



**Iran Crisis Update, September 29**  
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**September 29, 3:00 pm ET**

**The Iran Crisis Updates are produced by the Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute with support from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).**

**The Iranian regime’s extensive internet and telecommunications censorship is severely limiting the open-source information available on ongoing anti-regime protests in Iran.** Iranian state media and officials have confirmed that they are blocking domestic access to Western social media applications such as WhatsApp and Instagram to impede protester coordination and organization and limit the free flow of information September 22.<sup>1</sup> Iranian internet users reported restricted access to foreign domains—including Google—and difficulties accessing Google Play and Apple’s App store, preventing users’ efforts to download VPNs.<sup>2</sup> CTP cannot verify most protest footage circulating on social media. Iranian authorities previously blocked internet access in 2019 gasoline protests.<sup>3</sup>

**Uncorroborated social media reports suggest that Iran loosened internet restrictions around Tehran on September 29 but may continue blocking some social media platforms such as Instagram.**<sup>4</sup> Some Iranian officials have called on the regime to permanently block Instagram in recent days.<sup>5</sup> Iranian newspapers have similarly reported that Instagram could be permanently blocked even after protests subside.<sup>6</sup>

**Iran will likely continue improving its censorship infrastructure—possibly with support from China—to suppress future protests more effectively.** Iranian authorities have praised the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) control of its domestic information space and signed agreements on cyber and law enforcement cooperation with China<sup>7</sup>. Some Iranian internet experts have compared Iranian internet disruptions prior to the ongoing protests to the CCP’s internet filtering system.<sup>8</sup> The regime may increasingly mirror the Chinese model of internet sovereignty as it seeks to preempt and quell unrest.

**Key Takeaways**

- **Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei remains absent and did not make a public appearance or statement on September 29.**
- **Anti-regime protests likely occurred in at least six Iranian cities on September 29, but demonstrations appear to have subsided overall for now.**
- **Anti-regime protests may increase inside and outside of Iran on October 1.**
- **The IRGC conducted an artillery attack into Iraqi Kurdistan on September 29, marking the sixth consecutive day of such attacks.**

**Supreme Leader Succession**

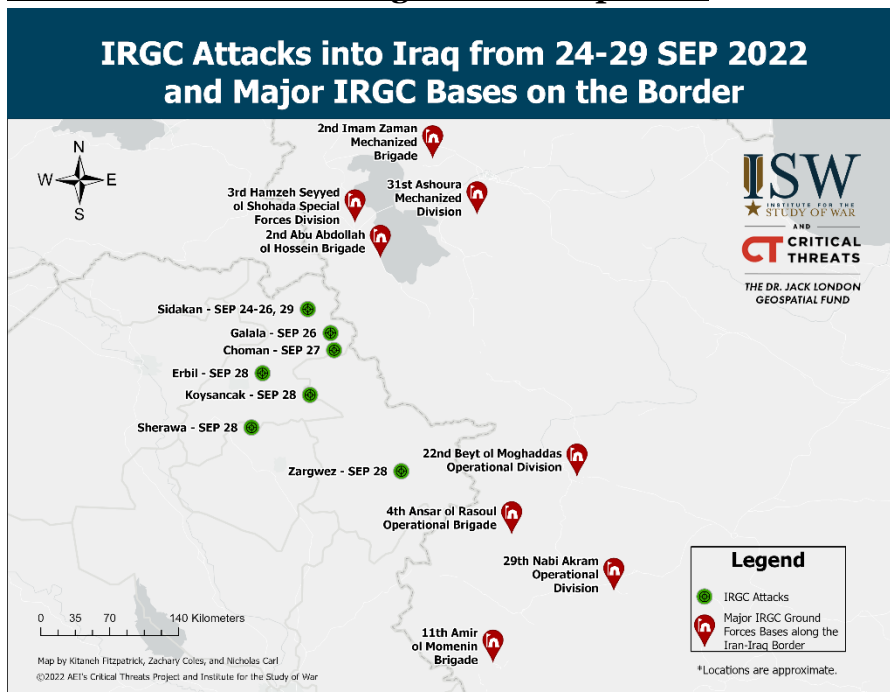
**Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei remains absent and did not make a public appearance or statement on September 29.** Unverifiable social media rumors continue to circulate online that suggest that Khamenei's health is worsening.<sup>9</sup> CTP will continue to monitor the situation.

