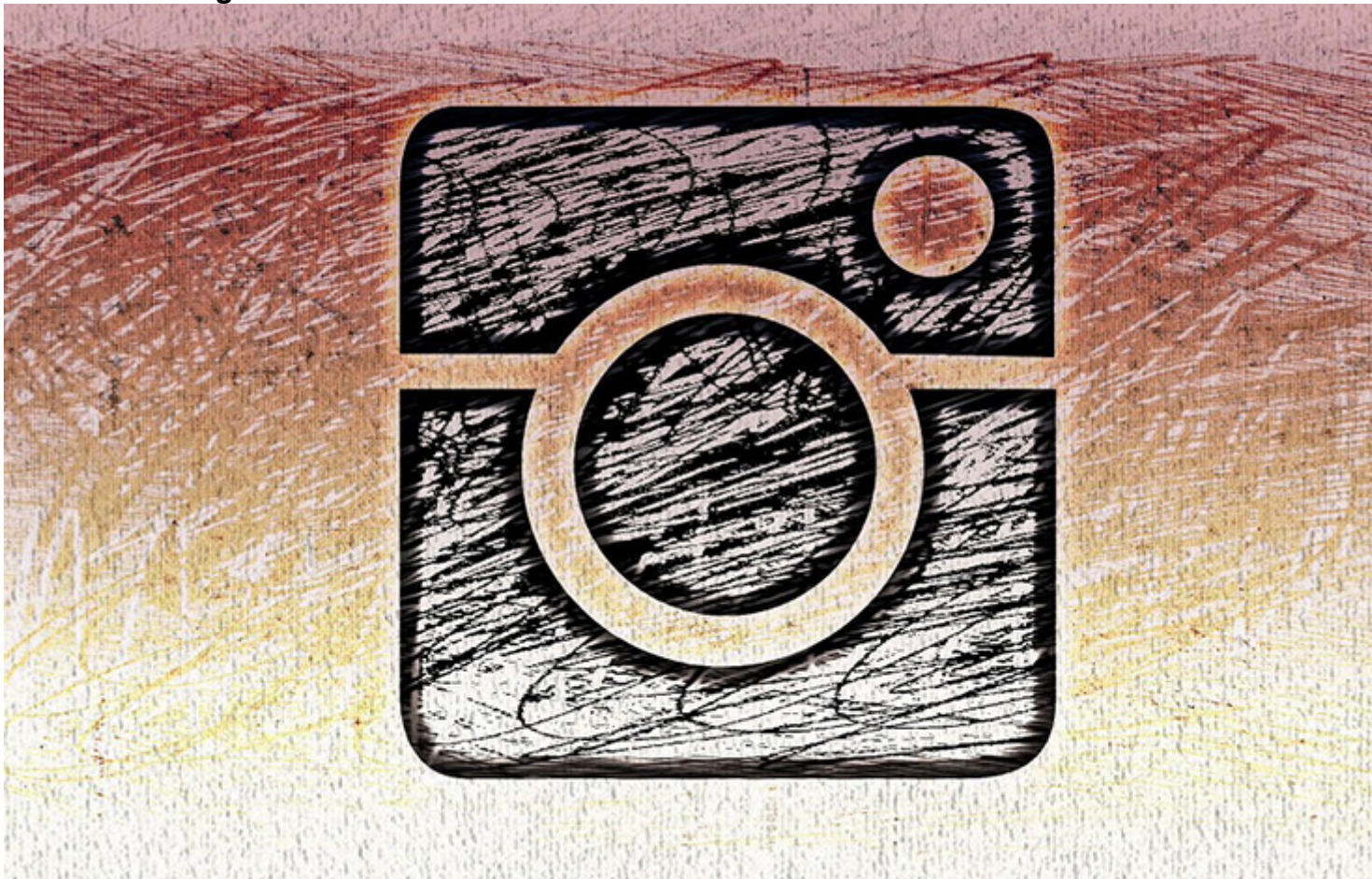


**Thumbnail Image:**



Jul 05, 2019 by [Ilan Manor](#)

