



## Iran Crisis Update, November 16

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November 16, 5:00 pm ET

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**Protest activity continued to surge on November 16, occurring in at least 29 cities in 19 provinces.** Protests will likely continue throughout Iran on November 17—the final day of the three-day commemoration of the Bloody Aban protest wave in November 2019—and concentrate in Sistan and Baluchistan on Friday, November 18. Security forces are continuing to crack down and use lethal force but are not using their full capabilities, likely to avoid angering protesters further and creating more 40-day commemoration ceremonies around which demonstrators will rally. The regime continues to seem like it does not have a coherent theory about how to address the protests, likely due to disagreements within the political and security establishment.

**Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's efforts to discourage prominent Sunni cleric Moulana Abdol Hamid from publicly criticizing the regime have likely failed.** Abdol Hamid tweeted on November 16, criticizing the clerical delegation that Khamenei sent to Sistan and Baluchistan Province.<sup>1</sup> The delegation—led by Friday Prayer Leader Policy Council Chairman Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari—met with Abdol Hamid and other local leaders likely to communicate Khamenei's directive to stop instigating protests in the province.<sup>2</sup> Abdol Hamid accused the delegation of intimidating and threatening people rather than consoling them in his tweet. Abdol Hamid's public criticism days after meeting the delegation indicates that he will continue publicly condemning the regime crackdown and supporting protesters. Abdol Hamid and his supporters will likely inspire further protests throughout Sistan and Baluchistan Province during his Friday sermon on November 18 as they have done almost every Friday since the brutal regime crackdown in Zahedan on September 30.<sup>3</sup>

**A false claim is circulating online that the Iranian Parliament has sentenced 15,000 arrested protesters to death.** Many online users, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, have propagated this misinformation unwittingly.<sup>4</sup> This claim is based on the actual reporting that 277 parliamentarians signed a letter calling for the judiciary to harshly and rapidly

prosecute arrested protesters on November 6.<sup>5</sup> The judiciary has sentenced at least five protesters to death thus far and will likely execute more, but the regime has not likely decided to kill 15,000 arrested protesters. This misinformation is distracting public attention from the atrocities and human right violations that the regime is actually committing against its people.

### Key Takeaways

- **Protest activity continued to surge, occurring in 29 cities in 19 provinces.**
- **Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's efforts to discourage prominent Sunni cleric Moulana Abdol Hamid from publicly criticizing the regime have likely failed.**
- **A false claim is circulating online that the Iranian Parliament has sentenced 15,000 arrested protesters to death.**
- **BBC published a purported leaked audio tape revealing internal disagreements within the regime over the cause of and correct response to the protests.**
- **Unidentified gunmen shot and killed at least six people and injured at least 15 at a shopping center in Izeh, Khuzestan Province.**
- **Unidentified gunmen shot at Basij and Law Enforcement Command (LEC) personnel, killing two, in Esfahan City, Esfahan Province.**
- **The judiciary sentenced three protesters to death.**
- **The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) or one of its proxies likely conducted a kamikaze drone attack on an Israeli-owned tanker in the Gulf of Oman.**

### Anti-Regime Protests

**At least 37 protests took place in 29 cities across 19 provinces on November 16.** CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

#### **Fardis, Alborz Province (population: approximately 181,174)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters demonstrated on a Fardis street during evening protests.<sup>6</sup>*

#### **Karaj, Alborz Province (population: approximately 1,592,000)**

- *One or two dozen protesters blocked a Karaj street and chanted "freedom, freedom, freedom" and other anti-regime slogans.<sup>7</sup>*

#### **Borazjan, Bushehr Province (population: 110,567)**

- *Several dozen protesters set fires and demonstrated on a Borazjan street. Regime security forces reportedly attempted to disrupt the protests.<sup>8</sup>*

#### **Shahr-e Kord, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province (population: approximately 190,441)**

- *Several dozen protesters chanted anti-regime slogans, set fires, and established roadblocks throughout Shahr-e Kord streets.<sup>9</sup>*

#### **Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province (population: approximately 1,599,000)**

- *An undetermined number of Azad University at Tabriz students protested on campus and chanted anti-regime slogans.<sup>10</sup>*

- *Several dozen protesters marched through Tabriz streets and chanted anti-regime slogans during evening protests.<sup>11</sup>*

