quelled" the "rebellion" and threatens to execute, in dozens, the "seditious".

It is certain that US sanctions, following the exit from the Iranian nuclear agreement, have had a strong impact on the Iranian economy and on the living conditions of the population. But the regime's focus on excessive spending on its military and nuclear programs, as well as the maintenance of its clientelist networks, inside and outside the country's borders, does not help. The anger of the popular classes who refuse to undergo austerity again and again as well as being deprived of many basic democratic freedoms, is legitimate. More than ever, solidarity with Iranians fighting against an authoritarian and antipopular regime is on the agenda.

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