



### [Protests Erupt in Iran Following the Accidental Shooting of a Ukrainian Airlines Flight](#)

Iran is currently gripped by anti-government protests, as outrage grows over the government's handling of a Ukrainian Airlines flight that was shot down by the Iranian military. Iran's government admitted that it shot down Ukrainian Airlines flight 752 when it was mistaken for an American military jet. Initially, Tehran blamed the crash on a mechanical failure, but when it became clear that a surface-to-air missile had intercepted the plane, Iran's Revolutionary Guards took responsibility and said it was a mistake. As a result, Iranians have been demonstrating in the streets against the government, and calling for leadership to step down. University students in Tehran and Isfahan ignited the protests, and have since been joined by regular civilians. The protests have been permitted to an extent by the authorities, although reports and video footage emerged showing police using live ammunition and tear gas to disperse crowds.

Tensions have been simmering close to the surface in Iran since the United States killed General Qassem Soleimani two weeks ago. Soleimani was in Iraq and allegedly planning attacks on American military installations throughout the Middle East when U.S. President Trump gave the order to kill him and several Iraqi militia commanders in Baghdad. Iran considered this an act of war, and retaliated by striking American military bases in Iraq. In the aftermath of those strikes, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps was on high alert to the possibility of the United States carrying out an attack on Iran. In this state of heightened tension, Ukrainian Airlines flight 752 to Kiev was shot down mistakenly when it was erroneously identified as an American bomber.

For the first three days following the crash, Iran's government denied the country had shot the plane down. When evidence surfaced that there was no mechanical failure, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani admitted that the plane was shot down, but said his government was unaware that the military was culpable. However, he was contradicted by a senior commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards who said he notified the government that the military shot the plane down hours after it happened. Recently, Rouhani has called for the military to continue the ongoing investigation, but with "more coordination and monitoring." Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif took a different tone, and praised the military during a state visit to India. Zarif commended the military for being "brave" in admitting that they were responsible for bringing down the plane.

One of the biggest reasons for the demonstrations in Iran is the three-day delay between the jetliner being shot down, and the government admitting responsibility. Protestors have been chanting "down with the liars" in Tehran, and Iranians appear tired of the regime's continued evasiveness. There have also been calls for Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to step down and for the country to enact more democratic reforms. The current protests come not long after mass demonstrations back in November of last year, that were the biggest since Iran's revolution in 1980. The November protests were marked by bloodshed, and the Iranian government stands accused of killing hundreds of protestors. Western nations have called for restraint during the current round of demonstrations, with President Trump tweeting that Iran would face harsh consequences for killing any civilians. In a rare move, Supreme Leader Khamenei is due to lead Friday prayers this week in Tehran, in an attempt to reduce tensions. The last time the supreme leader led the prayers was in 2012, during a crisis over Iran's nuclear program.