

ROUHANI AFTER TWO YEARS

PERFORMANCE REPORT



MUNK
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INTRODUCTION

This report provides Iranians and the international community with a detailed record of the campaign promises of Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, and his administration's efforts to achieve those promises. It offers an in-depth analysis of the administration's accomplishments and failures by fact-checking for tangible results.

This report is divided into four categories: foreign policy, economic policy, social and cultural policy, and domestic policy, covering the major policy areas in which Rouhani promised to prioritize his work as president. The findings of this report suggest that the top priority of the second year of the Rouhani administration has been the nuclear program and the lifting of economic sanctions. By reaching a nuclear deal with the P5+1 states, the government fulfilled one of its main campaign promises. As a result, Rouhani has been able to advance diplomatic efforts aimed at getting the UN Security Council to lift its sanctions on Iran.

The government has failed to make progress on Rouhani's campaign promise to reduce Iran's regional isolation and improve its relations with Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring Gulf States. On the contrary, Iran's relations in the region have significantly deteriorated. The change of leadership in Saudi Arabia, the proxy war in Yemen, and other ongoing conflicts in the Middle East all contribute to Iran's isolation.

Rouhani's government has a mixed record on economic policy, which was a particularly important factor for voters during the 2013 presidential election. Successes include keeping the inflation rate steady at 14.5 percent, down from highs of over 40 percent under the previous government, and stabilizing the currency. On job creation, the government has taken small steps to fulfill its promise to lower the unemployment rate. Oil and gas production fell slightly to 3 million bpd. Worker's wages were finally adjusted to account for inflation, though they remain significantly lower than what workers had demanded.

The government has struggled to improve economic conditions in other areas, such as recovering from the recession, improving national subsidy programs, and stimulating growth in the financial sector, foreign investment, and the stock market. Rouhani's government has expressed hope that the removal of sanctions and the accompanying release of national assets will have a positive impact on general economic conditions.

On social and cultural policies, the government has fulfilled two of its campaign promises, namely the re-launch of Iran's National Symphonic Orchestra, and the implementation of universal health coverage. However, regarding Internet censorship and the filtering of social networking websites, the government has not made significant progress.

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On domestic policy, the government has shown little progress in fulfilling its campaign promises. The Rouhani government has neglected a key campaign promise to free political prisoners, including the three leaders of the Green Movement who have been under house arrest since 2011. The government has also failed to overturn the judiciary's ban on media coverage of reformist former President Mohammad Khatami.

The reopening of the Bureau of Political Parties, established in 2001 during Khatami's presidency with the goal of "guaranteeing and institutionalizing political activities," is sometimes cited as one of the major domestic achievements of Rouhani's government. However, this has had no significant impact on improving free political participation or institutionalizing and strengthening political party membership.

Another important aspect of Rouhani's domestic policy promises concerns the status of Iran's ethnic minorities. Rouhani's government, along with the Governor of Azerbaijan, attempted to establish the Conservatory of the Turkish (Azeri) Language. However, the government's efforts were not as extensive as Rouhani's campaign promised. There have also been small grassroots efforts in the province of Kurdistan to teach the Kurdish language in schools. However, the government has not yet announced a strategic plan to implement such a program, failing to fulfill its campaign promises in this regard.

The government's political will to combat gender and ethnic discrimination has also been insufficient, with limited positive changes.

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In the second year of his term, President Rouhani faced regional security challenges and conducted prolonged nuclear talks. These challenges hindered efforts to fulfill his other foreign policy promises. The conclusion of the nuclear deal should significantly improve the government's efforts in foreign policy, though it will have limited impact on the government's regional challenges.

During his presidential campaign, Hassan Rouhani promised constructive engagement with the West and the alleviation of the nuclear crisis. Such promises gained him a tremendous amount of support from the people of Iran. Their fulfillment became the foundation of Rouhani's presidency in its first two years.

The government made tremendous efforts to mobilize its resources to solve the nuclear issue. Rouhani has been criticized for putting all his eggs in the basket of the nuclear deal, without any having any equally significant alternative priorities.

However, Rouhani believed that a nuclear deal was necessary for any economic development. Hard-line and conservative factions, who the Rouhani government calls the 'beneficiaries of sanctions' because their privileged place in the Iranian economy would be threatened a more open economy, continued their efforts to hinder a productive nuclear deal.

Now that the government has achieved a nuclear deal - its ultimate priority - it can begin to fulfill its domestic political promises. One such promise includes the release of members of the Green Movement from house arrest. Thus, it is likely that the nuclear deal will free government resources to pursue its domestic policy priorities.

The Nuclear File

After 13 months of negotiations, a nuclear deal was reached in July of 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States—plus Germany), and the European Union.

The length of the negotiations presented numerous challenges for the government. It allowed for the opponents of the deal to mobilize opposition to the deal through seminars and conferences and to publish media reports that hindered the government's efforts to reach a deal. Conservatives in Parliament summoned the Minister of Foreign Affairs several times to Parliament for questioning, and frequently referred to him as a traitor during his appearances. Parliament even issued a critical letter signed by 77 of its members to further

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undermine the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the talks.

The ongoing economic crisis further contributed to political tensions and made the success of the nuclear deal of central importance to the government's legacy.

The nuclear deal was reached in the final month of Rouhani's second year. The government is hopeful that in the following months it will finally be able to fulfill many of its campaign promises on foreign policy.

Shortly after its signing, the United Nations Security Council unanimously endorsed the nuclear deal in resolution 2231. In accordance with the deal, the Council also set in motion a process to lift international sanctions in exchange for stringent new controls on Tehran's nuclear program.

Iran's file was removed from Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, which is concerned with threats to global peace and security, and placed under Chapter Forty One, a change which brings several legal benefits. The resolution sets out the plan for the gradual removal of sanctions against Iran, sets limitations on Iran's nuclear activities and the implementation of safety protocols, and endorses the monitoring of the nuclear sector in Iran. Restrictions on the sale of nuclear-related material will stay in place for 10 years.

