



Iran Crisis Update, October 22

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Anti-regime protests in Iran occurred in at least 24 cities in 18 provinces on October 22—a significant increase from the protest activity in recent days. Protest organizations called for countrywide demonstrations on October 22 as CTP previously reported.¹ Protestors are continuing to organize demonstrations despite ongoing and severe internet and telecommunications censorship. The protest organizations have called for additional demonstrations on October 26—the 40th day since the morality patrol killed Mahsa Amini.²

Some marginalized segments of the reformist faction are continuing to criticize the regime crackdown.

The reformist son of former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani suggested amending the constitution to address popular grievances on October 22.³ Reformist politician Abbas Ahmad Akhoundi called on the Iranian clerical establishment to publicly support the protesters and condemn crackdowns on October 22.⁴ Akhoundi was a senior cabinet official under both Rafsanjani and former President Hassan Rouhani.⁵ Akhoundi's comments follow unconfirmed reports of rifts between the regime and some members of its clerical establishment as CTP previously reported.⁶ Persian-language media outlet *Zeitoon* published a statement allegedly from students and teachers at the Tehran, Mashhad, and Qom seminaries on September 30, condemning Khamenei and the regime crackdown on the protests.⁷ Other senior clerics such as Ayatollah Mustafa Mohaghegh Damad, Ayatollah Asadollah Bayat Zanjani issued statements on criticizing state security services for the death of Mahsa Amini on September 17.⁸ One of Iran's most senior Sunni clerics—Maulvi Abdol Hamid—similarly criticized the regime on October 21 for its brutal suppression of protests in Zahedan on September 30.⁹

Key Takeaways

- **Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 24 cities in 18 provinces on October 22—a significant increase from the protest activity in recent days.**
- **Some marginalized segments of the reformist faction are continuing to criticize the regime crackdown.**

- **Anti-regime hacker group Black Reward published 50 gigabytes of documents related to the Iranian nuclear program.**
- **The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and regime media channels claimed a new separatist movement has formed in Azerbaijan’s autonomous Nakhchivan region.**

Anti-Regime Protests

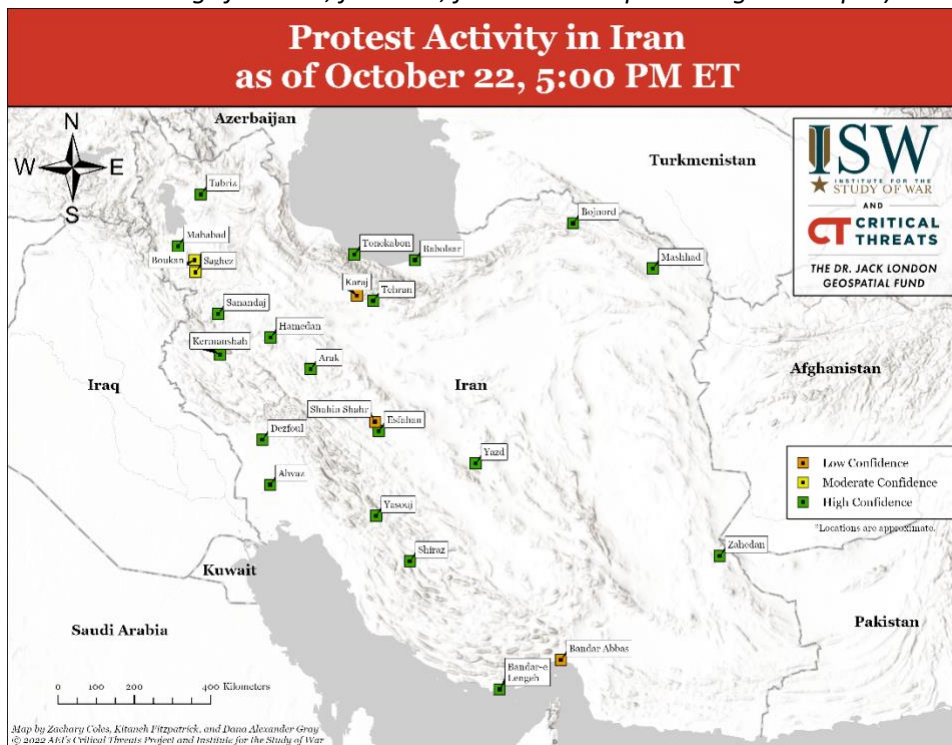
Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 24 cities in 18 provinces on October 22. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

- Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province (*Hundreds of Tabriz University students protesting in Tabriz streets; protesters lighting fires in the street*)¹⁰
- Esfahan City, Esfahan Province (*Over 100 Mohajer University students holding a sit-in on campus*)¹¹
- Shiraz, Fars Province (*Several dozen protesters chanting “this is no longer a protest, it’s a revolution.”*)¹²
- Hamedan City, Hamedan Province (*50-100 Hamedan University of Medical Sciences students protesting on campus*)¹³
- Bandar-e Lengeh, Hormozgan Province (*Dozens of protesters in Bandar-e Lengeh streets, reported clashes between security forces and protesters*)¹⁴
- Kermanshah City, Kermanshah Province (*100-200 Razi University students chanting “zealous students, support, support” in Kermanshah streets*)¹⁵
- Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province (*Security forces reportedly using live ammunition against protesters in Mashad streets*)¹⁶
- Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province (*Undetermined number of Jondishapour University students protesting on campus*)¹⁷
- Dezfoul, Khuzestan Province (*Undetermined number of protesters demonstrating in Dezfoul streets*)¹⁸
- Yasouj, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmed Province (*Several dozen Yasouj University students demonstrating on campus*)¹⁹
- Saghez, Kurdistan Province (*Undetermined number of protesters demonstrating in Karimabad neighborhood*)²⁰
- Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province (*Undetermined number of protesters lighting fires in Sanandaj streets; security forces targeting protesters with tear gas and reportedly live ammunition*)²¹
- Arak, Markazi Province (*Dozens of protesters chanting “women, life, freedom” in Arak streets; clashes between protesters and security forces*)²²
- Babolsar, Mazandaran Province (*Undetermined number of Mazandaran University students protesting on campus*)²³
- Tonekabon, Mazandaran Province (*Dozens of protesters tearing down a Law Enforcement Command (LEC) billboard and setting fire to a morality police facility*)²⁴
- Bojnord, North Khorasan Province (*Undetermined number of Bojnord University students protesting on campus*)²⁵
- Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province (*Roughly 50 Zahedan University of Medical Sciences students protesting on campus and chanting “zealous students, support, support.”*)²⁶

- Tehran City, Tehran Province (*Hundreds of students and faculty protesting from Tehran Technology Institute, Shahid Beheshti, Tehran, Allameh Tabatabai, and Sharif Universities; undetermined number of electricity workers and protesters chanting “death to the dictator” in Lalezar; protesters possibly attempting to set the IRIB radio station on fire*)²⁷
- Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province (*Undetermined number of protesters in Boukan streets*)²⁸
- Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province (*25-50 protesters lighting fires and protesting in Mahabad streets*)²⁹
- Yazd City, Yazd Province (*Several dozen Yazd University students demonstrating on campus*)³⁰

CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

- Karaj, Alborz Province (*Undetermined number of protesters in Karaj streets*)³¹
- Shahin Shahr, Esfahan Province (*Undetermined number of protesters in Shahin Shahr streets*)³²
- Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province (*Undetermined number of Hormozgan University students chanting “freedom, freedom, freedom” and protesting on campus*)³³



Anti-regime hacker group Black Reward published 50 gigabytes of documents related to the Iranian nuclear program on October 22. The group posted a video that reportedly depicted the Bushehr nuclear facility’s reactor room.³⁴ It also posted links to documents containing private discussions between Iranian and International Atomic Energy Agency officials, contracts with foreign and domestic entities related to atomic development, strategic planning documents for the Iranian nuclear industry, and passports and visas for Russian and Iranian technicians cooperating on work in the Bushehr facility.³⁵

Black Reward first announced a series of cyberattacks against regime institutions and media outlets after emerging online on September 25.³⁶ The group claims to belong to a larger Iranian hacker community that

intends to destroy the “clerical criminal regime for women, life, [and] freedom.”³⁷

Social media users documented anti-regime strikes among merchants and workers in 10 cities in seven provinces on October 22, including:

- Karaj, Alborz Province³⁸
- Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province³⁹
- Rezvanshahr, Esfahan Province⁴⁰
- Marvdasht, Fars Province⁴¹
- Salas-e Babajani, Kermanshah Province⁴²
- Marivan, Kurdistan Province⁴³
- Saghez, Kurdistan Province⁴⁴
- Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province⁴⁵
- Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province⁴⁶
- Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province⁴⁷

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and regime media channels claimed a new separatist movement has formed in Azerbaijan’s autonomous Nakhchivan region. IRGC Telegram channels and regime-affiliated Sahar Azeri TV reported the emergence of a separatist movement that intends to return Nakhchivan to Iran.⁴⁸ IRGC Telegram channels posted the videos with a message that warned those “who think they can play with the national security of others should be aware that many hearts in the region are with Iran.”⁴⁹ These announcements may be part of the Iranian effort to threaten Azerbaijan. The IRGC conducted a three-day military exercise along the Iran-Azerbaijan border from October 17-19, as CTP previously reported, threatening to attack Azerbaijan in part for allegedly hosting Israeli intelligence agents⁵⁰ An open-source analyst claimed to geolocate an image from the exercises to a section of the Aras River that divides Iran from Nakhchivan⁵¹

