



## **Iran Crisis Update, November 12**

**Nicholas Carl, Zachary Coles, Dana Alexander Gray, and Frederick W. Kagan  
November 12, 5:00 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). To receive Iran Crisis Updates via email, please subscribe [here](#).**

**Protest coordinators and organizations have called for countrywide demonstrations from November 15 to 17 to commemorate the three-year anniversary of the Bloody Aban protest wave in November 2019.**<sup>1</sup> Citizens took to the streets in around 100 cities in the Bloody Aban protest wave in response to a sudden regime decision to cut fuel subsidies. Estimates of civilians killed by security forces during Bloody Aban range from 304 to 1,500.<sup>2</sup> Some protest organizers have published instructions to “conquer” a main Tehran highway on November 15, blocking the road with cars to restrict security forces’ movement.<sup>3</sup> Persian-language social media accounts have described the ongoing protests as the continuation of the Bloody Aban protest wave in recent weeks, as CTP previously reported.<sup>4</sup> Invoking popular frustrations toward the regime about the Bloody Aban crackdown could reinvigorate this protest movement, which has seen reduced turnout in recent days.<sup>5</sup>

**Iranian clerical, political, and security leaders are arguing to the domestic population that the collapse of the Islamic Republic would lead to chaos and civil war.** Iranian authorities likely seek to convince the population that the protests will ultimately worsen the state of the country rather than achieve meaningful reform. Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Political Deputy Brigadier General Yadollah Javani accused the West, Israel, and Saudi Arabia of stoking the protests to “Syrianize” Iran on November 11.<sup>6</sup> This regime narrative has become increasingly prevalent in recent weeks. Iranian clerics, military commanders, parliamentarians, and state media have used similar rhetoric, asserting that the protests will create instability similar to the Syrian civil war in Iran rather than lead to a democratic, secular republic.<sup>7</sup>

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Protest coordinators and organizations have called for countrywide demonstrations from November 15 to 17 to commemorate the three-year anniversary of the Bloody Aban protest wave in November 2019. Citizens took to the streets in around 100 cities in the Bloody Aban protest wave in response to a sudden regime decision to cut fuel subsidies.**

- Iranian clerical, political, and security leaders are arguing to the domestic population that the collapse of the Islamic Republic would lead to chaos and civil war.
- At least 12 protests took place in 10 cities across nine provinces.
- Unidentified militants killed a member of the IRGC Ground Forces 25<sup>th</sup> Karbala Operational Division at an unspecified location in northwestern Iran.
- Senior Shia cleric Ayatollah Asadollah Bayat Zanjani issued a fatwa requiring Muslims to defend themselves and others if an armed stranger attacks them, according to anti-regime outlet *IranWire*.

### **Anti-Regime Protests**

At least 12 protests took place in 10 cities across nine provinces on November 12. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

#### **Karaj, Alborz Province (population: 1,970,000)**

- *Around one or two dozen Kharazmi University students chanted anti-regime slogans and held demonstrations on campus to protest against security forces killing their fellow students during previous protests.<sup>8</sup>*

#### **Shiraz, Fars Province (population: 1,565,572)**

- *Several dozen protesters marched through Shiraz streets chanting “death to the dictator” and other anti-regime slogans.<sup>9</sup>*

#### **Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province (population: 3,001,184)**

- *An undetermined number of Azad University in Mashhad students chanted “freedom, freedom, freedom” in a hallway on campus.<sup>10</sup>*

#### **Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province (population: 414,069)**

- *Several dozen likely high school-age students marched through a Sanandaj street and chanted anti-regime slogans.<sup>11</sup>*

#### **Arak, Markazi Province (population: 520,944)**

- *Around a dozen protesters held an evening demonstration on an Arak street and chanted “we do not want spectators; join us.”<sup>12</sup>*

#### **Babol, Mazandaran Province (population: 250,217)**

- *Around a dozen Noshirvani University of Technology students chanted anti-regime slogans at a courtyard on campus.<sup>13</sup>*