**Esfahan City, Esfahan Province (population: approximately 1,961,000)**

- *At least 200 protesters demonstrated in an Esfahan park and chanted slogans against the regime and focused on economic grievances.<sup>12</sup>*
- *An undetermined number of protesters set two regime security forces motorcycles on fire in an Esfahan street.<sup>13</sup>*

**Fouladshahr, Esfahan Province (population: approximately 88,426)**

- *Footage from social media depicts at least 50 protesters fleeing from security forces advancing down a Fouladshahr street. Protesters set fires in the street and can be heard chanting anti-regime slogans.<sup>14</sup>*

**Lar, Fars Province (population: approximately 62,045)**

- *Regime security forces fired teargas and attempted to disrupt protesters demonstrating on a Lar street.<sup>15</sup>*

**Shiraz, Fars Province (population: approximately 1,566,000)**

- *Several dozen protesters set fires and chanted anti-regime slogans on a Shiraz street during evening protests.<sup>16</sup>*

**Soumesara, Gilan Province (population: approximately 47,083)**

- *At least 50 protesters marched through Soumesara streets and chanted “freedom, freedom, freedom” and “death to the dictator.”<sup>17</sup>*

**Kerman City, Kerman Province (population: approximately 537,718)**

- *Several dozen protesters marched through Kerman streets and chanted “freedom, freedom, freedom” and “death to the dictator” during evening protests.<sup>18</sup>*

**Kermanshah City, Kermanshah Province (population: approximately 946,651)**

- *Several dozen protesters blocked Kermanshah streets and chanted “death to the dictator,” “death to Khamenei,” and other anti-regime slogans. Regime security forces reportedly used live ammunition against protesters, killing at least one.<sup>19</sup>*

**Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province (population: approximately 3,000,000)**

- *Several dozen protesters set fires on a Mashhad street. Footage from social media depicts a large grouping of individuals opposite to the protesters, possibly indicating the presence of regime security forces.<sup>20</sup>*
- *An undetermined number of protesters chanted anti-regime slogans and blocked traffic in Mashhad streets during evening protests.<sup>21</sup>*

**Abadan, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 231,476)**

- *Several dozen Abadan University of Medical Sciences students gathered along an Abadan street and chanted anti-regime slogans.<sup>22</sup>*

**Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 1,185,000)**

- *At least 100 Chamran and Jundishapur University at Ahvaz students marched and chanted anti-regime slogans on campus.<sup>23</sup>*
- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered and set fires in Ahvaz streets during evening protests. Footage from social media features multiple gunshots, possibly by regime security forces.<sup>24</sup>*

**Izeh, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 119,339)**

- *Several dozen protesters marched through Izeh streets and chanted anti-regime slogans during evening protests. Likely protesters set fire to an Izeh seminary.<sup>25</sup>*

**Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 461,000)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters set fires and established obstacles in Sanandaj streets during evening protests.<sup>26</sup>*
- *Approximately 50 Sanandaj University of Medical Sciences students chanted “freedom, freedom, freedom” during a demonstration in a building on campus. The students also marched through campus. Regime security forces confronted the protesting students and attempted to arrest them.<sup>27</sup>*

**Saghez, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 165,258)**

- *Several dozen protesters demonstrated and set fires in Saghez streets. Protesters gathered outside a Saghez hospital that was holding a teenager shot by regime security forces.<sup>28</sup>*

**\*Kamyaran, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 57,077)**

- *More than 200 protesters gathered on a Kamyaran street to demonstrate against regime security forces killing protest martyr Fawad Mohammadi on November 15. Security forces used tear gas and reportedly fired live ammunition at protesters, killing one and injuring at least 10 more.<sup>29</sup>*

**Saveh, Markazi Province (population: approximately 220,762)**

- *At least two dozen protesters gathered to demonstrate on a Saveh street during evening protests.<sup>30</sup>*

**Ghaem Shahr, Mazandaran Province (population: approximately 204,953)**

- *One or two dozen protesters marched through Ghaem Shahr streets and chanted “freedom, freedom, freedom.”<sup>31</sup>*

**Abbasabad, Mazandaran Province (population: approximately 13,482)**

- *Several dozen protesters gathered on a Abbasabad street and chanted anti-regime slogans during evening protests.<sup>32</sup>*