The withdrawal of Iran's file from the Security Council constitutes a fulfillment of Rouhani's campaign promise. Sanctions against Iran should begin to wind down so long as Iran complies with its commitments.

The agreement obliges Iran to take certain measures with respect to its existing nuclear program. Iran will be allowed no more than 5,065 early-generation centrifuges at Natanz, the primary uranium enrichment facility—about half the previous number. It must reduce its uranium stockpile by 98 percent to 300kg for 15 years. It must convert its Fordow nuclear facility into a research centre and remove any existing capacity to enrich uranium. And it must allow for outstanding issues in its nuclear-related military activities prior to 2003, when the nuclear program was first revealed, to be resolved by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Before sanctions could begin to be lifted an IAEA report was needed to corroborate Iran's implementation of the nuclear agreement. This report was submitted to the IAEA's Board in Governors by its Director General in early December 2015. The Board closed its investigation into the Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of Iran's nuclear program shortly thereafter.

Iran also agreed to the 'Additional Protocol' with the IAEA, which gives inspectors increased access in perpetuity to nuclear facilities for monitoring and verification. The Agency will have continuous access to Iran's entire supply chain, including uranium mines, mills, factories manufacturing centrifuges,

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and centrifuge spinning facilities. Iran must grant the IAEA access to any sites it suspects are involved in covert enrichment, centrifuge production, or yellowcake production. Lack of compliance with any of the provisions would be referred to the P5+1 for further action.

Regional Challenges

Rouhani has faced unexpected regional challenges that have hindered his campaign promise to improve relations with neighbouring powers. The security of Iran's border with Iraq became a concern as ISIS expanded its reach across the region. Additionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came under attack by conservative opposition groups for neglecting diplomatic relations with the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the political crisis in Yemen escalated tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Supreme Leader's aggressive tone against the Saudi government also did not help the government's engagement with Saudi Arabia. Efforts at rapprochement faced serious setbacks early in 2016 after Iranian protesters stormed the Saudi embassy in Tehran to protest the execution of Nimr al-Nimr, a Shia religious leader in Riyadh.

The government also canceled the pilgrimages (Umrah) due to public outcry against the case of two Iranian pilgrims who were sexually abused at the airport in Jeddah.

Saudi has mobilized resources and diplomatic influence against Iran. Arab-language media are often antagonistic towards Iran, contributing to tensions between the two states.

Falling oil prices has contributed to a decrease in Iran's oil revenues, a phenomenon that Rouhani has described as a conspiracy against Iran.

Even though Rouhani tried to reconcile its differences with Saudi Arabia, the new crowned Saudi King has adopted more aggressive policies than his predecessor towards Iran, and has shown little will for improving diplomatic relations.

These tensions have prevented Rouhani from fulfilling his promise to improve Iran's regional isolation. The successful implementation of the nuclear deal holds out some promise of improving Iran's foreign relationships as Rouhani enters his third year.

It is important to note that regional security challenges in Syria, Yemen and other Arab states have involved the military, the National Security Council and the Quds forces, which operate outside of the authority of the Rouhani administration.

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Rouhani's promise to address widespread visa restriction for Iranian passport holders was left unmet this year. The United Arabs Emirates deported many Iranian nationals and refused the extension of their visas. Iranian citizens travelling abroad face significant restrictions. Iran ranks 98 on the Visa Restrictions Index; holders of an Iranian passport can visit 37 countries visa-free or with visa on arrival.

Rouhani's promise to open the social and political environment in Iran faces significant domestic opposition from hard-line and conservative factions, both of whose influence extends to many key government bodies. The government hopes that the implementation of the nuclear deal and lifting of sanctions will lead to better relations with the West and improvements in Iran's international standing. Rouhani hopes that the government's domestic legitimacy will increase with the finalization of the nuclear deal. Additionally, Rouhani wants Iran to play a significant role in reducing regional crises. Success in these areas would give Rouhani greater leverage to implement social and political reforms.

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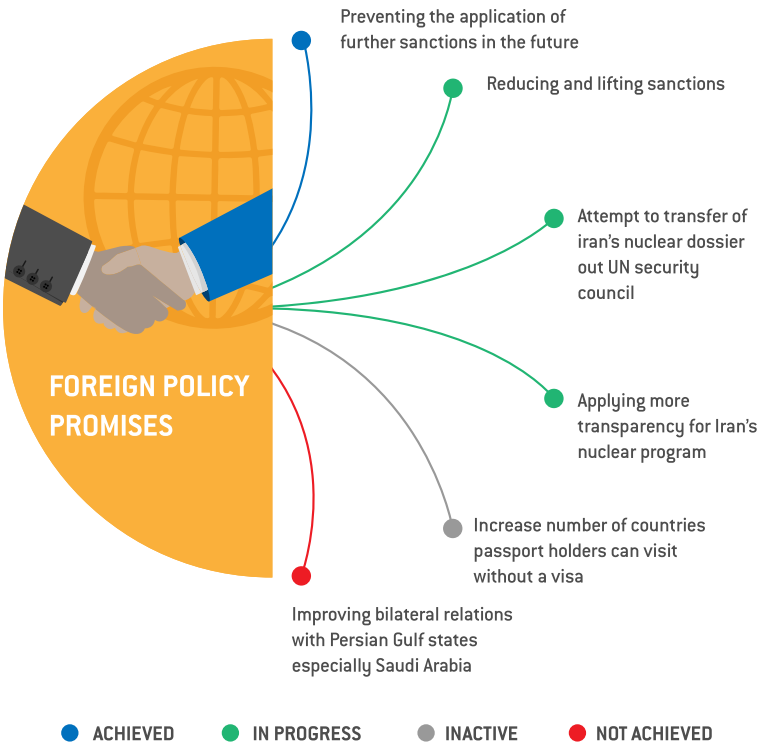
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During the presidential campaign, Hassan Rouhani presented a very hopeful image of the future economic situation of Iran. He proposed a '100 day solution' for the continuing economic crisis and represented the nuclear agreement as a potential remedy.