#### **Tehran City, Tehran Province (population: 8,700,000)**

- *An undetermined number of Khajeh Nasir University students chanted “by the end of the month of Aban, the dictator will fall” and other anti-regime slogans in a hallway on campus.<sup>14</sup>*
- *An undetermined number of Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran students chanted “free the imprisoned students” and “shout, shout for your rights” on campus. Iranian social media accounts posted images of several dozen students holding a sit-in inside a classroom.<sup>15</sup>*

- Around one or two dozen University of Science and Culture students chanted anti-regime slogans on campus. Iranian social media accounts posted images that showed students attending the protest.<sup>16</sup>

**\*Sardasht, West Azerbaijan Province (population: 68,165)**

- Several dozen citizens marched through a village near Sardasht to the home of killed protester Heman Hamzeh. The protesters chanted “martyrs do not die,” “as long as there is a Kurd, Heman will take revenge,” and other anti-regime slogans.<sup>17</sup>

**Zanjan City, Zanjan Province (population: 430,871)**

- Around one or two dozen protesters demonstrated and sang protest songs on a Zanjan street.<sup>18</sup>

CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

**\*Dehgolan, Kurdistan Province (population: 45,386)**

- Iranian social media accounts reported that people gathered on Dehgolan streets to condemn security forces for reportedly driving killed protester Hasti Panahi to commit suicide two days after being released.<sup>19</sup>

**Note: CTP is using asterisks to denote protests that included mourners commemorating killed protesters.**



**Unidentified militants killed a member of the IRGC Ground Forces 25<sup>th</sup> Karbala Operational Division at an unspecified location in northwestern Iran on November 12.<sup>20</sup>** Iranian state media reported that the officer was guarding the border region. The 25<sup>th</sup>

Division is headquartered in Sari, Mazandaran Province and has previously deployed to Syria to fight for despot Bashar al Assad.<sup>21</sup>

**Senior Shia cleric Ayatollah Asadollah Bayat Zanjani issued a fatwa requiring Muslims to defend themselves and others if an armed stranger attacks them, according to anti-regime outlet *IranWire* on November 12.**<sup>22</sup> *IranWire* interpreted Bayat Zanjani's fatwa as calling on protesters to defend themselves against plainclothes security personnel, although it is unclear if this framing is correct. CTP cannot verify this reporting, and Bayat Zanjani's website has not published this fatwa at the time of this writing.<sup>23</sup> Bayat Zanjani has criticized security forces for the death of Mahsa Amini, as CTP previously reported.<sup>24</sup>

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

### **There was nothing significant to report today.**

<sup>1</sup> [https://twitter.com/iran\\_javanan/status/1591422168910696448](https://twitter.com/iran_javanan/status/1591422168910696448)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/05/iran-details-released-of-304-deaths-during-protests-six-months-after-security-forces-killing-spree;%20https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-protests-specialreport/special-report-irans-leader-ordered-crackdown-on-unrest-do-whatever-it-takes-to-end-it-idUSKBN1YROQR>

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/neginsh/status/1591101670901309441/photo/1>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-24#\\_ednfd5b678c84318859ce365ec47f4b37bd2](https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-24#_ednfd5b678c84318859ce365ec47f4b37bd2)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-11>

<sup>6</sup> [www.defapress dot ir/fa/news/555338](http://www.defapress.ir/fa/news/555338)

<sup>7</sup> [www.mehrnews dot com/news/5624362](http://www.mehrnews.com/news/5624362); [www.snn dot ir/fa/news/1041801](http://www.snn.ir/fa/news/1041801); [www.irna dot ir/news/84937272](http://www.irna.ir/news/84937272); [www.mehrnews dot com/news/5623203](http://www.mehrnews.com/news/5623203); [www.irna dot ir/news/84907177](http://www.irna.ir/news/84907177)

<sup>8</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1591381743893889024?s=20&t=s\\_FNSe6HkjP2pm6rBRRAmA](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1591381743893889024?s=20&t=s_FNSe6HkjP2pm6rBRRAmA;);

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591388729268371456?s=20&t=Y63CRCzz1da-4ayfey74wQ>