## **How America Uses Instagram to Indict Iran**

[1]

Recent weeks have seen tensions between the U.S. and Iran reach fever pitch. While the Trump administration has warned Iran not to commit any acts of provocation, or attack American interests in the region, Iranian officials have vowed to defeat America in any future war. With tensions quickly escalating, the U.S. has decided to withdraw all non-essential personnel from neighboring Iraq while also deploying new forces in the Persian Gulf. Although U.S.-Iranian relations have deteriorated over the past two years, some wonder why the two nations have reached an impasse at this specific point in time? Why have the winds of war begun to blow in May and June of 2019?

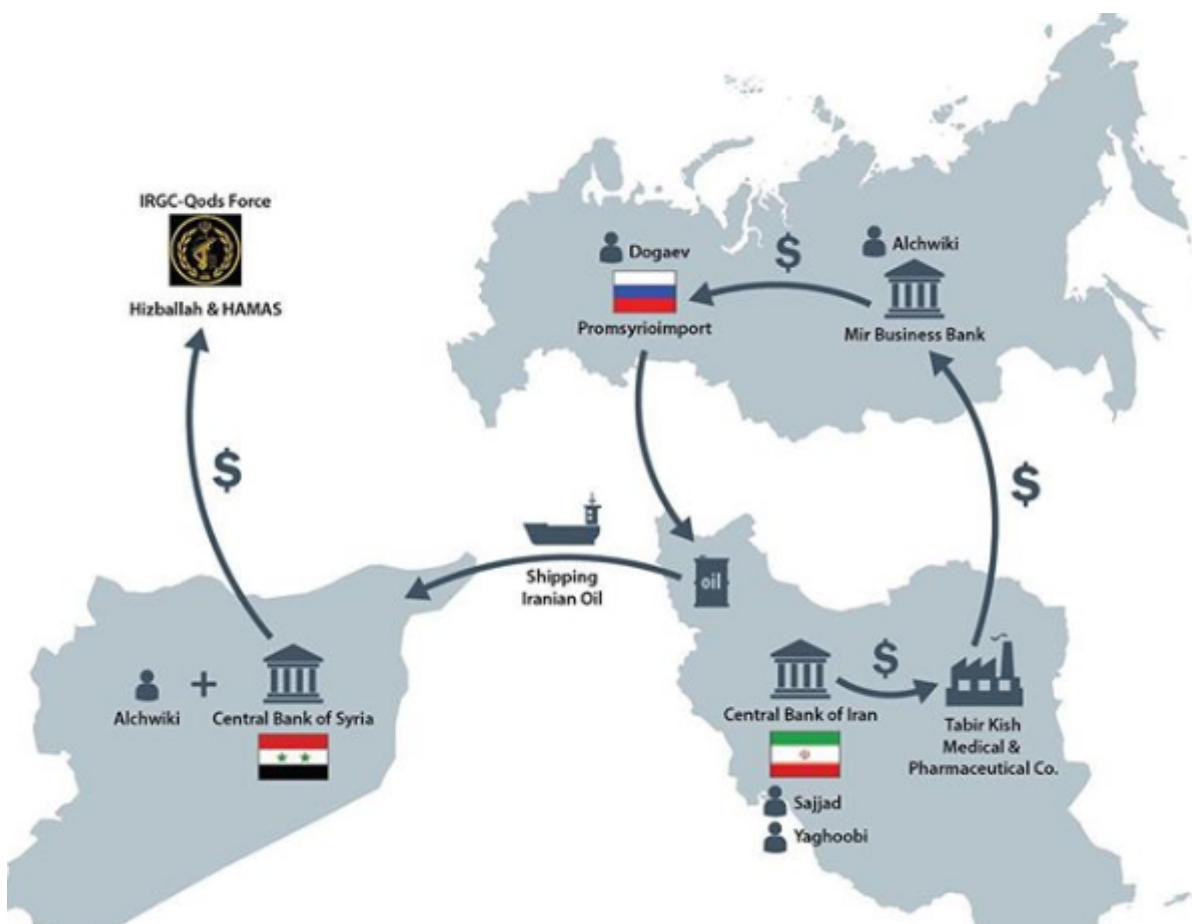
One answer might be that the Trump administration feels that it has "made its case" against Iran, and has thus legitimized the use of force to topple the current Iranian regime. Unlike the prelude to the Iraq war, in which Colin Powell presented America's case against Iraq at the U.N., the Trump State Department has sought to indict Iran in the court of Instagram public opinion. Indeed, over the past few months the State Department has been investing

