

# Trump's Iran policy

*Wed Jan 10, 2018 01:15PM*



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US President Donald Trump has taken a tough line on Iran since taking office in January last year. He has been highly critical of the nuclear deal between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany. Trump who's developed close ties with Saudi Arabia and Israel, both hostile to Iran, wants other parties to the nuclear deal to scrap it. Back in October, Trump refused to certify Iran's compliance with the landmark nuclear agreement to the Congress. He however renewed temporary waivers for many US sanctions against Iran so that America technically remains a party to the atomic deal. Trump faces the same deadlines this month on whether to certify Iran's compliance and renew the waivers. The deadlines are looming as tensions between Washington and Tehran have escalated over the US president's tweets on recent protests in Iran.

## **Saudi crackdown**

Important developments in the Middle East and beyond have not spared Saudi Arabia of pressure from advocacy groups over its human rights record. Riyadh is facing renewed calls to release the dozens of people it has arrested since September in what has been condemned as a "worrying" crackdown on dissent. The crackdown has seen over 60 prominent clerics, writers, academics,

religious figures, journalists and activists put in jail. In a statement on the second anniversary of Saudi Arabia's last mass execution of 47 adults, UN human rights experts and groups including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have condemned the latest crackdown. They said: quote-We are witnessing the persecution of human rights defenders for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association and belief, as well as in retaliation for their work. The Saudi government has ignored repeated calls by UN experts and others to halt these violations, rectify them, and prevent their recurrence.