Lebanese Hezbollah-owned media continued echoing Iranian regime rhetoric intended to discredit university protests. Al Ahed News published an article that discouraged Iranians from demonstrating on university campuses. The article included IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami’s October 22 claim that the US and Israel are inciting protests at universities to stifle Iranian technological progress.⁵²

¹ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-20>

² https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1583016004174589953?s=20&t=CoA9bLu7E-mqTjiBcfwhAA

³ <https://www.etemadonline.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-9/578905-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%87%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%BE%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%85>

⁴ <https://www.ettelaat.com/archives/648974>

⁵ <https://www.ettelaat.com/archives/648974>

⁶ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-2>

⁷ www.zeitoons.com/105642

⁸ <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32037877.html>

⁹ <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32042577.html>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583819131240869888?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583815480284176385?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583797737803239424?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583798789269176320?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583804127024275456?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/borzou/status/1583910216852045825?s=20&t=AoNloSnzEVxzDyors-P1kQ>

¹² <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583820910620200960>

¹³ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583800093740011520?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

¹⁴ https://twitter.com/chawshin_83/status/1583879897021550593?s=20&t=s10Fweg8NeqSDN1HXV9OPg;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583916516743208960?s=20&t=AoNloSnzEVxzDyors-P1kQ>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583793574751383553?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583819874694221824?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583818888399421441?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583773586288185345?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

¹⁸ https://twitter.com/chawshin_83/status/1583837855906136064?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583798080264056832?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1583834150984785920?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

²¹ <https://twitter.com/PanahiRafiq/status/1583841282522173440?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/Kolbarnews/status/1583780878030753792?s=20&t=Onvcf81lLkgO4B1S8qpSfA>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583857443175813120?s=20&t=Onvcf81lLkgO4B1S8qpSfA>;
<https://twitter.com/KurdistanHRN/status/1583892196956086272?s=20&t=s10Fweg8NeqSDN1HXV9OPg>;

²² https://twitter.com/chawshin_83/status/1583870272624504832?s=20&t=s10Fweg8NeqSDN1HXV9OPg;
<https://twitter.com/KhosroKalbasi/status/1583877483295698944?s=20&t=s10Fweg8NeqSDN1HXV9OPg>;
<https://twitter.com/IranNewsUpdate1/status/1583878211875745796?s=20&t=s10Fweg8NeqSDN1HXV9OPg>

²³ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583772756365410306?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583904800017899520?s=20&t=AoNloSnzEVxzDyors-P1kQ>

²⁵ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583794394800742400?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

²⁶ <https://twitter.com/KhosroKalbasi/status/1583852842627964929?s=20&t=Onvcf81lLkgO4B1S8qpSfA>;
<https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1583808249593491458?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583824832357367811?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583816703645192192?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
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<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583815824535875584>;
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<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583789917330558978?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
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<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583780331924045824?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

²⁸ https://twitter.com/chawshin_83/status/1583841337064845312?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ

²⁹ <https://twitter.com/IranNW/status/1583842749488730114?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/FarashgardFdn/status/1583908733285171201?s=20&t=s10Fweg8NeqSDN1HXV9OPg>

³⁰ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583785253906178048?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

³¹ <https://twitter.com/Javanmardi75/status/1583856143700750336?s=20&t=Onvcf81lLkgO4B1S8qpSfA>;
<https://twitter.com/pouriazeraati/status/1583855773712797698?s=20&t=Onvcf81lLkgO4B1S8qpSfA>

³² https://twitter.com/chawshin_83/status/1583757574951747585?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHmV75DCIXDbhcJQ

³³ <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1583781534997262336?s=20&t=wnnXJOjWyy9oplgXx9EQpw>

³⁴ https://t.me/black_reward/34

³⁵ https://t.me/black_reward/31

³⁶ https://t.me/black_reward/5

³⁷ https://t.me/s/black_reward

³⁸ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583814379933298688?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

³⁹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583734368501403649?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583742919701278721?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583738306004590592?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴¹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583719607159836673?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴² <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1583828294881140737?s=20&t=Onvcf81lLkgO4B1S8qpSfA>

⁴³ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583725604431884288?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴⁴ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583742043071057920?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴⁵ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583745394424442880?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴⁶ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583719948832374784?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1583720323769597954?s=20&t=HwgVE4fHfMV75DCIXDbhcJQ>

⁴⁷ <https://twitter.com/ICHRI/status/1583847580609679363?s=20&t=wnnXJOjWyw9oplgXx9EQpw>

⁴⁸ https://t.me/Sepah_lr/71153

⁴⁹ https://t.me/sepah_pasdaran/114794

⁵⁰ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-17>

⁵¹ https://twitter.com/khalfaguliyev/status/1583156444488028160?s=20&t=_6dm2L36Ba_MNLNUFjwSGA

⁵² http://alahednews_dot_com_dot_lb/article_dot_php?id=46984&cid=116