



Iran Crisis Update, December 29

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Funerals and commemoration ceremonies for killed protesters are continuing to sustain anti-regime activity throughout Iran as demonstrations enter their fifteenth consecutive week. Protest organizations successfully coordinated anti-regime demonstrations across five Iranian provinces on December 28. Six of the seven anti-regime protests that CTP observed on December 28 corresponded with prior protest calls from anti-regime organizations, suggesting that these groups may have assisted in generating turnout.¹ CTP additionally observed estimated crowds of over 100 protesters in three of the seven recorded protests on December 28. Previous anti-regime demonstrations commemorating killed protesters have historically generated higher attendance as well.² CTP previously reported that protesters have found secular martyrs around whom to rally and who sustain the momentum of the Mahsa Amini movement.³ The regime may struggle to preempt further commemoration ceremonies and funerals for such secular martyrs in the coming weeks.

The Iranian regime has reportedly purchased Sukhoi Su-35 fighters from Russia. The *Times of Israel* reported that Russia is preparing to supply Iran with up to 24 Su-35 war planes in the near future, citing Western intelligence officials.⁴ Asa'ib Ahl al Haq-affiliated *Sabreen News* additionally claimed that Iran will station a squadron of Russian Su-35 fighter jets at the 8th Shakari Base in Esfahan Province.⁵ US intelligence officials had previously warned of strengthening Russo-Iranian ties on December 17.⁶ Russian Su-35 fighters are fourth-generation aircraft without stealth characteristics and thus pose a limited threat to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other regional adversaries. Iran may employ them to support IRGC and Iranian proxy militia personnel in Iraq and Syria, however. The Iranians have long sought Russian combat aircraft, likely in part to reduce their reliance on the Russian Air Force to provide air support to the activities of Iran and its proxies in Iraq and Syria.

Key Takeaways

- **Funerals and commemoration ceremonies for killed protesters are continuing to sustain anti-regime activity throughout Iran as demonstrations enter their fifteenth consecutive week.**
- **The Iranian regime has reportedly purchased Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets from Russia.**
- **At least seven protests occurred in six cities across five provinces.**
- **President Ebrahim Raisi appointed Mohammad Reza Farzin as the new Central Bank of Iran Chief.**
- **Anti-regime outlet *Iran International* circulated footage of Golestan Province Governor General Ali Mohammad Zanganeh requesting that local government officials refuse providing services to unveiled women.**
- **UK-based Amwaj Media reported that prominent Iranian hardliners are pursuing political reform in attempt to preempt further unrest, citing an inside source.**
- **A website purporting to represent the Iranian Sunni community reported that Iranian authorities arrested a Sunni scholar in Khorasan Razavi Province on December 27.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least seven protests occurred in six cities across five provinces on December 29. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

Semiron, Esfahan Province⁷

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Regime Repression: LEC forces seen driving to Semiron according to social media users
- Note: 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Ali Abbasi

Marvdasht, Fars Province⁸

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Mourners
- Note: 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Arman Emadi

Izeh, Khuzestan Province⁹

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Mourners
- Note: 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Sadian Jo

Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province¹⁰

- Size: Undetermined
- Demographic: Mourners
- Note: 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Afteh Naami

Dehgolan, Kurdistan Province¹¹

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Mourners

- Note: 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Mohsen Niazi

Tehran City, Tehran Province¹²

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Regime Repression: Security personnel present at the protests, fired tear gas and beat protesters.
- Protester Activity: Fires lit in the street
- Note: 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Hamidreza Rouhi

Tehran City, Tehran Province¹³

- Size: Undetermined
- Demographic: Mourners
- Protest Activity: Evening protest in front of Hamidreza Rouhi's house
- Note: Follows 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Hamidreza Rouhi

NOTE: CTP defines small protests as fewer than 100 individuals, medium protests as between 100 and 1,000, and large protests as over 1,000.



Protest coordinators circulated calls for anti-regime protests and strikes on the following dates:

January 6-8¹⁴

- Type: Protest and strike
- Location: Country-wide

President Ebrahim Raisi appointed Mohammad Reza Farzin as the Central Bank of Iran Chief on December 29. Farzin replaced Ali Salehabadi, whom Raisi appointed in September 2021.¹⁵ Farzin previously served as the CEO of state-owned Bank-e Melli and was the Deputy Economy Minister under former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.¹⁶ Raisi stressed the importance of managing exchange rates and reducing inflation in publicized comments on Farzin's appointment.¹⁷ Farzin's appointment likely reflects the regime's growing concern with the Iranian rial's decline in recent months, although it is unclear how his appointment will rectify Iran's deteriorating economic conditions and endemic corruption.