However, by the second year of his presidency, Rouhani was more circumspect in describing Iran's economic prospects. A number of issues contributed to the change in tone: the increasingly drawn-out nuclear negotiations, decline of oil prices, institutional corruption left over from the Ahmadinejad administration, and issues caused by the outsize influence of private economic actors, such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and groups connected to the Supreme Leader.

Challenges and obstacles:

Legacy of the Previous Government

After the election of Hassan Rouhani, the extent of illicit economic activity allowed by the previous government gradually became apparent. The Rouhani government argues that the inefficient and corrupt management of Ahmadinejad's government has done long-lasting damage to the Iranian economy.

Many of Ahmadinejad's economic initiatives were implemented in a way that limits the range of options available to the new government. The previous government transferred profitable industries to private actors with extensive connections to Ahmadinejad's base of power, including main sources of wealth such as state-owned industries, the banking sector, customs and taxation, oil revenues and sales of government bonds. First vice president, Eshagh Jahangiri, claimed that over 100 billion dollars of revenues from loans and leases extended to private economic institutions linked to powerful state factions were never returned to the treasury. Also, in the banking sector, the lack of obligatory payments for loans, or adequate down payments, restricted the government from accessing resources to promote further development projects. Additionally, Ahmadinejad made large numbers of patronage hires, inflating the bureaucratic system, and leading to inefficient and poorly organized financial and budgetary resources.

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Economic Sanctions and Structural Challenges

Rouhani recently highlighted the role of economic sanctions in constraining economic growth, and argued that without sanctions relief, the government could only perform a limited, protective role, and could not actively promote economic prosperity. Rouhani's tactic of blaming sanctions for all major social and economic issues has been attacked by many critics.

The economic system in Iran faces structural challenges that inhibit economic growth and prosperity. A large share of the economy is strictly controlled by economic institutions that belong to Supreme Leader and his entities, including the Executive Committee of the Imam Khomeini's Order, Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi, and the Mostazafan Foundation of Islamic Revolution. These bonyads, or charitable foundations, control billions of dollars in assets and are under the direct control of Supreme Leader Khamenei. The army and the police force also control a significant share of the economy.

These economic entities often have large businesses and holdings that have privileged access to resources from banks and other large institutions. They control a commanding share of imports and exports through exclusive access to ports that are outside the supervision of customs. The structure of Iran's economy allows for such powerful independent economic entities to act independently to promote or hinder government's efforts in the economy.

[The strengthening of the government to fulfill its promises](#)

Despite these challenges, the government has been able to fulfill a few of its economic promises. The government of Rouhani believes that its implemented strategies, including the redirecting of the economy and revitalizing the rail transit system, have significantly contributed to economic growth. Rouhani argues that the central role of its government is to restore stability in the business environment and earning back trust back in the government after years of corruption under Ahmadinejad.

The government argues that changes to how strategic economic decisions are made, including wider consultation among different constituents including government decision-makers and economic advisors, has led to marked improvements in the economy over the past two years. The market is more stable in comparison to the final year of the Ahmadinejad presidency, and economic growth has returned after contracting 5.8 percent in 2013.

[Promises on economic measures](#)

The government of Rouhani has committed to achieving certain economic targets:

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Decrease of Inflation

The most important obstacle for economic growth is stagnation and inflation. The government believes that foreign investment, removal of sanctions and economic openness are successful strategies to combat inflation. Thus, the government recognized the resolution of nuclear negotiations the most important approach to addressing economic issues across the country.

The government believes that it has been able to bring inflation down to 15 percent. Last year, Rouhani believed his government could lower the inflation rate into single digits, which was stymied by the decrease in oil prices and high interest rates.

Some critics believe inflation is higher than 15 percent, and that reported rates are subject to government manipulation. In support of this they argue that it is impossible for the inflation rate to be at 15 percent when the interest rates at banks are close to 25 percent. Even assuming that the government-reported figures are entirely accurate, Iran has one of the highest inflation rates in the world.

Massoud Nili, the chief economic advisor to the government, believes the government has made major gains in the battle against inflation. He argues that the public has a favourable impression of the government's management of inflation and shows increased trust towards government bodies. The stabilization of the currency market as well as control and reduction of monetary base growth have also helped in dealing with economic inflation.

Economic Growth, improving Business Environment and increasing Employment

Sanctions have prevented the government from making significant improvements in the business environment and job creation. The government's original strategy for job creation was the removal of sanctions, which Rouhani believed could be reached in his first one hundred days in office. However after two years, and despite reaching a nuclear deal, skepticism is high that the deal will have a rapid impact on the growth of the economy.

Growth has slowed in the past year due to decreased oil prices and the protectionist policies of the previous government, which Rouhani hoped to change early in his term. The government believed it had taken the necessary measures to attract domestic and foreign investment and overcome inflation. Rouhani appointed Mohammad Nahavandi, former President of Chamber of Commerce, as the head of the Office of the President. Having a financial executive as the face of the government was meant to signal an openness to industrialists and businessmen and compromise in foreign policy. Despite these

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efforts, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reported that foreign investment in Iran decreased year-over-year in 2015.

While the overall environment for job creation has improved, according to the World Bank Doing Business report, the job market faced several problems. Production costs increased due to higher interest rates, rising energy costs, taxes, increase wages, and import expenses due to sanctions. This led to falling industrial production and the closure of many production sites in the past year. The construction budget was slashed and job growth in the public sector was stagnant as slumping oil prices, sanctions against the banking sector and oil industries, and subsidies to affluent classes constrained government spending.

