



THE IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS

POSSIBLE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What were the original root-causes of the Iranian Revolution?
- How did the Iran Hostage Crisis, and the establishment of the Iranian Republic transform the West's view of, and attitude toward, Iranians and Shia Muslims?

BACKGROUND

The Pahlavi dynasty, under the rule of Mohammed Reza Shah Rahlavi, and supported by the United States government, ruled from 1925 to 1979. During the 1960s, Iran experienced vast economic and structural growth as a result of the discovery and exportation of Iranian oil.

Historically, Shia Muslims in Iran have viewed it as their responsibility to fight for the oppressed. In 1979, this viewpoint persevered, leading to the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the rise of the National Republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The revolution included secular and Islamic components, and the first part of the revolution remained relatively peaceful. Revolutionaries had hopes of reducing western influence and restoring the Iranian economy, which had suffered a slump between 1977 and 1978. Many Iranians were infuriated after the United States accepted exiled former leader, Reza Shah Rahlavi, into the country for cancer treatment in 1979.

As a result of multiple factors, the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line took over the United States Embassy in Tehran, Iran on November 4, 1979. 52 American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days, until they were released on January 20, 1981. The United States attempted to rescue hostages after numerous failed attempts at negotiations. The incident proved to be a critical event in the deterioration of United States and Iranian relations, and had a tremendous impact on the political landscape of modern world history.

RESOURCES**Personal Stories**

- [Remembering Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution \(NPR\)](#)
- [Interview: Prison Child of the Iranian Revolution \(Radio Free Europe\)](#)
- [444 Days: Memoirs of an Iranian Hostage \(ADST\)](#)
- [I Was Rescued From Iran \(Slate\)](#)
- [444 Days in the Dark: An Oral History of the Iran Hostage Crisis \(GO\)](#)
- [Iran Hostage's Diary \(National Archives\)](#)

Articles

- [Among the Hostage-Takers \(The Atlantic\)](#)
- [Iran hostage crisis victims to get \\$4.4M in compensation for 1979 American Embassy attack \(Daily News\)](#)
- [Operation Eagle Claw: the disastrous rescue attempt during Iranian Hostage Crisis \(Mental Floss\)](#)

Audio

- [The Iranian Hostage Crisis \(SpyCast\)](#)
- [Ahmadinejad's role in Iran Hostage Crisis Disputed \(NPR\)](#)

Data

- [Iran Timeline \(BBC\)](#)
- [Modern Iran Timeline \(PBS\)](#)
- [Political events since Iran's revolution \(Reuters\)](#)
- [The Iran Primer](#)

Video

- [Iran's Revolutions: Crash Course World History \(Crash Course\)](#)
- [Iranian Hostage Crisis of 1979 \(PBS\)](#)

- [End of Iranian Hostage Crisis \(ABC News\)](#)
- [Iran Hostages \(National Geographic\)](#)

Websites

- [Persian Revolution \(BBC\)](#)
- [Iran 1979: the Islamic revolution that shook the world \(Aljazeera\)](#)
- [The Iran Hostage Crisis \(Encyclopedia Britannica\)](#)

Images

- [In Pictures: Iran Hostage Crisis \(BBC\)](#)
- [Iran Hostage Crisis \(CNN\)](#)
- [Eerie remnants of the former U.S. Embassy, 35 years after Iran Hostage Crisis \(PBS\)](#)
- [Frozen in Time \(Daily Mail\)](#)
- [Khomeini's Long Shadow \(Time\)](#)
- [Iran Hostage Crisis \(Getty Images\)](#)
- [Iran's 1979 Revolution \(HuffPost\)](#)