considerable digital resources in framing the character of the Iranian regime. This framing, which consists of three main themes, is analyzed in this blog post as well as the images employed by the State Department. The analysis of the images employed by the State Department is crucial given that Instagram is a visual medium.

### Theme #1: Iran's Global Reach

The first theme comprising America's framing of the Iranian regime focuses on its reach. According to the State Department, the regime does not settle for oppressing its citizens and denying their freedoms. Rather, Iran is a global actor whose activities extend far beyond its borders. In one Instagram post, the State Department visualized Iran's global network of financial institutions used to sell oil to the reprehensible Assad government in Syria and finance Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon. Another post focused on Iran's support of the Houthi rebels in Yemen while still another accused Iran of de-stabilizing Iraq and supporting Palestinian terrorism.

These posts, combined, depict the Iranian regime as a direct threat to U.S. interests in the Middle East and as a threat to the stability of the region. Moreover, they transform Iran from a rogue state to a global state whose malicious activities easily transcend borders. Subsequently, the threat that Iran poses to the world is made evident while America's activities are framed as a commitment to global security and stability. The posts comprising this theme may be seen below.



Instagram post interface showing the profile of 'statedept', the date 'NOVEMBER 21, 2018', and engagement metrics like '3,513 likes' and 'Add a comment...'.



Iran's regime provides up to **\$100 million/year** in combined support to Palestinian terrorist groups, including Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad, and the PFLP. These terrorist groups have been behind a number of deadly attacks against Israeli civilians, Egyptian security forces, and American citizens.



statedept



ali\_heidari

31w Reply



khezri0135

30w Reply



freshoils

25w Reply



2,180 likes

OCTOBER 22, 2018

Add a comment...

**IRAN SANCTIONS DEADLINE**  
**NOV 04 2018**

## **12 REQUIREMENTS**

**5. THE IRANIAN REGIME MUST END ITS MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE HOUTH MILITIA AND WORK TOWARDS A PEACEFUL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN YEMEN.**



statedept



30w Reply



25airamev

USILUS=

30w Reply



mitramich

30w Reply



1,045 likes

OCTOBER 31, 2018

Add a comment...



feel inform  
 cooperati  
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 who conq  
 https://ma  
 01520364

30w Repl

642 likes

OCTOBER 31, 2018

Add a comment...

The last post published in the theme of Iran's Global Reach warrants attention because of its visual resonance. The image consists of a clock watch running backwards while a red banner outlines America's demands of Iran. The visual resonance that this image elicits is that of a time bomb ticking back to detonation as is demonstrated below. This resonance signals that the Iranian regime is running on borrowed time.



(image source: [www.digdipblog.com](http://www.digdipblog.com))

## Theme #2: Iran as ISIS

The second theme comprising America's framing of Iran is a moral one. According to the

State Department, the Iranian regime prohibits freedom of speech and freedom of the press; suppresses all forms of political dissent; abuses its citizens; accepts corruption on a national scale and indoctrinates children who become child soldiers. The Iranian regime is thus depicted as the antithesis to the U.S., which has historically framed itself as a champion of human rights, freedom of speech and democracy.