Additionally, the domination of other organs of the government in major industries, including the military and intelligence agencies, further crowded out private investment opportunities. The arrest of individuals involved in corruption, and a lack of judicial transparency in trials related to economic crimes, led to a reluctance among some investors and hindered the environment for economic growth.

Privatization

The government has begun to establish proper mechanisms to transfer state-owned industries into the private sector. These efforts have yet to yield significant results. Rouhani's only notable move has been transferring ownership of state assets to private institutions to pay off governmental debts. The Cabinet officially approved the sale of government assets to pay off debt for government institutions, including for the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, allowing some projects that had been stopped due to lack of funding to begin running again. Many of these contracts belong to the Foundation of Mostazafan and Khatam Alnbya, semi-private institutions with close links to the Supreme Leader and the Revolutionary Guard, respectively.

Strengthening of National Currency

Strengthening the value of the national currency was one of Rouhani's top promises. Not only has the government not been able to increase the value of the Rial, there has been an additional 10 percent decrease in its value compared to the U.S. dollar. However, considering the inflation rate, the currency has been relatively stable which has had a positive impact on the bureaucratic problems facing banks and traders.

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The government tried to keep the production of oil and gas consistent with last year. However due to the length of nuclear negotiations and failure to remove international constraints on trade, the production and export of oil fell this year.

Based on the findings of Shell's annual report, Iran is first in the world for its gas reserves and fourth for its oil reserves. The report is hopeful that the nuclear deal and lifting of sanctions will allow for Iran to expand business with multinational oil companies. The report also noted that a few oil companies have already begun to open their offices in Tehran and are at the forefront of companies that want to do business with Iran.

The government is taking greater steps in increasing oil and gas production, and estimates that production will double in the next two years. This is due to the removal of sanctions and an increase of interest by international energy companies in the Iranian market.

Establishment of Social Housing

The establishment of social housing was considered as an alternative project to Ahmadinejad's colossal Mehr Housing Project. However, since Rouhani's government was unable to complete the plan from the previous government, it has not been able to sustain its promise. The government's lack of financial resources had a significant impact on its ability to complete the projects.

Improving Wages

The government increased worker's wages and tied it with the inflation rate, though the increase was lower than the workers' original demands. The representatives of the union criticized the raise as insufficient, stating that in the long run, it would not improve the workers situation. The government argued that larger increases wages would contribute to the rise of production costs, leading to layoffs and worsening conditions for employment.

Critics of the Government's Economic Record

Critiques of the government's economic record comes from a diverse array of constituents with different grievances. The factional differences within the government's economic team make it difficult to implement a coherent economic program.

At the same time, critics claim that the government's economic team has invested disproportionate resources in securing the nuclear deal. Masoud

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Nili, chief economic adviser to the government, argues that the government's strategy is to control and prevent any economic crises until the nuclear agreement is sealed, following which the government can expand its economic development plans. Critics also claim that government subsidies have had a devastating impact on state budget and have forced the government to spend the development resources of different ministries on subsidies.

The stock market has significantly decreased in value. According to experts, it is estimated that nearly 50 billion dollars has been lost in the stock market. Poor management of government finances is one of the causes of this weak performance.

The government has also failed to address the negative economic consequences of high interest rates. Many economists believe that the 25 percent rates that many banks offer inhibits investment. Former Minister of Economy and former chief of central bank, Tahmasb Mazaheri, believes that anti-inflation policies of the government has contributed to the scarcity of money for financing. He argues that lack of government leadership in tackling inflation has caused significant problems for the economy, which will remain even after the removal of sanctions.

The unemployment rate in Iran is over 12 percent, among the highest in the world. According to International Monetary Fund, unemployment is expected to worsen in Iran in 2016. Critics believe that rising unemployment will contribute to the negative impact of inflation felt by Iranian households.

Critics believe that such shortcomings indicate that government of Rouhani has only been able to manage economic crises and has failed to fulfill its promises of growth.

In general, the economic problems perceived in the second year of Rouhani's government are due to continuation of recession, the lengthy process of the nuclear deal as well as the decline in oil prices. The government hopes that the nuclear deal and the lifting of sanctions will encourage foreign investment and could create a new economic environment for Iran.

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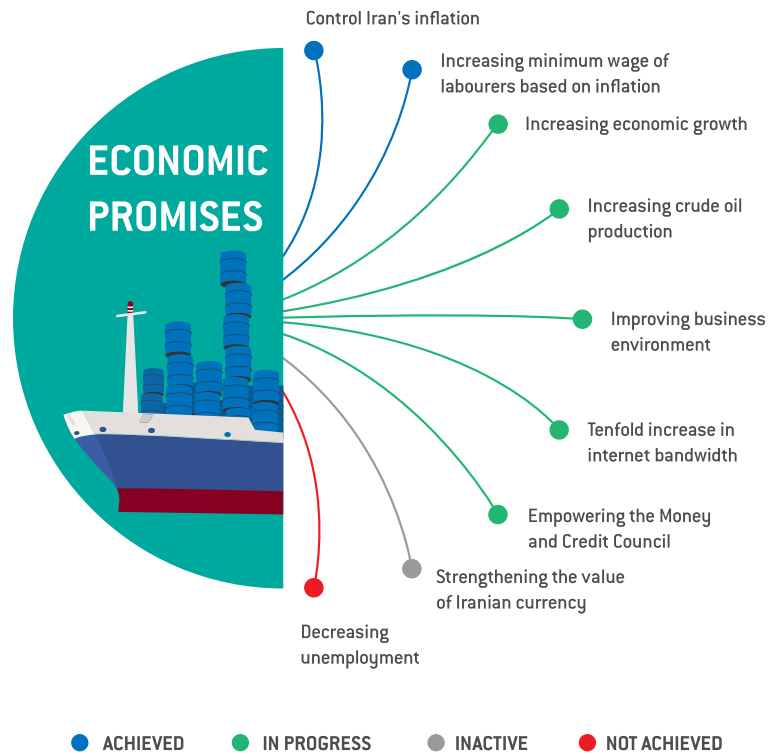
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There has been mixed progress on the social and cultural policy promises of the government. In total, from 23 promises, only 5 have been fulfilled and 6 more are in progress. The rest have failed to be implemented. One of the main reasons for the government's poor performance on social and cultural issues is the power of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR) in the implementation of such promises. This Council is a significant government organ that has final say on the implementation of social and cultural policies. Even though President Rouhani is the ex officio chairman of the Council, the Supreme Leader and religious authorities have a significant power over the SCCR's decision-making.