<sup>9</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591518881004556293?s=20&t=ali27yUNGqVqm0lbqaQ\\_Uw](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591518881004556293?s=20&t=ali27yUNGqVqm0lbqaQ_Uw)

<sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1591429434090827776?s=20&t=dvyvmUhZWelBkH00hZQlhQ>

<sup>11</sup> [https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591405024059723776?s=20&t=KGw0QgUtM2vTfj4eWVfSA](https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591405024059723776?s=20&t=KGw0QgUtM2vTfj4eWVfSA;);

[https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1591410635505831936?s=20&t=3BO4nC9Hy9BowqSurPdcwA](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1591410635505831936?s=20&t=3BO4nC9Hy9BowqSurPdcwA;);

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591393277328384000?s=20&t=lqQJ0z8goSXZ6btXSw6nYw>

<sup>12</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591536646499041281?s=20&t=44\\_ngn-VGZ1u3TN1P0ZMDw](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591536646499041281?s=20&t=44_ngn-VGZ1u3TN1P0ZMDw)

<sup>13</sup> [https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591431246672179201?s=20&t=zdEf7jAWsEUsYPnG22lu\\_g](https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591431246672179201?s=20&t=zdEf7jAWsEUsYPnG22lu_g;);

[https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1591502289054814209?s=20&t=zWDpBgSs-xcM5cBTx-z3IA](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1591502289054814209?s=20&t=zWDpBgSs-xcM5cBTx-z3IA)

<sup>14</sup> [https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1591452241780953091?s=20&t=9yFab550mQvcxRIDb9ETZg](https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1591452241780953091?s=20&t=9yFab550mQvcxRIDb9ETZg;);

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591459835878559744?s=20&t=kjBfXIE5FJZIVelCVKMLbw>

<sup>15</sup> [https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591384789806108673?s=20&t=h655pnqMvfpn8R4\\_KIGBAg](https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591384789806108673?s=20&t=h655pnqMvfpn8R4_KIGBAg;);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591389815118905344?s=20&t=s0E4ey4TGuZONP6KKexGCG](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591389815118905344?s=20&t=s0E4ey4TGuZONP6KKexGCG;);

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591338941214359552?s=20&t=jagfFXZlkCH5YK9a6TsbWw>

<sup>16</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591391427426123777?s=20&t=jEpIHT4I7JHZWOFxs0Rb2Q](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591391427426123777?s=20&t=jEpIHT4I7JHZWOFxs0Rb2Q;);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591390095537770496?s=20&t=jIXAQRJKeFqvYBsIEgVnhg](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591390095537770496?s=20&t=jIXAQRJKeFqvYBsIEgVnhg;);

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591371739031916552?s=20&t=L5IHOKYOpQfLrbDVOBE0Kw>

<sup>17</sup> [https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1591469631398899712?s=20&t=j1437VHXITdc9dhKSYE\\_g](https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1591469631398899712?s=20&t=j1437VHXITdc9dhKSYE_g;);

[https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591486095430389760?s=20&t=Z1qTORGbM48s9NgmGwkJQQ](https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591486095430389760?s=20&t=Z1qTORGbM48s9NgmGwkJQQ;);

<https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1591495830762323970?s=20&t=hWBdlmsotZkClg7X7ijWA>

<sup>18</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1591520652791799808?s=20&t=pqXP4ngULr7pO45xD6aD0g](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1591520652791799808?s=20&t=pqXP4ngULr7pO45xD6aD0g)

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1591381982797496320?s=20&t=JIP8O10VD52d66x7QYW7KA>

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://irna dot ir/xjKYYs>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Irans-Reserve-of-Last-Resort.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://iranwire.com/en/politics/109726-defense-against-plainclothesmen-is-a-religious-duty-iranian-ayatollah-rules/>

<sup>23</sup> [www.bayat dot info](http://www.bayat dot info)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-2#\\_edn24be60559121abfedca2de2f3579cd247](https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-2#_edn24be60559121abfedca2de2f3579cd247)