**Birjand, South Khorasan Province (population: approximately 203,636)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters marched through a Birjan streets and chanted anti-regime slogans during evening protests.<sup>33</sup>*

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

- *Possibly local workers protested and set fires at an industrial market in a neighborhood in southwest Tehran. Regime security forces dressed as firefighters reportedly attempted to suppress the demonstrations.<sup>34</sup>*
- *50-100 Khajeh Nasir University of Technology students protested on campus while a university official delivered a speech. Protesters chanted “We don’t want Sepahi [IRGC] University, we don’t want it.”<sup>35</sup>*
- *50-100 protesters chanted anti-regime slogans and set fires on Tehran streets during evening protests.<sup>36</sup>*
- *Several dozen protesters chanted “death to the dictator” on a Tehran street during daytime protests.<sup>37</sup>*
- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered within a metro station in Tehran. Security forces attempted to arrest individuals and disrupt the protests with pepperball rounds.<sup>38</sup>*

### **Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province (population: approximately 193,501)**

- *Dozens of protesters marched through Boukan streets and chanted “death to Khamenei” and other anti-regime slogans during evening protests.<sup>39</sup>*

### **Zanjan, Zanjan Province (population: approximately 430,871)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters blocked traffic and marched through Zanjan streets, chanting “death to the dictator” and other anti-regime slogans.<sup>40</sup>*

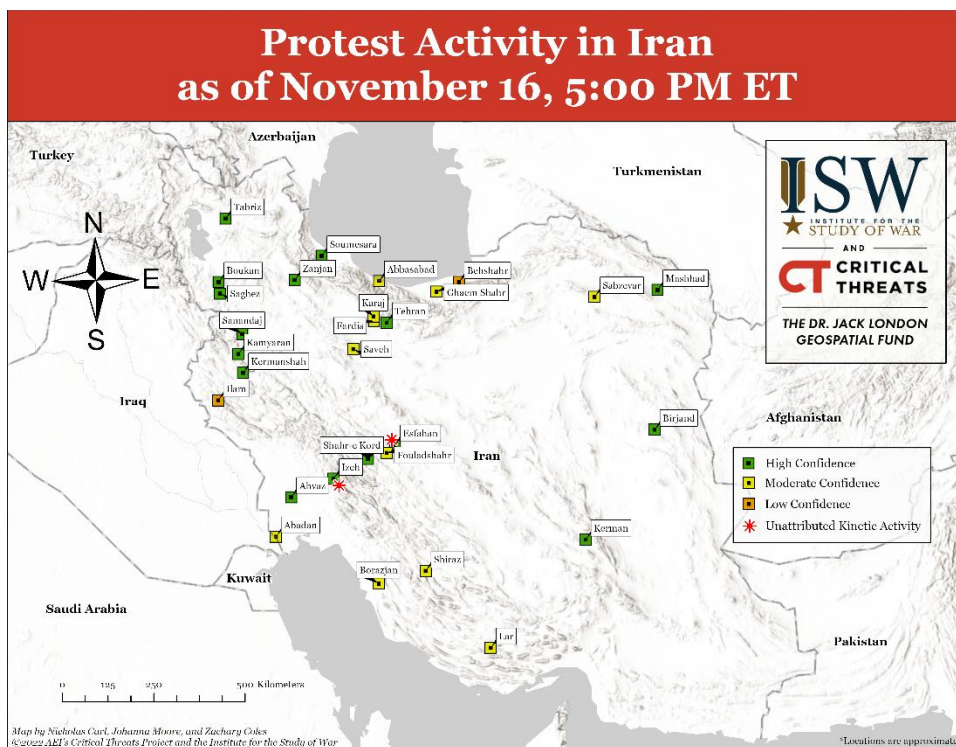
CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

### **Ilam City, Ilam Province (population: approximately 194,030)**

- *Footage from social media shows protesters fleeing down an alley, reportedly away from regime security forces pursuing them.<sup>41</sup>*

### **Behshahr, Mazandaran Province (population: approximately 94,702)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered in Behshahr streets during evening protests. Footage from social media depicts regime security forces using likely tear gas and flashbang grenades on protesters.<sup>42</sup>*



**BBC published on November 15 a purported leaked audio tape revealing internal disagreements within the regime over the cause of and correct response to the protests.<sup>43</sup>** BBC has not indicated how it authenticated and obtained the recording nor can CTP independently verify its authenticity. The recording, nevertheless, has no obvious indications that it is doctored or fake.