The following outlines Rouhani's social and cultural campaign promises, and their progress during the second year of Rouhani's presidency:

Universal Health Coverage

There seems to be significant progress in the implementation of this program. In the past two years, universal health coverage has been fulfilled as part of Rouhani's social and cultural policy platform.

During the second anniversary of his election, Rouhani announced that 9.2 million people have been covered by the universal health plan. This statistics confirm that his government has been able to provide coverage for a significant number of people across the country.

Rouhani's campaign promised to issue identification cards for patients to get easy access to health coverage. During the first year of his presidency, coverage was provided in Mazandaran and Zanzan provinces. On his second year, the head of universal health care in the Markazi province announced 1,031 cards have been issued for people to have access to the services.

However, the plan for the universal health coverage is under scrutiny by the opposition. Some of the concerns include who is eligible for the coverage, how many new users were not already insured by other plans, and what percentage of the population are currently covered by the universal health care.

Re-launch of the National Orchestra and Tehran's Symphonic Orchestra

Rouhani's campaign promise in this regard has been fulfilled. After a three year hiatus, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra was re-launched in March 2015 by Ali Rahbari, a well known Iranian composer and principal conductor. This event drew widespread coverage and was considered politically significant in the

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country. Amongst the attendees of the opening ceremony were Vice President Eshagh Jahangiry, Ali Jannati, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and ambassadors and diplomats from different embassies, including the Dutch ambassador in Tehran, Jos Douma. Also, in May 2015 Farhad Fakhreddini, a famous composer of Persian classical music, conducted the first concert of the National Orchestra after a two and half year hiatus due to financial problems. The concert featured Salar Aghili and Keyvan Saket, who are well-known musicians and composers in Iran.

Improving of the Status of Teachers

Progress on this promise has been limited. Aliasghar Fani, the Minister of Education, recently announced that teachers who have been fired or banned from teaching need the government's attention. He has also claimed that the Minister of Intelligence, Mahmoud Alavi, is meeting academics and intellectuals to discuss the release of a few teachers currently in prison.

In the past two years teachers and academics have been outspoken about their struggles, which has contributed to multiple strikes across the country. However, the strikes and complaints led to the detention and prosecution of many teachers and activists. Such actions against teachers is counter to what Hassan Rouhani promised last year, when he declared that everyone has the right to publicly criticise the government.

Esmail Abdi, the head the teacher's union, was arrested in June 2015 and currently resides in Iran's Evin prison. Teacher's rights activist Milad Darveesh said that in recent months, the former head of the teacher's union Aliakbar Baghbani, and the head of teacher's organization, Alireza Hashemi, who were both originally against the teacher's strikes, have also been arrested. Mahmoud Bagheri, Hashem Khastar, Ali Poursaliman, Rasoul Badaghi, Aliakbar Baghbani, Mahmoud Beheshty Langaroudi and Mohammad Davari are among activists who have been imprisoned since the presidential election of 2009.

Considering the crackdown on union activists and lack of change in the situation of teachers, Rouhani's government has failed to fulfill his campaign promises to them. National news media, however, has reported that the Minister of Education has sent a letter to the Ministry of Justice demanding amnesty for the imprisoned teachers. This request was not accepted, and more teachers' rights activists have been arrested in the meantime.

The removal of Filters on Social Media

Progress in this field has been limited. This is despite the fact that many government officials, including the President himself, are active users of social media.

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The popularity of social media, namely Facebook, Google+, Twitter and YouTube, accelerated during Iran's controversial 2009 presidential election. During the presidential election of 2013, many candidates utilized these platforms to further advocate for their campaigns.

In an effort to increase domestic discussion on removing filters on social media, Rouhani's cabinet increased their own activities on social media, and demanded open access for the public. However, many government bodies, namely the Ministry of Justice, opposed such measures and have stalled all efforts to remove filters.

It is important to note that Rouhani has offered significant resistance to government bodies responsible for keeping social media filters. His cabinet has attempted to normalize the use of such sites by allowing select government officials to be active on Twitter and Facebook.

Linguistic Rights for Minorities in Iran

Rouhani made limited progress implementing his promise for greater linguistic rights for minorities. During his presidential campaign, Hassan Rouhani referenced Article 15 and 19 of the Constitution and promised to establish the Academy of Azeri Language and Literature, gaining him enormous support amongst the Turkish communities in Iran.

Two years later, on April 2015, the government backtracked as the Academy faced opposition from critics who wanted Persian to remain as the sole official language of Iran. In its place the government established the Foundation for Culture, Literature and Arts of Azerbaijan. During the inauguration ceremony of the Foundation, Ali Jannati, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, announced that consultation was conducted with prominent academic and cultural members of Azerbaijan in order to establish the Foundation. However, when it came to selecting a president for the Foundation, members of Azerbaijan's cultural community were disqualified. Instead, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance himself was selected to lead the Foundation.

Anaj, an Azerbaijani news website, was suspicious of the Foundation from its inception. Skepticism continued to grow when the officials refrained from providing any detailed explanation of the Foundations' plans and implementation strategy.

Other media experts on Azerbaijan affairs further criticized Rouhani for deceiving the people of Azerbaijan, referring to his campaign promises regarding the introduction of education in the Azeri language and efforts to save Lake Urmia.