Yet this framing of Iran also resonates with the Western framing of ISIS. Indeed, news stories dealing with ISIS focus on its corrupt leaders, its indoctrination of children and its suppression of dissent. In this way, the State Department creates an association between a radical organization and a radical state while the struggle against Iran becomes one more component in the struggle against radical terrorism. And if the world must be steadfast in its struggle against ISIS, then surely America must be steadfast in its struggle against Iran.

Images comprising this theme can be seen below. The final image, of indoctrinated children, is compared to pictures used by Western media when reporting on ISIS.

The image is a social media post from the official account of the U.S. State Department. The main content is a graphic with a grey background and a portrait of Ayatollah Khomeini on the left. The graphic is titled "40 YEARS OF BROKEN PROMISES" in red capital letters at the top. Below the title, it is divided into two columns. The left column is for the year 1979 and is headed "KHOMEINI'S PROMISE" in white text on a black brushstroke. It lists "Freedom of expression and freedom of the press" in bold black text. The right column is for the year 2019 and is headed "TODAY'S REALITY" in white text on a black brushstroke. It lists two points in bold black text: "The Iranian regime detains dozens of journalists each year, throws them in prison, and threatens their families." and "The regime blocks the internet and bars access to social media." To the right of the graphic is the social media interface, showing the State Department's profile picture and name, a user comment from "x\_kaveh.k" with a reply button, another user comment from "kave20000" with a reply button, a heart icon for 1,761 likes, the date "FEBRUARY 1", and a text input field for "Add a comment...".

statedept

x\_kaveh.k  
masih aline  
of people c  
17w Reply

kave20000  
to get rid o  
terrorist an  
liar.....never  
16w Reply

1,761 likes  
FEBRUARY 1  
Add a comment...

**40 YEARS OF BROKEN PROMISES**

1979

**KHOMEINI'S PROMISE**


**“Injustices of the past”  
will not continue**

2019

**TODAY'S REALITY**


**“The staggering scale of  
arrests, imprisonments and  
flogging sentences  
reveal the extreme lengths  
the authorities have  
gone to in order to  
suppress peaceful dissent.”**

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL,  
2018: IRAN'S "YEAR OF SHAME"


 **statedept**

kkkkknkkk  
kn




16w Reply

 asimphan

16w Reply

 asimphan

16w Reply

1,849 likes

FEBRUARY 1

Add a comment...

**40 YEARS OF BROKEN PROMISES**

1979

**KHOMEINI'S PROMISE**

**“We want to  
bring you prosperity.”**


2019

**TODAY'S REALITY**

**Corruption,  
inflation,  
repression,  
drug addiction,  
environmental  
and cultural  
destruction**

 **statedept**

16w 1 like

 javad\_ham

آنکه نتواند دید

15w Reply

 sina77ma

Republic is

15w 1 like

1,693 likes

FEBRUARY 1

Add a comment...



statedept  
294.5k followers

View Profile



**SANCTIONED**  
A vast network of businesses financing Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps' Basij militia, which **recruits, trains, and deploys child soldiers** – as young as 12 – to fight in IRGC-fueled conflicts.



The

### Theme #3: Iran's Leaders

The final theme focuses on Iranian leaders. In a long series of Instagram posts, these leaders are depicted as corrupt kleptocrats who further abuse the Iranian people. One of these is the Sultan of Sugar who made billions flooding the market with expensive products. Another is a billionaire who made his fortune through corrupt construction contracts. Notably, in these pictures the images of Iranian kleptocrats are in black and white while a red banner presents their name. These images seem to resonate with U.S. "Wanted" posters published by the F.B.I.



