

# Iranians respond to MEK troll farm: #YouAreBots | AI Monitor

By Al-Monitor Staff

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Anyone who has been active on Twitter and tweeted about Iran in the past year can attest that the online debate over events in the country has taken a dramatic turn for the hostile.

Many Iran observers are perplexed by the sharp increase in vitriol spewed at journalists and analysts. Some speculate that regime-change advocates were encouraged by US President Donald Trump's electoral victory and are seizing their chance to influence the online debate about Iran while there is a sympathetic ear in the White House. Others felt that the nationwide protests in January were a turning point in the Islamic Republic and that the public discourse had moved on from Reformism and into much starker choices. However, an investigative [report by Al Jazeera](#) has shed light on a third reason for the spike in Twitter activity: what many Iran observers had suspected from the outset, a [Twitter troll factory](#) meant to influence the already contentious debate over Iran.

According to the Al Jazeera report, the exiled Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK) has set up a center at its headquarters in Albania, where 1,000-1,500 "online soldiers" are instructed to promote hashtags in support of overthrowing the Islamic Republic. Two former MEK members told Al Jazeera that they would receive specific daily orders on what to highlight regarding Iran and also which specific Iran analysts to attack on social media, often sharing the White House's critical messages against Iran and amplifying their tweets via bots.

In response to the report, Iran's Foreign Minister [Mohammad Javad Zarif](#) tweeted to Twitter co-founder and CEO Jack Dorsey, "Hello @Jack. Twitter has shuttered accounts of real Iranians, incl TV presenters & students, for supposedly being part of an 'influence op'. How about looking at actual bots in Tirana used to prop up 'regime change' propaganda spewed out of DC? [#YouAreBots](#)"

Source: [Iranians respond to MEK troll farm: #YouAreBots](#)