### **Anti-Regime Protests**

**Anti-regime protests occurred in at least six Iranian cities on September 29, although demonstrations appear to have subsided as a whole for now.** This is a moderate-to-high confidence assessment. Social media users documented protests in Gilan, Qom, Esfahan, Kurdistan, Khorasan Razavi, and Kermanshah Provinces and have reported unrest in Khuzestan, Mazandaran, Hormozgan Provinces that CTP is unable to verify.<sup>10</sup> Iranian officials have reported diminished protest activity in Tehran Province, where protests first erupted following Mahsa Amini's death on September 16. Tehran Provincial Governor Mohsen Mansouri announced that protests had subsided in Tehran on September 29, and social media users have circulated less footage of unrest in Tehran and other cities.<sup>11</sup> Social media users may be circulating less information due to internet restrictions.

**Social media reports suggests that anti-regime demonstrations may resume within and outside of Iran's borders on Saturday, October 1.** Iranian students announced plans to resume demonstrations in front of several universities in Tehran on October 1.<sup>12</sup> Organized student protests would coincide with international demonstrations scheduled in several US, Australian, Canadian, and European cities on the same date.<sup>13</sup> Iranian authorities reportedly plan to prevent spectators from attending Iranian soccer matches from October 9-10 in seven cities, possibly suggesting that the regime anticipates and is attempting to preempt further unrest.<sup>14</sup>

### **Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments**



**The IRGC conducted an artillery strike in Iraqi Kurdistan on September 29, marking the sixth consecutive day of such attacks.** Iraqi media reported that the IRGC struck two locations in Erbil Province.<sup>15</sup> The IRGC has conducted artillery, drone, and missile attacks on anti-regime Kurdish positions in Iraqi Kurdistan since September 24. IRGC Operations Deputy Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan accused these Kurdish groups in Iraqi Kurdistan of stoking the ongoing, anti-regime protests.<sup>16</sup> The IRGC Ground Forces published a statement on September 29, vowing to continue such attacks until it destroys the groups.<sup>17</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> <https://t.me/farsna/263268>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/filterbaan/status/1574061779881164801>; <https://twitter.com/xhdix/status/1572938218668195841>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/21/irans-internet-blackout-enters-fifth-day-amid-fuel-price-protests.html>
- <sup>4</sup> [https://twitter.com/fresh\\_sadegh/status/1575531689614667776?s=20&t=RrN0TdWFmoxl7PFAJG9DXQ](https://twitter.com/fresh_sadegh/status/1575531689614667776?s=20&t=RrN0TdWFmoxl7PFAJG9DXQ)
- <sup>5</sup> <https://t dot co/xChAgxKiXC>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://36101266.khabarban dot com/>; <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/whatsapp-and-instagram-will-not-be-unfiltered/32055533.html>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/security-official-threatens-more-internet-censorship-as-iran-moves-towards-intranet-30825156.html>; <https://www.shahrsakhtafzar dot com/fa/news/internet-operator/37870-iran-china-to-develop-5g-in-iran>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.khordad dot news/fa/news/376039/%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%86%DA%AF-%D8%B3%D9%87-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%84-%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%86%DA%AF-%DA%86%DB%8C%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://twitter.com/SaeedAganji/status/1575552279201153032>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranwire/status/1575558501438722048> <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1575556851122700288>; <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1575551293669593088>; <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1575535115098550278>; <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1575535081099513856>; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1575553026835636224>; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1575542333734793216>; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1575520881761140737>; <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1575578140646121472?s=20&t=RrN0TdWFmoxl7PFAJG9DXQ>; [https://twitter.com/chawshin\\_83/status/1575570828800167936](https://twitter.com/chawshin_83/status/1575570828800167936)
- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.ensafnews dot com/373038/%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%81-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A7/>
- <sup>12</sup> <https://www.iranintl.com/202209296135>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/esmaeilion/status/1574923992250449921>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://iranwire.com/en/sports/108082-irans-premier-league-to-host-football-matches-without-spectators/>
- <sup>15</sup> <https://www.shafaq dot com/en/Kurdistan/Iranian-artillery-renews-bombing-regions-in-Iraqi-Kurdistan-2>
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/07/05/2779695>
- <sup>17</sup> [www.defapress dot ir/fa/news/548082](http://www.defapress dot ir/fa/news/548082)