



Iran Crisis Update, October 15

Nicholas Carl, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Dana Alexander Gray, and Frederick W. Kagan

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A major fire broke out at the Evin prison in Tehran on October 15, and the regime used live rounds and tear gas against prisoners and nearby protestors. Iranian state media made the unsubstantiated claim that inmates started the fire.¹ Regime security forces used violence against prisoners and nearby protesters during the fire.² Persian-language social media accounts reported that security forces have blocked roads to the prison and fired live rounds and tear gas.³ Social media users and western media outlets reported explosions and gunshots around Evin Prison.⁴

The regime uses Evin Prison to hold political prisoners and individuals detained on security-related charges, among others.⁵ Prison guards and security officials harshly abuse and mistreat inmates there.⁶ The judiciary manages the prison, but the Intelligence and Security Ministry and IRGC Intelligence Organization control some parts of the facility as well.⁷ The regime holds several dual nationals at Evin Prison, including US-Iranian citizens Siamak Namazi and Emad Shargi.⁸

Social media users have suggested without substantiation that the regime intentionally started the fire, possibly to justify the killing of arrested protesters at the prison.⁹ Yasser Hashemi Rafsanjani—the son of late President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—claimed that Iranian authorities advised his brother not to return to Evin Prison on October 15 when his brother was scheduled to return from a furlough.¹⁰ CTP cannot validate these rumors.

1 Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War 2022.

Key Takeaways

- **A major fire broke out at the Evin prison in Tehran on October 15, and the regime used live rounds and tear gas against prisoners and nearby protestors.**
- **Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 22 cities in 16 provinces, although this number is almost certainly higher.**
- **A Persian-language social media account tweeted a political manifesto, calling for a peaceful transition to establish a democratic, secular Iranian government.**
- **IRGC-affiliated Telegram channels claimed that unidentified militants fired six rockets at the al Omar oilfield, which houses US servicemembers, in eastern Syria.**

Anti-Regime Protests

Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 22 cities in 16 provinces on October 15, although the number of protests is almost certainly higher. Open-source information on protest activity on October 15 is likely delayed by news of the fire and violence at Evin Prison. Protest organizations called for countrywide protests on October 15, again demonstrating their ability to coordinate large-scale unrest. The regime disrupted internet services on the morning of October 15.¹¹ CTP assess that protests occurred in the following locations:

- Karaj, Alborz Province (violence reported)
- Adrabil City, Ardabil Province (violence reported)
- Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province (violence reported)
- Esfahan City, Esfahan Province
- Shahin Shahr, Esfahan Province
- Rasht, Gilan Province
- Hamedan City, Hamadan Province
- Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province
- Kerman City, Kerman Province
- Kermanshah City, Kermanshah Province (violence reported)
- Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province
- Boukan, Kurdistan Province (violence reported)
- Marivan, Kurdistan Province
- Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province
- Saghez, Kurdistan Province (violence reported)
- Khorram Abad, Lorestan Province (violence reported)
- Arak, Markazi Province
- Amol, Mazandaran Province

- Tehran City, Tehran Province
- Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province (violence reported)
- Ourmia, West Azerbaijan Province
- Yazd City, Yazd Province (violence reported)



A Persian-language social media account tweeted a political manifesto on October 14, calling for a peaceful transition to establish a democratic, secular Iranian government.¹² The anonymous authors proposed establishing a transitional government that would provide amnesty to arrested protesters, investigate the regime crackdown, integrate the IRGC into the Artesh, resolve the nuclear negotiations, and improve the economy. The authors expressed support for the protests and emphasized the importance of women’s rights, preserving Iran’s territorial integrity, and promoting the freedoms of assembly, association, press, and privacy. The authors welcomed the participation of current regime members and stated that they reserve the right of legitimate defense against repression. A journalist from the *Independent* tweeted without

details or substantiation that male and female political activists in Tehran drafted the statement.¹³

State-aligned media outlets are propagating divergent—and often contradictory--narratives of the regime's response to ongoing unrest. IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency denied reports that Iranian security forces killed a high school girl in Ardabil City and even claimed that there had been no protest-related deaths or injuries in Ardabil Province.¹⁴ Some state-aligned outlets, including Tasnim, later circulated purported footage from the deceased student's uncle, who claimed that the student had died from heart disease.¹⁵ The footage implicitly suggests that a high school did indeed die, contradicting Tasnim's initial story. State-affiliated outlets had similarly discordant coverage of the fire and reported violence at Evin Prison, Tehran City. IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency reported clashes between prisoners and security personnel while other outlets claimed that clashes were limited to being between prisoners.¹⁶

