

# Iran prison fire kills four, injures 61

● Iranian judiciary says those killed died of smoke inhalation

● Iran says calm returns to Evin prison after fire, airs footage

● Fire comes amid widespread protests, brutal crackdown

● Iran accuses Biden of interfering in state affairs

● Protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death enter second month

Reuters | Dubai



A view of smoke rising from Evin Prison in Tehran, Iran

A fire at Iran's Evin prison late on Saturday killed four detainees and injured 61, state media reported, as anti-government protests sparked by a woman's death in police custody continued on Sunday, including at several universities.

Iranian authorities said on Saturday that a prison workshop had been set on fire "after a fight among a number of prisoners convicted of financial crimes and theft". Evin holds many detainees facing security charges, including Iranians with dual nationality.

Iran's judiciary said four of those injured in Saturday's fire were in critical condition and that those killed had died of smoke inhalation, Iranian state media reported.

Earlier state television aired video apparently showing that calm had returned to the facility.

Protests sparked by 22-year-old Mahsa Amini's death on Sept. 16 have turned into one of the boldest challenges to Iran's

## 240

Rights groups said at least 240 protesters had been killed in the anti-government protests, including 32 minors.

## 8,000

Over 8,000 people had been arrested in 111 cities and towns, Iranian activist news agency HRANA said

clerical rulers since the 1979 revolution, with protesters calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic, even if the unrest does not seem close to toppling the system.

Demonstrations continued at several universities on Sunday, including in the cities of Tabriz and Rasht, to a heavy deployment of riot police. Videos posted on social media showed students at a Tehran university chanting: "Iran has turned into a big prison. Evin prison has become a slaughterhouse."

Reuters could not independently verify the footage.

The clampdown on protests has attracted international condemnation, with the United States, Canada and some European countries imposing sanctions on Iranian officials and organisations they accuse of being involved.

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American Iranian held at Evin, Siamak Namazi, imprisoned for nearly seven years on espionage-related charges rejected by Washington as baseless, said on Sunday that Namazi had contacted his relatives.

Several other dual national Iranians and foreign citizens are held in Evin prison mostly for security-related charges.

"Siamak Namazi has now spoken to his family. He is safe and has been moved to a secure area of Evin Prison. We have no further details," lawyer Jared Genser said in a tweet.

The husband of Iranian journalist Niloofer Hamed, who broke the news of Amini's hospitalisation and was arrested last month, also wrote on Twitter that she had telephoned him on Sunday.

### VIOLENT CRACKDOWN

Asked about the prison fire, US President Joe Biden told reporters during a campaign trip on Saturday to Portland, Oregon that the Iranian government was "so oppressive" and that he was surprised by the courage of the Iranian protesters.

Iran's foreign ministry said Biden had interfered in Tehran's

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state matters by showing support for the anti-government protests. read more

France said on Sunday it was following with the utmost attention the situation at Evin prison, "where several French nationals are being arbitrarily detained".

"France once again reminds the Iranian authorities that they are responsible for the safety and health of our compatriots detained in Iran," a French foreign ministry spokesperson said in a statement, repeating a call for their immediate release.

Protests have been met with a brutal state crackdown. Rights groups said at least 240 protesters had been killed in the anti-government protests, including 32 minors. Over 8,000 people had been arrested in 111 cities and towns, Iranian activist news agency HRANA said on Saturday. The authorities have not published a death toll.

Among the casualties have been teenage girls whose deaths have become a rallying cry for more demonstrations across the country.

Protesters hold signs at a demonstration, following the death of Mahsa Amini, a woman who died last week in Tehran after being arrested by Iranian morality police, in Berlin, Germany

## UK finance minister Hunt vows to win back financial market trust

● PM Truss remains under intense political pressure

● Government must account for every penny, says new finmin

● Promises to make "difficult decisions" on spending, tax

Reuters | London

New finance minister Jeremy Hunt promised to win back Britain's economic credibility by fully accounting for the government's tax and spending plans, while insisting his boss Liz Truss remained in charge of the country.

Prime Minister Truss appointed Hunt on Friday in an attempt to rescue her leadership as confidence in her ability to run the country drained away within both her own Conservative Party and international financial markets.

Sunday's newspapers were rife

with stories of plans to replace her.

Investors have sold British government bonds heavily since Sept. 23 when Hunt's predecessor, Kwasi Kwarteng, announced a string of unfunded tax cuts without publishing a set of independent economic forecasts.

The knock-on effects forced the Bank of England into an emergency intervention to protect pension funds and drove up mortgage costs - adding to the squeeze on Britons' finances.

"What I'm going to do... is to show the markets, the world, indeed people watching at home, that we can properly account for every penny of our tax and spending plans," Hunt told BBC television in an interview broadcast on Sunday.

Britain's economy is at risk of

going into recession at the same time as the Bank of England is raising interest rates to control soaring inflation. Bank Governor Andrew Bailey said on Saturday he thought a big rate hike would be needed in early November.

Truss - who became Conservative Party leader just 41 days ago after promising to slash tax-

fired Kwarteng on

Friday and has ditched key parts of the programme they agreed together.

The chaos has fuelled discontent in the governing party, already splintered before Friday and falling far behind the opposition Labour Party in opinion

polls. Crispin Blunt on Sunday became the first Conservative lawmaker to publicly say Truss could not survive as leader.

"I think the game is up and it's now a question as to how the succession is managed," he told Channel 4's 'The Andrew Neil Show'.

Blunt did not say how such a change could happen, but that if enough of the party wanted it they would find a way.

Even U.S. president Joe Biden criticized Truss's original economic plan as a mistake.

"I think that the idea of cutting taxes on the super wealthy at a time when - anyway, I just think - I disagreed with the policy, but that's up to Great Britain to make that judgment, not me," he said.



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