UK-based *Amwaj Media* reported that prominent Iranian hardliners are pursuing political reform in hopes of preempting further unrest, citing an inside source. *Amwaj* reported that Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani, and Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei are considering reforms with the support of Former Parliament Speaker and prominent reformist Ali Larijani and Expediency Council Member Mohammad Reza Bahonar. The source allegedly expressed doubt that hardliners would be able to persuade Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other conservative figures within the regime to implement meaningful reforms.¹⁸ CTP cannot corroborate the veracity of these claims. *Amwaj's* reporting aligns with prior statements that Ghalibaf has made endorsing limited sociopolitical reforms in recent months, however.¹⁹ *The Wall Street Journal* additionally reported that Shamkhani discussed implementing unspecified "liberalizing measures" with reformist leaders in October 2022.²⁰

Anti-regime outlet *Iran International* circulated footage of Golestan Province Governor General Ali Mohammad Zanganeh requesting that local government officials refuse providing services to unveiled women. Zanganeh stressed that officials should avoid normalizing the behavior of women who do not adhere to state-imposed veiling standards.²¹ CTP previously assessed that the regime may be seeking alternative ways to enforce the mandatory hijab law, including employing an Orwellian surveillance-punishment model relying on collective punishment through shutting down non-compliant entities.²²

A website purporting to represent the Iranian Sunni community reported that Iranian authorities arrested a Sunni scholar in Khorasan Razavi Province on December 27. The website claimed that the Special Clerical Court in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province summoned Malouvi Abdul Nasser Ghadri after Ghadri read a statement from local Sunni leaders expressing support for ongoing, anti-regime protests and prominent Sunni cleric Moulana Abdol Hamid.²³ Abdol Hamid has become an increasingly vocal critic of the regime and has incited regular protest activity in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province in recent months.²⁴

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

There was nothing significant to report today.

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- ¹ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-28>
 - ² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/data-analysis-of-the-mahsa-amini-protest-movement>
 - ³ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-1>
 - ⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-russia-to-supply-with-iran-with-dozens-of-sukhoi-su-35-fighter-jets/>
 - ⁵ <https://t.me/maymun5/19877>
 - ⁶ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/cia-head-russia-looking-to-support-iran-posing-threat-to-us-allies-in-middle-east/>
 - ⁷ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1608473465429843970?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
<https://twitter.com/pouriazeraati/status/1608482159810977793?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
https://twitter.com/hra_news/status/1608455991963652096?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA
<https://twitter.com/iranwire/status/1608428793370140674?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1608412547119517698?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
 - ⁸ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1608465150725558279?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1608462693198925825?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
 - ⁹ https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1608487381329448967?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA;
<https://twitter.com/amirbaktiar/status/1608447374648610818?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA;>
<https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1608579822040616961?s=20&t=VFx5wQ-PrAdwwTUbwmf1w>
 - ¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/160848290599888961?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA;>
<https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1608501000263946244?s=20&t=97COPEkDyS9qFvga9hCFKw>
 - ¹¹ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1608469675712876546?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA;>
<https://twitter.com/KurdistanHRN/status/1608472794253123586?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA;>
<https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1608534851119972355?s=20&t=97COPEkDyS9qFvga9hCFKw>
 - ¹² <https://twitter.com/Vahid/status/1608455303384956928?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA;>
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<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1608461351604699136?s=20&t=Omc-KXNNNkC1X2dyojfZA>
 - ¹³ https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1608554055017668609?s=20&t=VbbcXoy8EsVnBrAcucA0Vg;
<https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1608535874337402880?s=20&t=BBDRGWbMTsQMNAxtkyaRHg>
 - ¹⁴ https://twitter.com/UYI_fa/status/1608163435551903744;
https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1608146303971909632?s=20&t=P_g6sIJmHYVQ2LAuwHzzfw;
https://twitter.com/javanane_hmd/status/1608177583384035328?s=20&t=P_g6sIJmHYVQ2LAuwHzzfw;
 - ¹⁵ <https://www.dotirna.ir/news/84983569>
 - ¹⁶ <https://www.dotirna.ir/news/84983569>
 - ¹⁷ <https://president.ir/fa/141661>
 - ¹⁸ <https://amwaj.media/article/inside-story-amid-protests-talk-of-reform-crosses-political-divide-in-iran>
 - ¹⁹ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-10;>
 - ²⁰ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-22>
 - ²¹ <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/160840622032258945?s=20&t=GX3udGZnvaOSO7ujJaQtg>
 - ²² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-23>
 - ²³ <http://sunnionline.us/farsi/2022/12/26053>
 - ²⁴ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-1> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-13>