**GRAND AYATOLLAH  
MAKARAM**

**SHIRAZI**

**THE SULTAN OF SUGAR**

**MADE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS  
FLOODING THE MARKET  
WITH EXPENSIVE SUGAR**



statedept

14w Reply



babaksalar



14w 1 like



saber.119

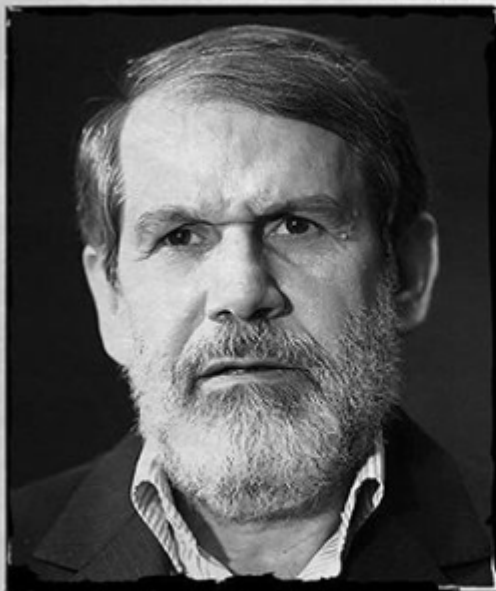
4w Reply



2,163 likes

DECEMBER 10, 2018

Add a comment...



**SADEGH**

**MAHSOULI**

**THE BILLIONAIRE GENERAL**

**MADE BILLIONS IN  
CONSTRUCTION AND OIL  
THROUGH IRGC CONTACTS**



statedept

16w Reply



babaksalar



14w Reply



babaksalar



14w Reply



1,930 likes

DECEMBER 9, 2018

Add a comment...



# WANTED

INFORMATION THAT BRINGS TO JUSTICE



**TALAL HAMIYAH**

**UP TO \$7 MILLION REWARD**

Talal Hamiyah is the head of Hizballah's External Security Organization (ESO), which maintains organized cells worldwide. The ESO is the Hizballah element responsible for the planning, coordination, and execution of terrorist attacks outside of Lebanon.



**FU'AD SHUKR**

**UP TO \$5 MILLION REWARD**

Fu'ad Shukr is a senior Hizballah operative. Shukr played a central role in the planning and execution of the October 23, 1983 U.S. Marine Corps Barracks Bombing in Beirut, Lebanon, which killed 241 U.S. service personnel.

The U.S. government is offering rewards for information on either of these two individuals. Absolute confidentiality is assured and relocation may be available. If you have information, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate or [info@rewardsforjustice.net](mailto:info@rewardsforjustice.net).

