



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Iran

Iran – IRN36494 – Ekbatan – Post-election protests – Sadarat Bank

28 April 2010

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4. **Please advise if protests are recorded to have occurred in Ekbatan in Tehran, and provide any information about the attack of Sadarat Bank in Ekbatan.**

No information was located that specifically describes protests occurring in Ekbatan in the immediate aftermath of the June 2009 elections; more recent anti-government protests, however, have occurred in the suburb. One source dated in June 2009 claims that Sadarat Bank branch in east Tehran had been set on fire whilst two other sources claim that a Saderat Bank branch in central Tehran had been set on fire during protests in December 2009. No sources were located that refer to the burning of a Saderat Bank in Ekbatan.

In June 2009 Iran's incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was controversially re-elected, and hundreds of thousands of Iranians participated in street protests across the country from June 12. The protests continued in varying size and intensity for over a week after the elections, and were met with a violent response by Iranian security forces.¹ A new wave of protests also took place in November and early December 2009².

Research Response *IRN36064* of 25 January 2010 provides a thorough overview of the post-election demonstrations in Iran, where key protests occurred in Tehran and how many citizens took part in them. It also provides information on the targets of police arrests both during and in the aftermath of the protests by Iranian security forces.³

A number of sources were located that refer to anti-government protests occurring in Ekbatan; however, the suburb is mentioned as a site of more recent protest action that occurred as part of the Chaharshanbe Suri ('Fire Festival') of 16 March 2010.⁴ While no

¹ 'Iranian crackdown goes global' 2009, *Wall Street Journal*, 3 December – Attachment 24; 'Iran protests met with beatings, tear gas as Green Movement adopts new methods' 2009, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 December – Attachment 25; Weaver, Matthew and Dehghan, Saeed Kamali 2009, 'New protests in Iran', *The Guardian*, 4 November <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2009/nov/04/iran-student-day-protests> Accessed 27 April 2010. – Attachment 34

² 'Iran protests met with beatings, tear gas as Green Movement adopts new methods' 2009, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 December – Attachment 25

³ Refugee Review Tribunal Country Advice and Information 2010, *IRN36064*, 25 January – Attachment 33

⁴ See: 'Reports on Chaharshanbeh Soori from across Iran' 2010, *Persian2English* blog, 16 March <http://persian2english.com/?p=8558> – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 38; Setrakian, Lara 2010, 'Party or Protest? Fiery Night in Iran', *ABC News* website <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=10122078> – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 35. Videos of protests taken in Ekbatan on 16 March: '2010 Iranian Revolution – Protest on Chaharshanbeh Suri Ekbatan extended version March 16 – 2009IranRevolution' 2010, *ISee News* website, 16 March <http://www.iseenews.com/79275> – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 36; 'Iran ekbatan 16 March 2010 Chahar shanbe soori' 2010, *VodPod* website, 16 March <http://vodpod.com/watch/3251250-iran-ekbatan-16-march-2010-chahar-shanbe-soori> – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 37

sources were located that describe Ekbatan as a key protest site in the June protests, due to the restrictions placed on journalists in Iran at the time reliable information about the protests and their locations is largely unavailable. In its analysis of the election results in Iran, UK publication *The Guardian* simply noted that protests occurred “all over the city, including in Azadi Square and in the University”.⁵

Most mainstream media outlets reporting on the post-election protests relied on updates, photos and videos transmitted from Iran via mobile phones and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. The importance of internet-based communication, particularly blogs and social networking sites, in broadcasting information about the protests in Iran to the rest of the world, was widely reported on in Western media⁶, as the Iranian government’s response to the protests included stringent restrictions on journalists and on internet access, and the shut down of all text messaging in the country in the immediate aftermath of the election result.⁷

During the post-election protests a Google user named ‘Xárene Eskandar’ followed the activity on a Google Maps page, logging the events each day by the location from which were reported.⁸ The map below shows the protests logged by Eskandar on 15 June. The map illustrates how protests occurred in different parts of Tehran, some directly adjacent to where Ekbatan is marked:⁹