One journalist who tracks the implementation of Rouhani's campaign

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promises in Azerbaijan, argued to Rouhani Meter that the establishment of the Foundation for Culture, Literature and Art of Azerbaijan should not be considered as a fulfillment of the campaign promise. He argues that Rouhani promised to launch the Conservatory of Azri Language and Literature, which was meant to promote and preserve the Azeri language and culture. He claims that, in contrast, the Foundation is only a research institution without any significant cultural impact.

While Linguistic rights for minorities in Iran remains a contentious issue, Rouhani Meter concludes that the establishment of the Foundation has not fulfilled voter's expectations in the Azerbaijan province.

Freedom of expression

During his presidential campaign, Hassan Rouhani promised to revive the Association of Iranian Journalists, which was shut down by the government of Ahmadinejad in August 2009. Despite considerable pressure from local and international civil society organizations, additional measures have been put in place to further tighten the control of authorities over the media.

In contrast, there have been some moves towards greater openness in book publishing. In April 2015, Hossein Entezami, Deputy Minister of Media to the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, announced that 700- 800 books and articles have obtained publishing permission, representing a 20% increase. Entezami claims this is a testament to Rouhani's commitment to improve cultural and media activities.

However, the government has continued to prevent the publishing of books with so-called 'inappropriate content'. Ali Jannati, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, has encouraged publishers to apply for pre-publication censorship on their own work. However, a lack of concrete guidelines for censorship hindered the Minister's plan.

In February 2015, President Rouhani stated that he is neither for nor against the removal of inappropriate content. He said the lack of clear guidelines prevents owners of literary works from being able to supervise their own work. He was also critical of the process of obtaining publishing permission for the reprint of new editions of literary work. He claimed that if a book has already been published and read, it should not have to go through the difficult process of obtaining permission again.

Disagreements over the implementation of guidelines and the process of censorship have also made their way into Iran's film industry. The re-opening of the House of Cinema was a positive step towards fulfilling his campaign promise, but Rouhani has been unable to make further progress in limiting censorship in Iran's film industry.

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"There are many decision-making organs, such as the Islamic Consultative Assembly (the Iranian Parliament) that impact Iran's film industry. The Ministry proved to be weak against these bodies and was unable to influence or guide any of them," reports ISNA News, the Iranian Students' News Agency.

For example, the Ministry has been under tremendous pressure by the Parliament and Iran's hardliners to prevent the screening of films based on the contentious presidential election of 2009. In the past two years, all such films have been banned from screening. Additionally, in June 2015, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced that permission to screen Hussein Who Said No, a film by Ahmad Reza Darvish, has been denied. The Ministry claimed that the Grand Ayatollahs and religious scholars refused to approve its content due to its religious references.

The presidential cabinet of Iran has limited power in managing content censorship. Other powerful branches of the government are responsible for the approval of content for books, media, cinema, music and theater. Rouhani's government has openly admitted to the ambiguous guidelines and standards for content approval. However, such approval is ultimately under the jurisdiction of other powerful decision-making bodies, namely the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, which operates under the supervision of the Supreme Leader, to make concrete changes.

In considering the above, Rouhani Meter concludes that progress on freedom of expression in Iran has been very minimal. While Rouhani's administration does not have primary control over the policies that govern freedom of expression in Iran, Rouhani nevertheless failed to meet his election promise of reviving the Association of Iranian Journalists.

Promotion of Gender Rights and Elimination of Gender Inequality

During the first year of Rouhani's government, steps were taken to provide insurance coverage for female-headed households. The plan has been implemented in different provinces, namely in Qazvin, and 15,000 women are covered by the insurance.

On June 2015, Shahin-Dokht Molavari, Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, announced that insurance coverage for female-headed households is part of the government's social and economic strategic plan. She denounced criticism of the status of women in Iran, and claimed that the government is determined to protect women's rights through its policies.

When compared to other campaign promises, namely in foreign policy, it appears that the government has no significant plans to further fulfill its social and cultural promises. Minimum efforts are shown in the film industry, for example. However it is important to consider that the government has limited power against religious scholars and Grand Ayatollahs, who have significant authority in the implementation of social and cultural rights.

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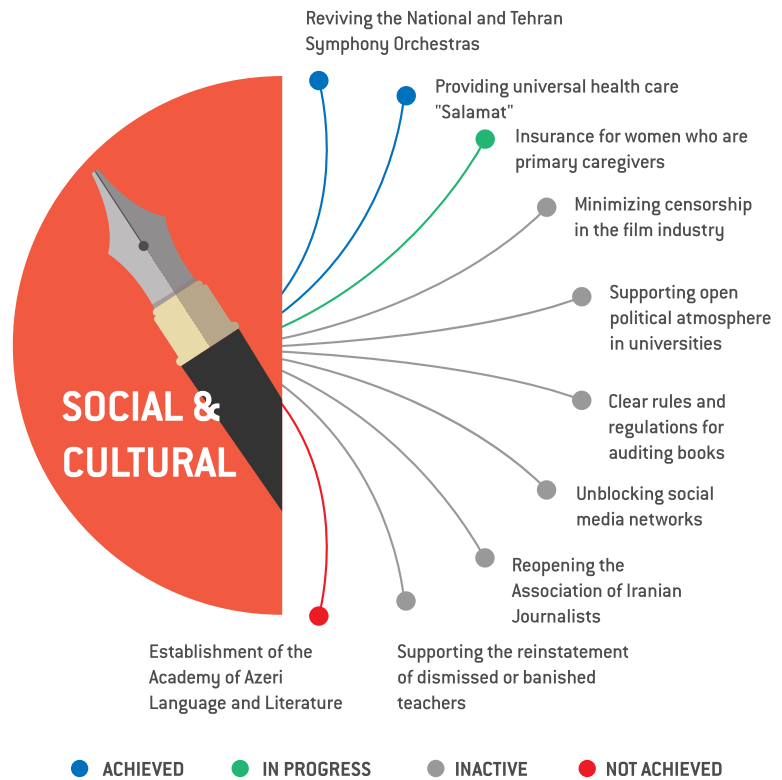
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Even though Rouhani's promises on domestic politics were critical to his election, the government's strategic implementation of these promises has been slow.

