

‘People are in no mood to mourn’: mixed reactions in Tehran after death of President Ebrahim Raisi

Tuesday 21 May 2024, by [PARENT Deepa](#) (Date first published: 20 May 2024).

Iran’s supreme leader has announced a five-day mourning period, but there have been fireworks and cheering in the country since the death was confirmed

The president was declared dead on 20 May after rescue teams found his crashed helicopter in a fog-shrouded western mountain region. Photograph: Atta Kenare/AFP/Getty Images

Activists in Iran have said there is little mood to mourn the death of the country’s president, Ebrahim Raisi, who was [killed in a helicopter crash](#) near the border with Azerbaijan on Sunday.

Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, announced a five-day public mourning period after the deaths of Raisi, the foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other passengers on the helicopter. However, Iranians who spoke to the Guardian have refused to lament the death of a man who they say was responsible for hundreds of deaths in his four-decade political career.

It was during Raisi’s tenure that [protests swept the country](#) after the death of the 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, who died in police custody after being arrested by police under Iran’s harsh hijab laws. More than 19,000 protesters were jailed, and at least 500 were killed – including 60 children – during the Woman, Life, Freedom protests. The police continue to [violently arrest women for refusing hijab rules](#).

Hours before Raisi’s death was confirmed by state media, videos circulated on Telegram showing celebratory fireworks, one of them from Amini’s hometown of Saqqez. Iranians from inside and outside the country shared posts reminding the world of Raisi’s brutal presidency and his repression of political dissidents.

Speaking of the president’s death, a family member of a teenager killed by security forces during the Mahsa Amini protests said: “Raisi’s soul will never rest in peace because he killed my brother and the children of my homeland. He was a murderer who ordered the killing of so many children. My brother’s soul will rest in peace only when others like him are brought to justice. Until then, in God, we believe.”

Among those killed during the protests was also [Minoo Majidi](#), a 62-year-old mother who was shot at close range by security forces with more than 160 pellets. Her daughters shared a video of them cheering to the news of the missing helicopter.

Majidi’s daughter Mahsa said: “We are happy because they were murderers. Raisi ordered the killing of my mother and his minister denied our martyrs. I know it is not right to be happy about the death of a person, but they were not human. Congratulations to all the victims’ families and people of Iran. *Zan, Zendegi, Azadi* [Woman, Life, Freedom].”

Those interviewed by the Guardian inside the capital said the mood may be “jubilant” on social media, but inside the country the reactions are mixed.

A Tehran-based reporter said: “Many military agents have been stationed in the streets and even small squares since last night. The police have repeatedly warned that people who are happy about the death of the president will be prosecuted. People were lighting fireworks, listening and dancing to music, and those in the traffic kept honking in solidarity with those celebrating.

“The mourning period will see some arrests because people are in no mood to mourn and won’t follow the orders. The surrounding mood is nowhere close to sorrow, and people hope others will meet a similar fate.”

A 22-year-old woman, who was among the first to hit the streets in protest in September 2022, said: “Raisi’s death will do little to change the repression we are facing every day. I am not happy or sad about his death. But I will take it as a sign of justice for the deaths of my friends. We continue to face death every day for simply asking for basic human rights and that unfortunately will not change unless this regime goes down.”

Political activist Taghi Rahmani, the husband of the imprisoned Nobel prize winner [Narges Mohammadi](#), said: “Raisi’s death in itself will not structurally change the leadership of the country which is ensured by the supreme leader Khamenei. On the other hand, we must now scrutinise the looming political battle and the internal balance of power within the regime, since the Iranian constitution provides that new elections must be organised within 50 days.”

Another protester, 30, from Tehran, said: “Life in Iran has taught us that sometimes it is possible to be happy about the death of people. It is painful, but I am happy. We lost our homeland and hopefully, we will gain it back.”

Deepa Parent

P.S.

• The Guardian. Mon 20 May 2024 14.31 CEST:
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/may/20/people-are-in-no-mood-to-mourn-mixed-reactions-in-tehran-after-death-of-president-ebrahim-raisi>

Supported by
guardian.org

This is what we’re up against

Teams of lawyers from the rich and powerful trying to stop us publishing stories they don’t want you to see.

Lobby groups with opaque funding who are determined to undermine facts about the climate emergency and other established science.

Authoritarian states with no regard for the freedom of the press.

Bad actors spreading disinformation online to undermine democracy.

But we have something powerful on our side.

We've got you.

The Guardian is funded by readers like you in France and the only person who decides what we publish is our editor.

If you want to join us in our mission to share independent, global journalism to the world, we'd love to have you on side.

If you can, please support us on a monthly basis. It takes less than a minute to set up, and you can rest assured that you're making a big impact every single month in support of open, independent journalism. Thank you.

- Support the Guardian

Available for everyone, funded by readers

[Contribute](#)

[Subscribe](#)