⁵ ‘The Contested Results’ 2009. *The Guardian* http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2009/06/17/iran_contested_results.pdf – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 40

⁶ See, for example: Addley, Esther 2009, ‘The Twitter crisis: how site became voice of resistance in Iran’, *The Guardian*, 16 June <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/16/twitter-social-networking-iran-opposition> – Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 39; ‘Tweeting from Tehran: social media and the Iranian election’ 2010, *ABC News* <http://www.abc.net.au/news/events/iran-social-media/> – Accessed 22 April 2010 – Attachment 27

⁷ Stelter, B. & Stone, B. 2009, ‘Web Pries Lid of Iranian Censorship’ *New York Times*, 22 June http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/world/middleeast/23censor.html?_r=3&hp Accessed 28 April 2010 – Attachment 43; West, D.M. 2009, ‘The Two Faces of Twitter: Revolution in a Digital Age for Iran’ The Brookings Institution website, source: *The Huffington Post*, 22 June http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2009/0622_technology_west.aspx – Accessed 28 April 2010 – Attachment 44; Gross, D. 2009, ‘Iran’s online protest faces more savvy regime’ *CNN News*, 30 December <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/12/29/iran.social.media/> Accessed 28 April 2010 – Attachment 45

⁸ Zetter, Kim 2009, ‘Google Maps Track Iran Protests’, *Wired Magazine* website, 24 June <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2009/06/google-maps-track-iran-protests/> – Accessed 23 April 2010 – Attachment 30

⁹ ‘15 June 2009 Tehran Election Protests’ 2010, *Google Maps*, 30 October <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117906582584758838973.00046ca7e6c61349254a3> – Accessed 23 April 2010 – Attachment 31

Eskandar's map below for 24 June illustrates how the protests continued to grow and spread through Tehran in the aftermath of the election results, including to areas surrounding Azadi square (marked by a red cross on the left side of the map above), adjacent to Ekbatan:¹⁰



The maps above demonstrate that protests did occur if not in, then directly adjacent to, the area of Ekbatan. Ekbatan, however, is not mentioned as a specific site of June or July 2009 demonstrations in any sources located.

A search conducted on Google Maps indicates that there are a number of Sadarat Banks in Tehran:¹¹

¹⁰ '20 June 2009 Tehran Election Protests' 2009, Google Maps, 12 July
<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117906582584758838973.00046ca73b480ff562d62> – Accessed 23 April 2010 – Attachment 32

¹¹ 'Saderat Bank near Ekbatan Complex, Tehran, Iran' 2010, Google Maps
<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?num=50&hl=en&rls=EGLC,EGLC:2009-47,EGLC:en&q=Ekbatan&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=w1> – Accessed 21 April 2010 – Attachment 19



The red arrow marks the location of Ekbatan, and the red balloons mark Saderat banks in Tehran. The closest Saderat Bank to Ekbatan is marked at 'S' located on Bolvar-e-Tehransar, approximately 5km West of the Ekbatan complex.

While no reports were located in the mainstream media describing the burning of Saderat bank in Tehran during the post-election protests of 2009, a number of blogs and left-wing sources note the event. Only one source, however, reports the burning of Saderat bank in the June protests; all other sources located refer to a Saderat bank burning on 27 December 2009.

Iran-focused blog *The Street Journalists*, which featured live updates from Tehran during the post-election protests, includes an entry for 14 June 2009 describing “the people of Tehran, particularly young people, demonstrate[ing] in their thousands in different parts of the city...against the illegitimate and fraudulent election”.¹² The blog post includes a number of undated photos and videos of the protests, including two photos of a burning building which is identified as “Saderat bank located on the ground floor of Ehsan shopping center. Amirabad, in front of the university dorm”:¹³

¹² ‘Riot in Tehran Streets’ 2009, *Street Journalists* website, 28 November

<http://www.enqlab.com/2009/11/28/riot-in-tehran-streets/> – Accessed 21 April 2010 – Attachment 21