Release of Political Prisoners

Granting amnesty to opposition leaders of the Green Movement is a crucial campaign promise that has gone unmet. Even after two years of his presidency, Rouhani has been unable to improve the situation of Mirhossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karoubi and Zahra Rahnava, all of whom have been under house arrest since February 2010.

Reopening the Bureau of Political Parties

During Rouhani's first year of presidency no efforts were put in place to reopen the Bureau of Political Parties. In May 2015 the Minister of Interior announced the gathering of members of the Bureau, and agreed that by the end of Ramadan it would begin to form regular meetings.

The Article of Association for the Bureau of Political Parties states that the Bureau is a legally independent, non-governmental organization that consists of representatives of registered political parties. Shortly after the 2013 election, political activists stressed the importance of revitalizing the activities of political parties within Iran's government structure. Activists believe that the reopening of the Bureau, for example, can potentially bring moderate conservatives and reformists closer together, a possibility receiving significant attention from the government.

Elimination of Discrimination Against Ethnic and Religious Minorities

One of Rouhani's main campaign pledges was the elimination of discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, a message that was well received amongst minorities across the country. Official statistics show that Rouhani received a significant percentage of his votes from minority-concentrated provinces such as Sistan and Baluchestan as well as the Kurdistan provinces.

Prior to the election, Rouhani stressed the importance of implementing the principle of meritocracy across all political levels. He stated that citizens from all ethnic backgrounds should be able to take part in all levels of the government, and emphasized that no obstacles should exist for minorities to be selected for government jobs, even for executive positions.

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After Rouhani's election there were many debates regarding who would become deputy for ethnic and minority rights. Eventually, Ali Yousefi, the former Minister of Intelligence during Khatami's presidency, was selected as the Special Assistant to Ethnic and Religious Minority Affairs. There were also discussions on selecting the first Sunni Minister. However, this plan was canceled, even though it was approved by members of the parliament.

Each province has had a different experience regarding the appointment of religious and ethnic minorities into public office. For example, based on Rouhani Meter's research, reformist activists of Sistan and Baluchestan agreed to appoint minorities in governor positions and a Sunni Baluch as deputy provincial governor. However in Kurdistan province, the lack of appointments for qualified indigenous forces in key positions was criticized even by reformist activists loyal to Rouhani.

Discrepancies are also present in the promotion of ethnic languages. In Saghez, a city in Kurdistan, a textbook on teaching the Kurdish language was published for the first time by a group of public school teachers. The book was used in one school to test the possibility of teaching Kurdish language in addition to Persian literature. The plan to teach Kurdish language however, was only confined to a few schools. According to the initiators of the plan, the government's only role was to approve this plan. The design, funding and implementation was done entirely by local initiators. They added that the Minister of Education was responsible for the approval of the official publishing and distribution of the book amongst Kurdish students. This is a considerable development in government policy: publishing books that promote the language and culture of ethnic minorities is not typically approved.

The initiators told Rouhani Meter that even though local teachers and students welcomed this plan, teaching the Kurdish language has not become a mandatory subject across schools in the province. According to Article 15 of the constitution, ethnic minorities have a right to teach their language in public schools, but in the past, systemic discrimination in the government made implementation of such programs difficult or impossible. It appears that in the last two years, the government has not been engaged to further implement projects that support Article 15 of the constitution, one of Rouhani's election promises,

On December 2014, members of the editorial board of Hezar Ghalam journal, an Azerbaijani magazine that specializes in minority language literature, announced in an open letter to the President that in protest to the government's poor record implementing Article 15, the journal would cease their press activities.

In February 2015, in an open letter to President Rouhani, more than 1800 students from Azerbaijan encouraged the president to refrain from treating

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ethnic minorities as a security issue. The Iranian government has historically perceived ethnic minorities as a security threat due to separatist activities. The students demanded that the government fulfill its promise to teaching ethnic minority languages in schools and to recognize Turkish (Azeri) language as an official national language. They also stressed the importance of establishing the Academy of Turkish Language and Literature.

In July 2015 newspapers across the country reported that the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj would accept 40 students in a Bachelors program for Kurdish Language Literature. President Rouhani reaffirmed the news during his visit to Kurdistan and announced it as part of his campaign promise to the people of Kurdistan. Political activists in Kurdistan remain skeptical of the plan, as a similar initiative was launched under President Khatami, but never materialized.

Additionally, the past two years show no significant improvement in the situation of Sunni minorities. While the constitution recognizes Sunni minorities, efforts to protect their rights have faced obstacles. During the Eid-Al-Fetr prayer, Moulavi Abdollah, a prominent Sunni figure in Sistan and Balouchestan, blamed Shia conservatives for Rouhani's failure to deliver on his campaign promises. This report was delivered on Sunni Online, an official Facebook page for Sunnis of Iran. Sunni Online, and Moulavi's personal Facebook page are the only news platforms that belong to Sunni minorities across Iran.

2015 saw the demolition of the only prayer room in Tehran available for use by Sunni minorities. In previous years, this prayer room was shutdown many times during Sunni celebrations. Recent hostilities have been openly condemned by prominent Sunni members of Kurdistan, Sistan and Balouchestan. They are concerned with the absence of Sunni mosques across major cities, which restricts Sunni minorities from organizing Friday prayer and Eid celebrations.

Return of Iranian expatriates to Iran

One of Rouhani's campaign promises that received global attention was the return of Iranian expatriates to their country of origin. During a campaign trip to Kurdistan province, Rouhani said that as president he would facilitate the return of Iranians who have been living abroad. To date there has been no effort to fulfill this promise.

