Dozens Arrested As Tehran Bazaar Protest Spreads To Other Cities

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<https://en.radiofarda.com/a/bazaar-protests-continue-a-second-day-in-iran-/29321459.html>

Protests against rising prices and chaos at foreign exchange rates continued in Tehran on June 26 for the third consecutive day. Protests have also spread to markets in several other Iranian cities, local media reported.

Judiciary officials say “a large number” of demonstrators have been arrested, while Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani has threatened that “disrupting economic activities may entail death sentence” for perpetrators.

Protests have reportedly spread far and wide from Tabriz in the north to the markets in Qeshm Island in the Persian Gulf, agency reports from Tehran say.

In Tehran, public transport officials announced the closure of some metro stations near the Grand Bazaar.

Media and officials close to President Hassan Rouhani have accused Iran’s hard-liners of organizing the protests.

The latest wave of protests started on June 24 at Tehran’s cell phone market and continued at the Grand Bazaar on June 25, when protesters closed their shops and marched toward the Iranian Parliament. Police dispersed the demonstrations on both days on Baharestan Square, where the parliament is located.

The streets around the Grand Bazaar were rife with people chanting slogans against fluctuations in the foreign exchange market that soon turned into anti-government political slogans.

“Union leaders had promised that the Tehran bazaar would be open for business this morning after Monday’s protests. But the agency’s reporters have observed that parts of the bazaar remained closed,” the semiofficial Fars news agency reported early on June 26.

According to Fars, “There are crowds chanting terrifying slogans at 15 Khordad Avenue,” where the Grand Bazaar’s main gate is located.

Other reports say that Bein ol-Haramain Bazaar, Tehran’s traditional market for books and stationary, as well as the blacksmiths market and jewellers market, had also joined the protest. Traders were chanting slogans calling on their colleagues to “unite and close the shops,” the reports said.

Videos posted on social media on June 26 showed the bazaar in Kermanshah in western Iran and the jewellers market of Tabriz in the northwest with shuttered shops and traders chanting protest slogans.

###### **A video from Tabriz shows the closure of shops and businesses.**

In an article on the front page of the hard-line daily newspaper Kayhan, Hossein Shariatmadari, the daily’s editor and the representative of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, suggested the government should deploy plain-clothes security agents among the protesters.

Another video posed on social media show demonstrators in Javadieh in downtown Tehran chanting, “Death to the dictator.”

Abdollah Esfandiary, a member of the trustees of Tehran’s Grand Bazaar, told reporters that rising prices and foreign exchange market fluctuations as well as instability with customs have made the continuation of business at the bazaar virtually impossible.

On June 24, the rate of exchange for the U.S. dollar reached a record high of 90,000 rials, with a 10,000 rial hike in just one day.

Demonstrators at the Grand Bazaar on June 26 voiced concerns over the rate of exchange for the U.S. dollar.

​**A Plot Against the Rouhani Administration?**

Some officials in the Rouhani administration have implicitly accused hard-liners of organizing the protests.

Presidential adviser Hesamoddin Ashna tweeted, “We should hear the voices coming from the streets and markets. Voices from the street reflect the people’s demands, but we should not mistake the dealers and traders’ voice for that of the poor.”

In another development, the Jomhouri Eslami newspaper described the protests as “a conspiracy against the Rouhani administration,” adding, “The conspiracy will not stop here.”

The daily warned, “It would be a mistake on the part of the plotters to think that they would rise to power if the Rouhani administration is toppled.”

The newspaper was apparently alluding to statements by some of Khamenei’s aides who have called for the dismissal of the Rouhani administration.

Yahya Rahim Safavi, an adviser to Khamenei, said on June 24, “Sometimes it seems the country would be better off without an administration.”

Meanwhile, some of the ultra-conservative MPs in the parliament have been taking about tabling a motion to remove Rouhani from his post.

The administration’s spokesman, Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, has said in response to the MPs that, “Some people are planning to create insecurity in the country by portraying the administration as incapable of meeting people’s demands.”

The parliament discussed the “economic chaos” in a closed-door session on June 26, and some MPs described the situation as “the United States’ economic war” against Iran.

Hard-line MP Nader Qazipour said at the session that “those who created this economic situation in Iran should be executed.”