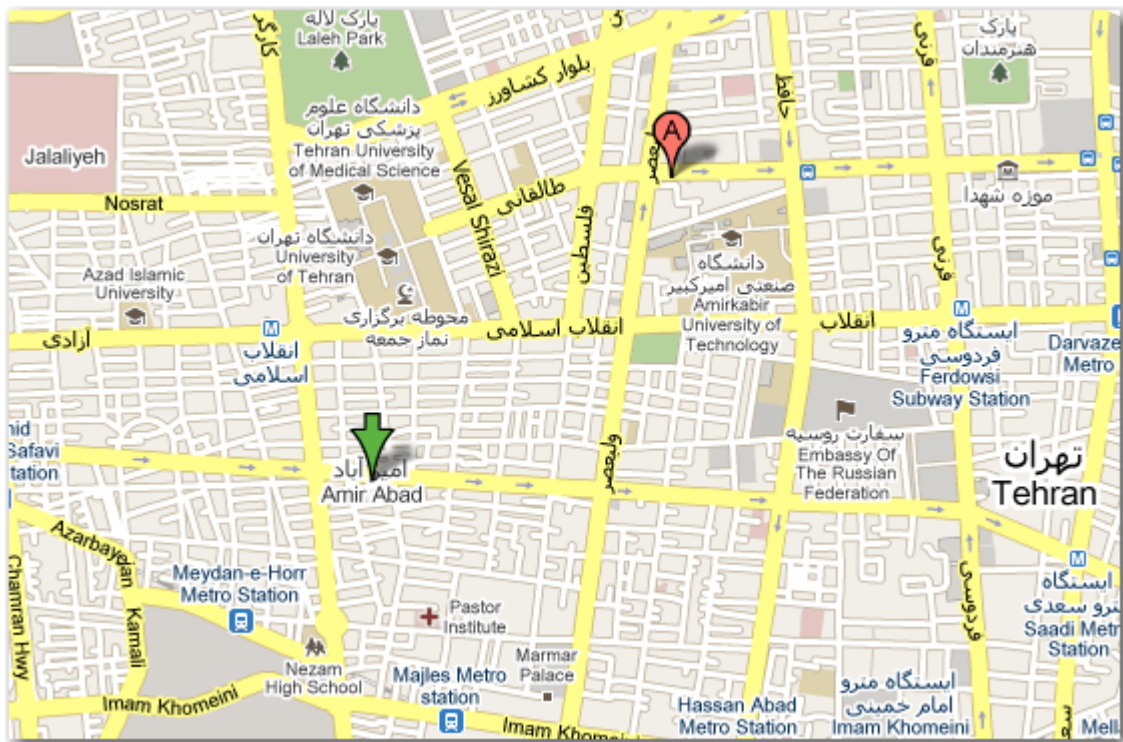
¹³ ‘Riot in Tehran Streets’ 2009, *Street Journalists* website, 28 November

<http://www.enqlab.com/2009/11/28/riot-in-tehran-streets/> – Accessed 21 April 2010 – Attachment 22