A senior Intelligence and Security Ministry official stated in the recording that internal disagreements have paralyzed the regime response to the protests.<sup>44</sup> These remarks accord with CTP's previous assessment that regime indecision and infighting has confused its response to the protests.<sup>45</sup> The official also acknowledged that domestic issues and the regime's brutality—rather than foreign influence and subversion—have driven many of the protests in recent weeks.

**Unidentified gunmen shot and killed at least six people and injured at least 15 at a shopping center in Izeh, Khuzestan Province on November 16.**<sup>46</sup> The victims include several men and at least one woman and one child. Two of the victims were Basij members. Iranian state media described the attackers as a “terrorist team.” It is unclear who is responsible for the attack. CTP recorded protest activity in Izeh for the first time on November 15.<sup>47</sup>

**Unidentified gunmen shot at Basij and Law Enforcement Command (LEC) personnel, killing two, in Esfahan City, Esfahan Province on November 16.**<sup>48</sup> It is unclear who is responsible for the attack.

**The LEC arrested an individual making Molotov cocktails and toxic chemicals in Tehran City, Tehran Province on November 16.**<sup>49</sup> The individual was reportedly preparing these materials in exchange for 30 billion tomans (roughly \$828,000) from an unknown source.

**The judiciary sentenced three protesters to death on November 16.**<sup>50</sup> The judiciary accused two of these individuals of attacking or threatening to attack security forces and the third of blocking roads and damaging public property. The convicted individuals can appeal these sentences. The judiciary has issued the death penalty for at least five protesters thus far since the protests began on September 16.<sup>51</sup>

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

**The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) or one of its proxies likely conducted a kamikaze drone attack on an Israeli-owned tanker in the Gulf of Oman on November 16.**<sup>52</sup> Tehran likely sought to retaliate for recent Israeli airstrikes in Syria and Israel's perceived role in stoking protests. The IRGC has increasingly attacked commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman as part of its regional escalation cycle with Israel since 2021.<sup>53</sup> The use of a Shahed-136 kamikaze drone in the attack is noteworthy given recent indications that Israel may support Ukraine in countering Russia's use of these same Iranian-made drones.<sup>54</sup>

