

Iran leaders accuse US, Saudis of supporting Tehran attacks

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Tehran: Iranian leaders on Friday accused the United States and Saudi Arabia of supporting the Islamic State-claimed dual attacks that killed 17 people in Tehran this week, as thousands of Iranians attended a funeral ceremony for the victims.

A police officer stands guard in front of Iran's parliament building in Tehran

The country's Supreme Leader said the attacks will add to the hatred that Iranians harbor toward the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

In a condolence message ahead of a funeral for the victims, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the attack: "will not damage the Iranian nation's determination and the obvious result is nothing except an increase in hate for the governments of the United States and their stooges in the region like Saudi (Arabia)," state media reported.

On Thursday, Iran's Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavai said investigators were working to determine whether Saudi Arabia had a role Wednesday's attacks but said it was too soon to say if that was the case.

During the funeral, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani called the U.S. the "international" version of the Islamic State group and said Washington had exchanged democracy for money, a reference to a recent huge arms deal between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. State TV broadcast the ceremony live.

He said anti-Iranian remarks by Saudi Arabia's foreign minister and U.S. President Donald Trump are a "matter of disgrace" for them.

Larijani also criticized a Wednesday decision by the U.S. Senate to move forward on a new set of sanctions against Iran, including its elite Revolutionary Guards, a move that came on the same day as the Tehran attacks.

During a massive funeral ceremony in Tehran following Friday prayers, thousands chanted "Down with the U.S." and "Death to Al-Saud," the Saudi royal family, while carrying coffins of victims.

The Vatican on Friday sent a message of condolence for the victims of the attack.

Pope Francis "laments this senseless and grave act of violence," and "assures the people of Iran of his prayers for peace," the message read.

Also on Friday, Iranian state TV said the Intelligence Ministry had detained 41 suspects in Tehran and the western Kurdish provinces of the country. The report called the detainees "elements of the Wahhabi IS group," and said they were involved in operations, communication and logistics for the local Islamic State cell.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry in a statement increased the number of wounded to 52, up from 40.

The Intelligence Ministry said its forces stormed several "safe houses" linked to the group in the country's northwest, according to state television.

Reportedly two guards, 10 government staffers and five civilians were killed in the attacks that simultaneously targeted

the country's parliament and shrine of late founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

IS has long vowed to attack Iran because the country had deployed military advisers and support to both Syria and Iraq in their fights against the extremist group.

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