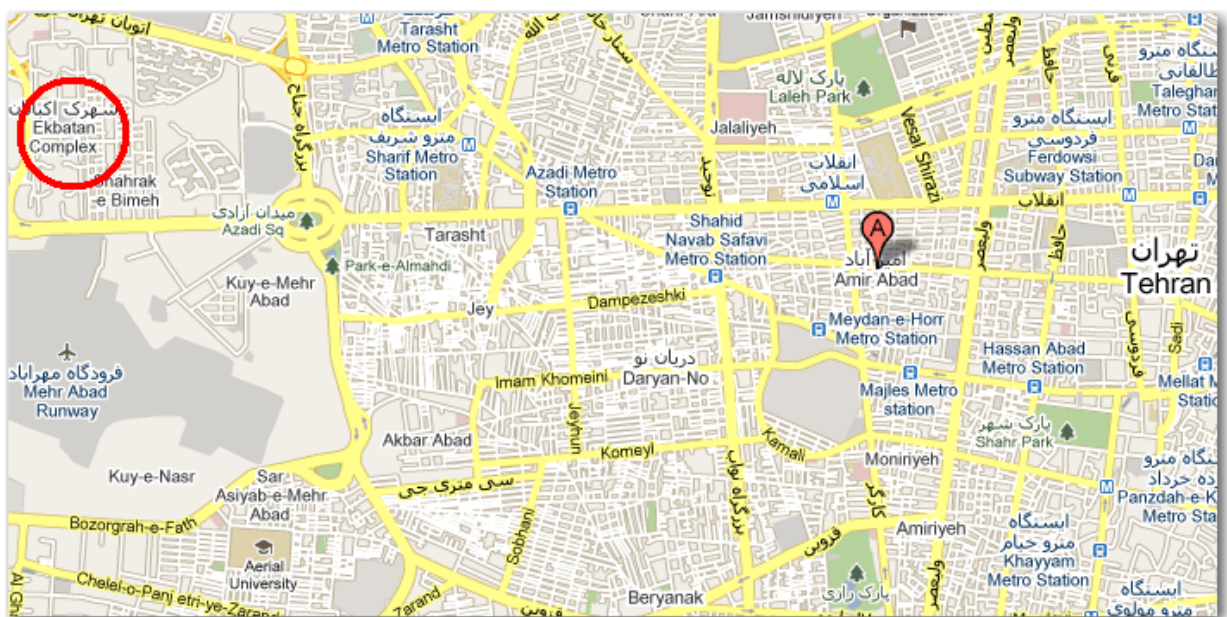


According to Google Maps, this would place the bank in the above photos at ‘A’ in the map below, near the Amirkabir University of Technology:¹⁴

¹⁴ ‘Saderat Bank near Amir Abad, Tehran, Iran’ 2010, *Google Maps*
<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?rls=EGLC,EGLC:2009-47,EGLC:en&q=Ehsan%20shopping%20center&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=wl> – Accessed 21 April 2010 – Attachment 23



The map below shows the location of Amir Abad relative to Ekbatan during the protests:¹⁵



This bank is located some distance from Ekbatan. The *StreetJournalists* website is, however, the only source located that refers to a Saderat bank being set alight by protestors prior to September 2009.

Three other sources were located that describe the burning of Saderat bank by protestors, and each date the event as occurring on 27 December 2009. UK-based socialist advocacy group Hands Off the People of Iran (HOPI) posted an article on 28

¹⁵ 'Ekbatan Complex and Amir Abad, Tehran, Iran' 2010, *Google Maps*

<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?rls=EGLC,EGLC:2009-47,EGLC:en&q=Ehsan%20shopping%20center&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=wl> – Accessed 22 April 2010 – Attachment 26

December 2009 describing the ‘protests of the previous day. The article states that demonstrators attacked the Saderat Bank in central Tehran, and set it on fire.’¹⁶

One Twitter account that provided live updates during the June and December 2009 protests includes a “tweet” on 27 December that reads “Saderat Bank (many floors) i [sic] middle of Tehran set on FIRE”.¹⁷ Further, social media hosting website *Live Leaks*, to which amateur videos of the protests and protest-related violence were posted, contains a video titled ‘Iran – Government Bank (Saderat) on Fire’, posted on 27 December 2008.¹⁸

It may be of note that the Iranian authorities have reacted strongly to the post-election protests, which have continued to occur since June last year on auspicious dates. The US Department of State’s 2009 Human Rights Report states that the regime detained approximately 4000 citizens in August 2009, with many of those arrested charged with fomenting a “velvet revolution”.¹⁹ Amnesty International reported in April this year that since the elections over 5,000 people have been arrested, and that since the beginning of March this year a wave of arrests of human rights defenders has taken place.²⁰ The government has begun to sentence some offenders to death, with two protestors executed as of March 2010.²¹

Attachments

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¹⁶ ‘27 December: Iran’s bloody Sunday’ 2009, *Hands Off the People of Iran*, 28 December <http://hopoi.org/?p=933> – Accessed 21 April 2010 – Attachment 20

¹⁷ ‘Parastoo Karimi (parastoo_karimi) on Twitter’ 2009, *Twitter* http://twitter.com/parastoo_karimi – Accessed 22 April 2010 – Attachment 28