**Kurdish military and political groups in Iraq and Syria may face increasing attacks from Iran and Turkey simultaneously.** The IRGC resumed its attacks on anti-regime Kurdish militants in Iraqi Kurdistan on November 14 in retaliation for their perceived role in stoking protests.<sup>55</sup> Iranian military leaders affirmed that they would continue attacks until these groups are unarmed or expelled from the border region. Turkish leaders have separately accused the Kurdistan Workers' Party of conducting the terrorist attack in Istanbul on November 13 and vowed to attack Kurdish targets in northern Syria in response.<sup>56</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/AbdolhamidNet/status/1592816361746882561?s=08>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-13>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-11>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://globalnews dot ca/news/9279581/trudeau-iran-tweet-deleted-15000-death-sentence/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-6>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592921362955665408?s=20&t=v1pigOE0YI9Wth0tMTj2Bg>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592941364723187713?s=20&t=XVGHvxHIDLPIgzR8WsouGg>
- <sup>8</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592963505212522497?s=20&t=MJZATQtsY\\_r44ET6KiVMw](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592963505212522497?s=20&t=MJZATQtsY_r44ET6KiVMw)
- <sup>9</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592934053732229120?s=20&t=Nyckb42E7caBAdCmcHgGUw;>  
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- <sup>10</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592861315584118785?s=20&t=vM6LTqWfhgS0zONOpBZDqQ;>
- <sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592929238000472064?s=20&t=RAKODnyKGVGcem0P7wv4zQ;>  
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- <sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592860661968535552?s=20&t=JckUFXkpQ7u9yxEOTEHilQ>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592983281896595456?s=20&t=1S5t6qzYFWYpppTD4HpE6g>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592992216506859521?s=20&t=R8c9uLtwWdzyMD8gNETgnA>
- <sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592928024634482688?s=20&t=DIUQg5ihjMvVQjPucUi8eg>
- <sup>16</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592985366621216768?s=20&t=Tq-RAwwRVtXKtfr-4WrcCQ>
- <sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592861796222013441?s=20&t=XGzp0D34moaSLBKQVdmURw;>  
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- <sup>18</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592943561691258880?s=20&t=Sp0Wre0VfVpJZAYEsM6D2Q;>  
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- <sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592803259013795841?s=20&t=F5QhMj8zsRBxfzVhqMa5sw;>  
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- <sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592844882783404032?s=20&t=XRSYPgclXNpkKfrDaDkeZw;>  
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- <sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592923727658094593?s=20&t=EfwnCBIWWNXl-ygehkSWJw;>  
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- <sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592886029367021568?s=20&t=hHiKVbVCOLKpbS5z5KIPhKa>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592892625698578434?s=20&t=FxnTVqDs02cbDFVq6Rmygg;>
- <sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592923259296952320?s=20&t=s3N8kn-N6Qpe8xzvVRKehA>
- <sup>25</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592919117648236546?s=20&t=oHXGu2CpZCzTGid75B1lrQ;>  
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- <sup>26</sup> [https://twitter.com/barin\\_omid/status/1592903630893600774?s=20&t=IGikY1hcNpOD5aHkoCFX5w;](https://twitter.com/barin_omid/status/1592903630893600774?s=20&t=IGikY1hcNpOD5aHkoCFX5w;)  
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- <sup>27</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592857780847013890?s=20&t=ojcDFKuMiL-vpV2v8U7sKw;>  
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- <sup>28</sup> <https://twitter.com/Fseifikaran/status/1592929386097160192?s=20&t=oZ4YqlkHhK0Y9gq2mK0lhw;>  
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<sup>29</sup> <https://twitter.com/jilamostajer/status/1592793112140984322?s=20&t=f1SwJE5YN8Q52BpUhCwzag>;  
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<sup>30</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592917888804933632?s=20&t=l6GQbUW\\_lx9biRJNJocn6g](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592917888804933632?s=20&t=l6GQbUW_lx9biRJNJocn6g)

<sup>31</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592916358940876800?s=20&t=\\_NFDpJuPebaoMTcDipKrTw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592916358940876800?s=20&t=_NFDpJuPebaoMTcDipKrTw)

<sup>32</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592925393249800193?s=20&t=dhwtsDvHXRUKKUcKdHc98Q>

<sup>33</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592930844838342658?s=20&t=gJ5nDEeYwrTBap6TZO7WnQ>

<sup>34</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592814328394440706?s=20&t=ZcFk3N2NyczkSzVYeHb8jw>;  
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<sup>35</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592893932840812544?s=20&t=THzaj4A\\_U8o-oq2CLCs8sA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592893932840812544?s=20&t=THzaj4A_U8o-oq2CLCs8sA)

<sup>36</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592946177502515206?s=20&t=l9r5BH2T\\_K0jLrJKF-Xv9w](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592946177502515206?s=20&t=l9r5BH2T_K0jLrJKF-Xv9w);  
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<sup>37</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592899399319183365?s=20&t=d-q-9K-PDp1iT9HN0Ct55g>

<sup>38</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592896018806636544?s=20&t=VokCQUwstce12OLWPwciGw>;  
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[https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592888775973085186?s=20&t=9ubicdTHtVfuxqi\\_46hpTA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592888775973085186?s=20&t=9ubicdTHtVfuxqi_46hpTA)

<sup>39</sup> [https://twitter.com/barin\\_omid/status/1592896946615754755?s=20&t=-N7gRU5J2UGuhmqn7rEarg](https://twitter.com/barin_omid/status/1592896946615754755?s=20&t=-N7gRU5J2UGuhmqn7rEarg);  
<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592917968689987587?s=20&t=ZAOcSgDNwWXGa6zYj73ueA>;  
[https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592932358311006209?s=20&t=v\\_fyxJnLcD8RzogLsz4FAA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1592932358311006209?s=20&t=v_fyxJnLcD8RzogLsz4FAA);  
[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592912525255143425?s=20&t=LhpnP\\_TQeVWLhZLoBKGyow](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1592912525255143425?s=20&t=LhpnP_TQeVWLhZLoBKGyow)

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<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-3>

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