

Blackouts in Bushehr Province Risk Unrest

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

According to the excerpted article from the provincial news section of the *Fars News Agency*, an outlet affiliated with more hardline elements in the Iranian regime, electricity shortfalls in Bushehr are increasingly consuming local government effort and sparking tension among Iranian officials. The Iranian government often seeks to blame deprivations on U.S. or international sanctions, but it is hard to make this case credibly to the Iranian public when it comes to energy. After all, Iran sits astride and partially owns the South Pars/North Dome field, the world's single largest gas field and, in 2020, was the world's ninth largest oil-producer. This is especially true in southern Iran. While many oil fields are in Khuzestan, its neighboring province Bushehr is the headquarters of Iran's operations in the South Pars Gas Field. Bushehr is also home to Iran's civilian nuclear reactor. With the southern provinces—Khuzestan, Bushehr, and Hormozgan—disproportionately supplying Iran's electricity, there would be little understanding among the residents of the area about why they might suffer electricity shortfalls.

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Drought and cryptocurrency mining (See: “Iran Crypto-Mining Destabilizing Electrical Grid and Possibly Much More,” *OE Watch*, July 2021) have undercut both generation and available electricity.



Bushehr City and Port.

Source: Gamkhabar.ir <http://gamkhabar.ir/uploads/gamkhabarir/355762968477.jpg>

The result has been rolling blackouts across Iran. The article summarizes Deputy Governor Mehrdad Sotoudeh's position on efforts to scale back energy consumption in order to ensure homes have adequate electricity, presumably to power fans, air conditioners and refrigerators, during summer months when the temperature regularly exceeds 120 Fahrenheit. Of particular interest is the allusion to potential social unrest. For Iran, this would not only pose an immediate security issue, but also could represent an amplifying economic problem should labor actions undermine the oil and gas industries.

Source: “Khamooshi Khanjidar Astan-e Bushehr Khat Qermez Ast (Blackouts at Home in the Bushehr Province are a Red-Line),” *Fars News Agency* (media outlet affiliated with more hardline elements in the Iranian regime), 5 July 2021. www.farsnews.ir/bushehr/news/14000414000205

[Deputy Governor] Mehrdad Sotoudeh, in an interview with reporters, stressed that the province's authorities have done their best to manage electricity consumption. He said, “Household power outages at 50 degrees [Celsius, 122 Fahrenheit] these days are unbearable and are by no means acceptable. The deputy governor pointed out that, after the formation of a crisis team and the reduction of office hours to end the day at 1 pm, we were able to reduce electrical consumption by 30 megawatts from this hour. He added, “Also, cooperation in reducing and managing the consumption of small industries will certainly lead to a daily load reduction of 25 MW from 1 to 4 pm.... Given that Bushehr province has used all its capacities to reduce power consumption in non-domestic sectors, no blackout in the household sectors is acceptable and is considered a redline. He concluded by saying that the necessary warnings had been conveyed to Mr. Haeri, the managing director of Fars Regional Electricity. Under these circumstances, these people will be responsible for any social consequences of this issue.