Furthermore, those with a history of political activism who did return to Iran were often detained upon their arrival or given a warning. Esmail Gerami Moghadam, adviser to Mehdi Karoubi and the spokesperson of National Trust Party, returned to Iran shortly after the nuclear agreement was reached. He was immediately arrested at the airport. Others activists, including Hossein Nourani Nejad, Kazem Barjesteh, Sajedah Arabsorkhi and Saraj Mirrdamani, were detained or received a warning upon their return.

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Elimination of Gender Discrimination

There have been no efforts to eliminate gender inequality across the country.

Prior to his election, Hassan Rouhani announced that women should be allowed into the presidential cabinet. He also promised to establish Ministry for Women's Affairs. None of the promises have been fulfilled. Instead of establishing a Ministry for Women's Affairs, Rouhani appointed Shahin-Dokht Molai as Deputy Minister for The Ministry of Women and Family Affairs. Also, no women have been able to enter the presidential cabinet. Also, despite international pressures, religion reasons are used to ban women from entering sports stadiums.

On May 2015, Deputy Minister Shahind-Dokht Molai officially denounced Rouhani's promise to establish a Ministry for Women's Affairs. She claimed that by establishing a Ministry for such affairs, they would take away responsibility from other Ministries to eliminate gender discrimination.

The government's neglect of women's rights was openly discussed in Shargh newspaper. On April 2015, Shargh reported on gender discrimination on the recruitment exam for the Management and Planning Organization and National Organization for Educational Testing. Allegedly, from a 2800 employment quota, 2284 (82%) were assigned to men, 500 (5.2%) were shared between men and women and 16 quotas (less than 1%) was assigned to women.

Charter of Civil Rights

Rouhani promised during the election to draft a Charter of Civil Rights, and drafting began during the first few months of his presidency. The first draft was circulated amongst scholars and thinkers for feedback. The final draft is supposed to be sent to the Parliament for approval.

Elham Aminzadeh, Vice President for Legal Affairs predicted three possibilities for the drafting and implementation of Charter of Civil Rights. One possibility would be to release and publish the Charter as a statement. The second possibility is for the Charter to adopted by the administration as a non-binding measure. The final possibility, based on Rouhani's promise, is for the Charter to be submitted to the Parliament and made binding upon all government institutions. The third scenario is the only one in which the Charter could realistically be enforced.

In May 2015, Emadeldin Baghi, a prominent journalist and a human rights activist, said that proposed Charter of Civil Rights provided great hope among activists. However skepticism remains given the lack of information on its developments or when it might be presented to the Parliament. He argued that Rouhani's promise will not be met until the Charter is published and approved.

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Management

Rouhani's domestic promises included the restoration of the Management and Planning Organization, which addresses professional mobility, the prevention of unstable management, and providing accurate statistics. Rouhani restored Management and Planning during his first year as president, eight years after its liquidation.

Despite conflicts between the Central Bank and the Statistical Center of Iran, statistics provided by Rouhani's government are generally perceived to be reliable. For example, Rouhani Meter research shows that statistics released by the government on the approval rate of the president is accurate.

Rouhani also promised that the Ministry of Intelligence would be more responsive to monitoring bodies and the people. The Rouhani government lacks power to restrain or discipline security institutions, and is often not authorized to have a voice on the structure of such bodies. So far, the Ministry of Intelligence has not been as responsive to the people as Rouhani had promised. Many families of political prisoners have sent letters to the Ministry demanding for fair and just trials. None have received comment or response from the Ministry.

Rouhani's government has shown significant interest in providing an environment for people to openly criticize the government. During his first year of presidency, Rouhani assigned his Vice President for Legal Affairs, Elham Aminzadeh and his advisor, Mohammadreza Sadegh, to review and address complaints and criticism perceived in the media. During his second year, Rouhani encouraged university students to critique the government on a wide spectrum of issues including nuclear matters.

Saving Lake Urmia

Lake Urmia, Iran's largest lake and the second largest salt-water lake in the world, has shrunk by nearly 90% since the 1970s due to mismanagement. Saving Urmia was an important campaign promise, and Rouhani created a working group in his first cabinet meeting to develop a plan to save this national asset.

On May 2015, Hadi Bahadori, Deputy Governor for Development in Western Azerbaijan, announced that even though continuous rain across the region has eased Lake Urmia's critical situation, the lake remains endangered.

For the past two years, the situation of the lake has deteriorated. Amin Nourbakhsh, one of the members of the committee for saving Lake Urmia, has warned of the detrimental impact of the drying of the Lake on the livelihood

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of millions of residents. He claimed that 7 million people have been forced to migrate from the region due to salt storms, desertification and development of dunes.

Protests against environmental degradation, including the drying of Lake Urmia, have led to the arrest of many social and environmental activists. In the past two years, such protests and gatherings have continued to be restricted and condemn by the government.

Until now, no significant plan has been revealed to address Lake Urmia's critical situation. Mohammad Sadeghpour Mahdi, Deputy Governor for Development in Eastern Azerbaijan, said in 2015 that the government has allocated over \$100,000 to save Lake Urmia, providing a ray of hope that requires a robust follow up.

Barriers to Fulfilling Domestic Political Promises

In the past two years, Hassan Rouhani's dedication to domestic politics has gradually decreased, especially in comparison to foreign policy, which has occupied a significant amount of his attention and resources.

It is important to note that during the selection process of his cabinet, Rouhani was involved in a political battle between different factions of government which forced him to allocate many ministries to his opponents, the Hardliners and Conservatives. This presented a constant barrier to Rouhani realizing many of his promises in government. In the Islamic Republic, the planning of domestic politics are often outside government's authority. However history shows that if a government is determined to make a difference in this field, it can eventually do so.

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