¹⁸ ‘Iran – Government Bank (Saderat) on Fire’ 2009, *LiveLeaks* website, 27 December http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=168_1261937534 – Accessed 22 April 2010 – Attachment 29

¹⁹ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Iran*, March, Section 2. – Attachment 46

²⁰ Amnesty International 2010, ‘Urgent Action: UA214/09: Two men due to be returned to prison in Iran’, 1 April – Attachment 47

²¹ ‘Iran court upholds death for opposition activist’ 2010, Iran Focus website, source: *Associated Press*, 3 March <http://www.iranfocus.com/en/human-rights/iran-court-upholds-death-for-opposition-activist-19837.html> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 48

12. Deleted.
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19. 'Saderat Bank near Ekbatan Complex, Tehran, Iran' 2010, *Google Maps*
<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?num=50&hl=en&rls=EGLC,EGLC:2009-47,EGLC:en&q=Ekbatan&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=wl> – Accessed 21 April 2010.
20. '27 December: Iran's bloody Sunday' 2009, *Hands Off the People of Iran*, 28 December
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<http://www.enqlab.com/2009/11/28/riot-in-tehran-streets/> – Accessed 21 April 2010.
22. 'Riot in Tehran Streets' 2009, *Street Journalists* website, 28 November
<http://www.enqlab.com/2009/11/28/riot-in-tehran-streets/> – Accessed 21 April 2010.
23. 'Saderat Bank near Amir Abad, Tehran, Iran' 2010, *Google Maps*
<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?rls=EGLC,EGLC:2009-47,EGLC:en&q=Ehsan%20shopping%20center&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=wl> – Accessed 21 April 2010.
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(CISNET Iran CX239671)
25. 'Iran protests met with beatings, tear gas as Green Movement adopts new methods' 2009,
The Christian Science Monitor, 7 December. (CISNET Iran CX237414)
26. 'Ekbatan Complex and Amir Abad, Tehran, Iran' 2010, *Google Maps*
<http://maps.google.com.au/maps?rls=EGLC,EGLC:2009-47,EGLC:en&q=Ehsan%20shopping%20center&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=wl> – Accessed 22 April 2010.
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<http://www.abc.net.au/news/events/iran-social-media/> – Accessed 22 April 2010.
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http://twitter.com/parastoo_karimi – Accessed 22 April 2010.
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<http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2009/06/google-maps-track-iran-protests/> – Accessed 23 April 2010.

31. '15 June 2009 Tehran Election Protests' 2010, *Google Maps*, 30 October
<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117906582584758838973.00046ca7e6c61349254a3> – Accessed 23 April 2010.
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<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&gl=us&ptab=2&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117906582584758838973.00046ca73b480ff562d62> – Accessed 23 April 2010.
33. 2010, *Refugee Review Tribunal Country Advice IRN36064*, 25 January.
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<http://www.iseenews.com/79275> – Accessed 27 April 2010.
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<http://vodpod.com/watch/3251250-iran-ekbatan-16-march-2010-chahar-shanbe-soori> – Accessed 27 April 2010.
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39. Addley, Esther 2009, 'The Twitter crisis: how site became voice of resistance in Iran', *The Guardian*, 16 June <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/16/twitter-social-networking-iran-opposition> – Accessed 27 April 2010.
40. 'The Contested Results' 2009. *The Guardian* http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2009/06/17/iran_contested_results.pdf – Accessed 27 April 2010.
41. Deleted.
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<http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/12/29/iran.social.media/> - Accessed 28 April 2010.
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47. Amnesty International 2010, 'Urgent Action: UA214/09: Two men due to be returned to prison in Iran', 1 April. (CISNET Iran CX241788)
48. 'Iran court upholds death for opposition activist' 2010, Iran Focus website, source: *Associated Press*, 3 March <http://www.iranfocus.com/en/human-rights/iran-court-upholds-death-for-opposition-activist-19837.html> – Accessed 8 April 2010.
49. Deleted.
50. Deleted.