**REWARDS FOR JUSTICE**

Washington, D.C. 20533-0303 USA | 1-800-USREWARDS

# WANTED

BY THE

IDENTITY FRAUD

## ROBERT RAYMOND




**DESCRIPTION**

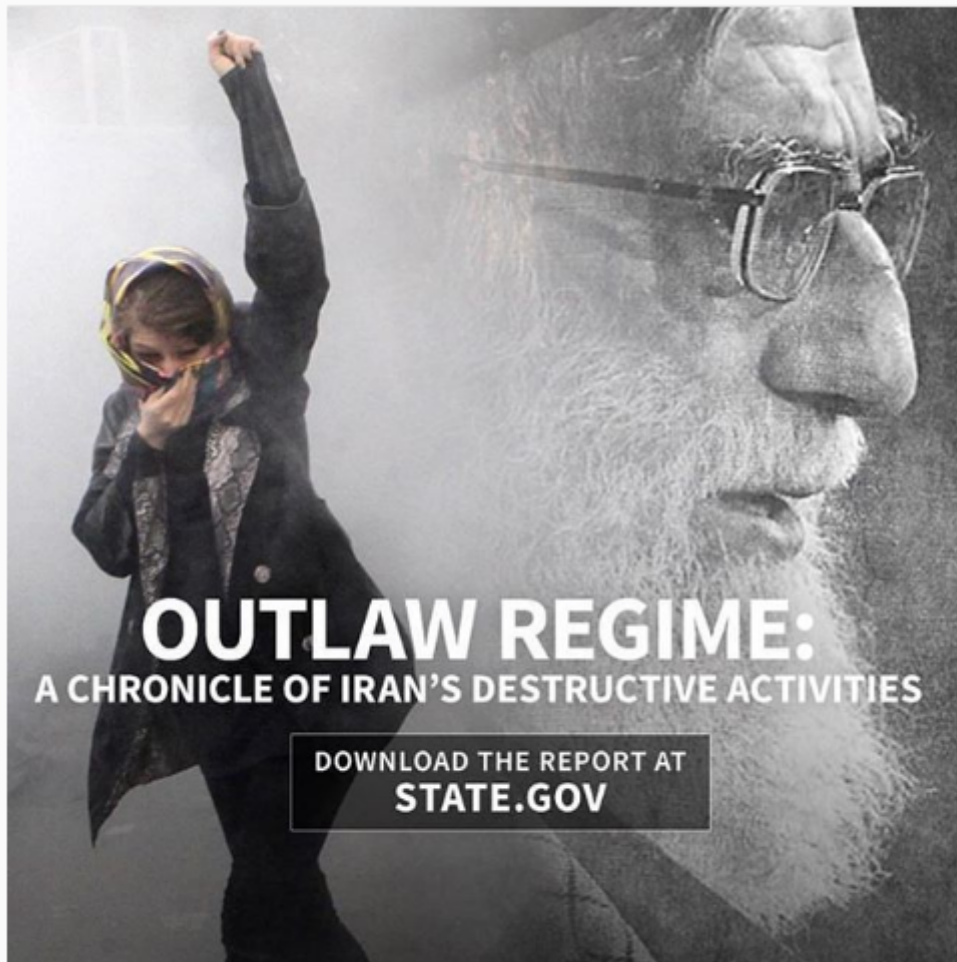
Year of Birth:	March 11, 1972, Lebanon
Place of Birth:	Beirut, Lebanon
Height:	5'7"
Weight:	170 pounds
Build:	Medium
Complexion:	Dark
Hair and Markings:	Mustache has a patch on the right eyebrow and right ear
Remarks:	Mustache suffers from facial disfigurement due to shrapnel wounds received in Beirut, Lebanon

**CRIMINAL RECORD**

**CAUTION**

(image source: [www.digdipblog.com](http://www.digdipblog.com))

Finally, the State Department framed the most appropriate solution to the struggle against Iran's regime—internal and external resistance. Even the solution to the Iranian threat seems to resonate visually with other images of resistance, such as the one depicting U.S. Olympic medalists raising their fists in protest of inequality and racism in America. The opposition to Iran is thus framed as one more step in America's long stride towards equality and justice.



statedept • Following

property  
\_ He never tells lies  
\_ He never speak repeatedly  
\_ his words are based on sience  
\_ His words are very important for  
world statesman.  
[#danatarin\\_sarbaz](#)

6w Reply



nafiseh.\_sgh Putin say iran  
bellwether has four special  
property  
\_ He never tells lies  
\_ He never speak repeatedly  
\_ his words are based on sience  
\_ His words are very important for  
world statesman.  
[#danatarin\\_sarbaz](#)

6w Reply



2,263 likes

OCTOBER 10, 2018

Add a comment...



*(image source: Wikipedia)*

## **Summary**

This blog has suggested that the U.S. State Department uses Instagram to indict the Iranian regime. Rather than send the American Secretary of State to the U.N., the U.S. now presents its case against directly to an online demos. As part of its framing of Iran, the State Department employs images that resonate visually with pictures that are familiar to target audiences. Some are iconic pictures, such as the U.S. athletes raising their fists in the air, while others are pictures that have been used repeatedly by the media. This visual resonance conveys the framing of Iran. Iran's leaders are "wanted" for crimes against the Iranian people. The regime, which indoctrinates its children, is running on borrowed time. The response to its crimes is internal and external protest. And so, the image is the medium on Instagram.

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