A prominent Iranian cleric and reporter diverged from the regime's official narrative downplaying ongoing protests. A senior cleric in Sistan and Baluchistan Province—where the regime has pursued particularly violent protest suppression tactics—defended protestors and criticized some clerics' comments blaming anti-regime demonstrations on the economy.¹⁷ A reformist outlet similarly circulated an interview from a prominent Iranian journalist criticizing the regime that same day.¹⁸

The Law Enforcement Command reportedly issued a complaint over four parliamentarians' views on Mahsa Amini's death and the morality police, which could also signal broader disagreements about protest responses within the regime.¹⁹

President Joe Biden reiterated his support for the Iranian protesters on October 14.²⁰ Biden called on the regime to end its crackdown.

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

IRGC-affiliated Telegram channels reported that unidentified militants fired six rockets at the al Omar oilfield, which houses US servicemembers, in eastern Syria.²¹ CTP cannot verify this reporting. US CENTCOM has not confirmed the attack occurred. IRGC-affiliated Telegram accounts often claim false attacks on US positions. The IRGC may have ordered its proxies to attack the oilfield if the reporting is true to retaliate for the perceived US role in stoking the protests.

¹ https://twitter.com/FarsNews_Agency/status/1581361781703786498

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranian-protesters-defy-crackdown-with-nationwide-demonstrations-2022-10-15/>

³ <https://twitter.com/AtenaDaemi/status/1581385124905914368>

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-63271817>;
https://twitter.com/Sima_Sabet/status/1581363854390726657?s=20&t=sTUZI659eM5hdIPILSRlQ;
<https://twitter.com/IHRights/status/1581387213392482304?s=20&t=sTUZI659eM5hdIPILSRlQ>

⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/rights-group-233-killed-in-iran-protests-enter-fifth-week/2022/10/15/aaba6e92-4ca4-11ed-8153-96ee97b218d2_story.html

⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/iran-leaked-video-footage-from-evin-prison-offers-rare-glimpse-of-cruelty-against-prisoners/>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/iran-leaked-video-footage-from-evin-prison-offers-rare-glimpse-of-cruelty-against-prisoners/>

⁸ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/12/politics/siamak-namazi-prison-iran/index.html>;
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/omad-shargi-iran-hostage-biden-appeal/>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/GissouNia/status/1581362226237124608>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/KavehGhoreishi/status/1581385348977856512>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1581204583208038400?s=20&t=MydoqxEAwulC6F8xHPWCyQ>

¹² <https://twitter.com/MahsaAmini40/status/1580986579417698305>

¹³ <https://twitter.com/borzou/status/158103323819724802>

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1581002798954872832>; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/07/23/2788286/%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%BA-%D9%BE%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C-%D8%A8%DB%8C-%D8%A8%DB%8C-%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D9%88-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%84-%D8%A8%DB%8C-%D8%A8%DB%8C-%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B4-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D9%BE%D8%B3-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%AA>

¹⁵ https://twitter.com/Tasnimnews_Fa/status/1581290776734371840;
https://twitter.com/IRNA_1313/status/1581328455924297728

¹⁶ https://twitter.com/FarsNews_Agency/status/1581361781703786498;
https://twitter.com/IRNA_1313/status/1581374904905379840?s=20&t=klmqbLLwSOFwgJIT9L9BmQ

¹⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/14/world/middleeast/iran-zahedan-crackdown.html>;
<https://www.rouydad24.ir/fa/news/319897/%DB%B3-%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%A2%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D9%85%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%85-%D8%B4%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AF%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B4%DA%A9%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C>; <https://fa.dot.shafaqna.com/news/1461383/%D9%85%D9%88%D9%84%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B4%DA%A9%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%82%D8%B7-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D9%86%DB%8C/>

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/EtemadOnline/status/1581295399192494080?s=20&t=MydoqxEAwulC6F8xHPWCyQ>

¹⁹ https://twitter.com/Tasnimnews_Fa/status/1581256248715931648

²⁰ <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/14/politics/joe-biden-iran-protests/index.html>

²¹ <https://t.me/sabreenS1/61995>; <https://t.me/maymun5/11347>