

# Skepticism blends with hope as Iranians consider life after nuclear pact

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.21.15

Word Count **856** 7



The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi (center), ends his speech in an open session of Parliament while discussing a bill on Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, in Tehran, Iran, Oct. 11, 2015. Photo: AP Photo/Ebrahim Noroozi

TEHRAN, Iran — A historic agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program formally began on Sunday. The accord may mean a new start for Iran. But there is little sense on the busy streets of Tehran, the country's capital, that anything will change soon.

Government efforts to lower people's expectations of any immediate changes and hide details of the agreement appear to have confused many ordinary Iranians. People are as worried as ever about not being able to afford goods or find work. In 1979, the Iranian revolution put anti-Western Muslim religious leaders into power, and Iran became an Islamic Republic. In response, the United States and other countries imposed sanctions, or trade restrictions, against Iran. The sanctions prevented Iran from trading with many countries and badly damaged its economy.

On Sunday, the agreement officially went into effect. Ninety days ago, the accord was signed by Iran and six other nations, including the United States. The goal of the agreement was to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and to ensure that its nuclear program is used for peaceful purposes, such as making electricity. In exchange for limiting its nuclear program, Western countries — mainly the U.S. and those in Europe — promised to lift the trade restrictions.

### **Most Express Doubt And Pessimism**

Still, many ordinary Iranians doubt that things will get much better. Others are just not sure what all the fuss is about.

“I can’t figure out what this deal is, but I hope it will be good for us,” said Bahram Asgari. The carpet salesman and father of three was outside the capital’s busy Grand Bazaar. “All I know is that prices keep going up and it is harder and harder to make ends meet, no matter what the politicians say.”

In the underground gold market, shop windows glittered with bracelets, rings, necklaces and other jewels. Store owners there said sales have been slow.

“Business is very slack,” said Asghar Nouzad, 40, seeming sad as he manned his stall. “I don’t see much to hope for in the future.”

### **President Calls For Patience In Waiting For Improvement**

On Sunday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned that people should not expect to see any change until spring. Iran is an oil-rich country. Most of the trade restrictions may be lifted on Iran by then, allowing it to begin selling oil to other countries.

The government does not want people to think that the deal will solve all their problems, but few here seem to believe that anyway.

Last week, Iranian lawmakers officially approved the nuclear deal.

Iran’s leaders are sensitive to any suggestion that they have given in to the United States. In fact, they have become even more anti-Western. Recently, the military announced that it has a new generation of long-range missiles, hidden deep underground.

### **Putting Deal In Place Will Take Months, Officials Say**

Western officials say it will take months for Iran to begin to put in place the complicated deal. Iran must reduce its ability to enrich uranium, a key step in making a nuclear bomb. It must also reduce its supply of enriched uranium and redesign its nuclear facilities for peaceful purposes. Enriching uranium

separates out the type of uranium needed to make an atomic bomb from common uranium. Sometime in the middle of 2016, Iran should be able to begin trading normally, officials say.

Because of the trade restrictions, many Iranians have been forced to take several jobs. Many senior citizens have begun driving taxis.

Ali Reza, 62, retired 10 years ago after working as a technician with the Iranian air force. Ten years ago, his pension was worth about \$2,500 a month. It is now worth about \$600 a month.

"I have three children; my benefits aren't enough," said Reza, who now works as a cabdriver to make more money.

"Nothing will ever change here," he said.

### **Young Iranians Are More Optimistic**

Iran's youth are more hopeful. They are major supporters of Rouhani, who was elected in June 2013 after promising to end the trade restrictions.

"I just hope people have more money to spend so they can invest more in decorating their homes," said Parisa Jalili, 24. She is an interior decorator who was with her boyfriend, Ramin Haderi, at the Naderi restaurant.

Many young Iranians are highly educated, but there are not enough good jobs.

Haderi, 25, is an engineer earning about \$600 a month. He said he believes that foreigners will now invest in Iranian businesses.

"I'd say there's a cautious optimism out there now," said Sam Madikians, an Iranian-born Californian who owns the Naderi restaurant.

### **Clergy Warns Western Values Will Not Be Embraced**

But Iran's religious leadership has repeatedly made a point: The deal does not mean the country is more open to the West.

At Friday prayers on the grounds of Tehran University, 88-year-old Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati warned that Western values -- including homosexuality -- were not welcome. An ayatollah is a high-ranking Muslim religious leader.

"Yes, we made the nuclear deal, but that's it," said Abbas Khorramabadi, who attended the prayer service. "We will not allow for any other compromises," he said, adding that Western values will not win.

## Quiz

- 1 Which section of the article BEST explains Iran's role in the trade agreement?
- (A) "Most Express Doubt And Pessimism"
  - (B) "President Calls For Patience In Waiting For Improvement"
  - (C) "Putting Deal In Place Will Take Months, Officials Say"
  - (D) "Young Iranians Are More Optimistic"
- 2 Which piece of evidence BEST illustrates an effect the trade agreement can have on Iran?
- (A) Store owners there said sales have been slow.
  - (B) Many ordinary Iranians doubt that things will get much better.
  - (C) He said he believes that foreigners will now invest in Iranian businesses.
  - (D) Shop windows glittered with bracelets, rings, necklaces and other jewels.
- 3 Read the sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].

*The accord may mean a new start for Iran.*

Which of the following phrases from the article helps readers understand the meaning of the word "accord"?

- (A) major supporters
- (B) immediate changes
- (C) trade restrictions
- (D) nuclear deal

- 4 Read the paragraph from the section "Most Express Doubt And Pessimism."

*"Business is very slack," said Asghar Nouzad, 40, seeming sad as he manned his stall. "I don't see much to hope for in the future."*

Which answer choice is the BEST definition of the word "slack" as used in the sentence?

- (A) predictable
- (B) profitable
- (C) unstable
- (D) sluggish