



## IRAN DEMOCRACY MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of  
Radicalism and Reform in Islamic Republic of Iran

# Iran Democracy Monitor No. 208

June 23, 2020 **Noah Garber**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; China; Iran; Iraq

## THE LONG ARM OF IRANIAN LAW

The Iranian regime's long-running campaign of extraterritorial assassinations of dissidents and fugitives appears to have expanded into Eastern Europe. Earlier this month, former Iranian judge Gholamreza Mansouri was found dead in Bucharest, Romania after falling six stories from a hotel window. Mansouri had been responsible for harsh rulings against media sources, shuttering newspapers, and imprisoning journalists during his tenure as a judge for the Culture and Media Prosecutor's Office. The rulings drew the ire of the international community, including Reporters Without Borders, Amnesty International, and Iranian activists, who called for his arrest.

Of late, however, Mansouri appeared to have fallen afoul of Iranian authorities, who accused him of receiving bribes while on the bench, prompting him to ultimately flee the country. When it was discovered that Mansouri had sought refuge in Romania, the Iranian regime requested his extradition, but Bucharest delayed the rendition (originally scheduled to have taken place on June 12th) due to a lack of evidence. A week later, Mansouri was dead, and while an investigation is still ongoing, his death bears an ominous semblance to past official assassinations of regime opponents. (*Radio Farda*, June 19, 2020)

## HARD TIMES FOR IRANIAN PROPAGANDA

The Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign is impacting Iranian foreign policy in an unexpected sphere: strategic communication. According to an expose by *Bloomberg*, funding shortfalls have forced the country's official broadcaster, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), to shut down its Dari-language programming into neighboring Afghanistan, where the Iranian regime has long sought to project its influence. The agency is now said to be contemplating additional closures (potentially including the dismantlement of its influential English-language *Press TV* channel) in order to further cut costs in the face of dwindling resources. (*Bloomberg*, June 11, 2020)

## A CHALLENGE TO IRANIAN CONTROL OVER IRAQ

The Islamic Republic's stranglehold of recent years over Iraqi politics is showing signs of weakening. Iran's clerical army, the IRGC, has long maintained extensive contacts with - and control over - Iraq's assorted Shi'a militias, formally known as the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU). These forces, in turn, have given Tehran a controlling position in Iraqi politics, allowing Tehran to exert influence over the direction and tenor of Iraqi foreign and domestic politics. However, Iraq's newly-appointed Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, appears to be seeking to alter this *status quo*.

Al-Kadhimi is now said to be seeking mandatory integration of the PMU into the regular Iraqi military, as well as a standardization of these forces and an elimination of their dependency on (and connection to) Iran. This month, pursuant to the Prime Minister's guidance, Iraqi PMU Chairman Fali Al-Fayyadh issued a directive to all forces that includes, among other things, an order to sever all political and non-political relationships with any outside organizations. The PMU must also rename themselves in accordance with military naming conventions, and close their respective headquarters around Iraq. (Middle East Media Research Institute, June 4, 2020)

## HOW HUAWEI SKIRTED IRAN SANCTIONS

Chinese tech giant Huawei has long misrepresented its role in providing prohibited U.S. computer gear to Iran. Previously described by Huawei as a "local business partner in Iran," Skycom Tech Co. Ltd has been found to be effectively controlled by Huawei - interest that the Chinese firm covered up after 2013 to avoid being targeted by U.S. trade sanctions. Documents reviewed by Reuters highlight the fraudulent relationship between the two firms, and reveal that Huawei installed its own employees in management positions at Skycom in order to direct commerce with the Islamic Republic while avoiding media scrutiny. (Reuters, June 3, 2020)