



Iran Crisis Update, November 1

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November 1, 5:00 pm ET

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American and Saudi officials have warned of an imminent Iranian attack on Saudi Arabia and possibly Erbil, according to the Wall Street Journal.¹ These warnings accord with CTP's previous forecasts that Iran may attack American, Israeli, or Saudi targets in retaliation for their alleged roles in stoking the protests and facilitating the Shiraz terror attack.² Iranian leaders will likely seek to externalize their responses to protests caused entirely by regime domestic policies as part of their refusal to accept that their policies alone have caused this much unrest.

Such attacks could threaten American servicemembers in the Middle East. Iranian officials have historically accused the US of cooperating with Israeli and Kurdish agents in Iraqi Kurdistan to undermine regime stability.³ Tehran could use its drone and missile forces or its proxies to attack positions in Iraqi Kurdistan that it has accused the US and Israel of using to facilitate clandestine activities against the Islamic Republic. These positions could include the US presences at Erbil International Airport and the al Harir airbase.

The Iranians have more freedom to attack enemy targets in Iraq since the Iraqi government formation process ended. The newly approved Iraqi prime minister, Mohammad Shia al Sudani, is an Iran-friendly politician who will likely allow the IRGC and its proxies to expand their economic, political, and security influence throughout Iraq much more than his predecessor.⁴ Tehran risked derailing its efforts to install a friendly prime minister if it had escalated against the US in Iraq before the government formation process ended.

The regime could attack Saudi Arabia from Yemen, Iraq, or Iran itself. The IRGC has long furnished the al Houthi movement with advanced drone and missile systems to conduct attacks into Saudi Arabia.⁵ The expiration of the UN-mediated truce to the Yemeni civil war on October 2 again allows Iran and the Houthis the opportunity to conduct attacks into the Gulf states.⁶ The IRGC has increasingly instructed its Iraqi militias to conduct drone attacks into Saudi Arabia since May 2019 as well.⁷ The IRGC also conducted a large-scale drone and missile attack on Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq crude-processing

plant in September 2019, temporarily cutting Saudi oil production in half.⁸ Iran's support to the Houthis and Iraqi groups allows the IRGC to attack Saudi Arabia from multiple directions and thereby strain Saudi air defenses.

Key Takeaways

- **American and Saudi officials have warned of an imminent Iranian attack on Saudi Arabia and possibly Erbil, according to the Wall Street Journal.**
- **At least 30 protests took place in 15 cities across 11 provinces.**
- **Anti-regime outlet Iran International reported that the regime flew around 150 personnel from Kataib Hezbollah and other Iraqi proxies from Baghdad to Mashhad to support the protest crackdown. This report cannot be substantiated.**
- **Protesters have halted operations at some industrial and mining sites in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least 30 protests took place in 15 cities across 11 provinces on November 1. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

Dehloran, Ilam Province

- *Several dozen protesters set fires in the streets and chanted anti-regime slogans.⁹*
- *Footage shows several dozen regime security personnel advancing towards a group of protesters and firing tear gas. Additional footage shows several protesters attending to people wounded by security forces.¹⁰*

Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province

- *25-75 Khayyam University students protesting and chanting "we don't want spectators! Join our ranks!" likely on campus grounds.¹¹*
- *50-100 high school students protested and chanted "Mullahs get lost" on the school grounds.¹²*

Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province

- *Several dozen Ibn Sina High School students protested in the street and chanted "death to the dictator."¹³*
- *An undetermined number of protesters set a fire in the street and reportedly clashed with security forces.¹⁴*

Saghez, Kurdistan Province

- *Several dozen Saghez University students protested in the street.¹⁵*

Marivan, Kurdistan Province

- *A dozen likely high school students protested in the street and blocked traffic.¹⁶*
- *An undetermined number of protesters set fires in the street.¹⁷*

Nurabad, Lorestan Province

- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered in the streets. Protesters clashed with security forces to prevent security forces from conducting arrests.¹⁸*

Romeshgan, Lorestan Province

- *An undetermined number of protesters set a government building on fire.*¹⁹

Zabaka, Piranshahr Province

- *Several dozen locals and outsiders attended a funeral for protest martyr Kumar Darfatade.*²⁰

Tehran City, Tehran Province

- *Several dozen University of Tehran students protested on campus.*²¹
- *Protesters hung a sign stating “We swear by the blood of our comrades, we will stand until the end” over Azadegan Highway in Tehran.*²²
- *At least a dozen faculty and students gathered to protest students being prevented from entering campus at Shahid Beheshti University.*²³
- *Several dozen student protesters held a sit-in at the Tehran al-Zahra University.*²⁴
- *50-100 female students protest and chant “don’t be afraid, don’t be afraid, we are all together.”*²⁵
- *An undetermined number of protesters were heard chanting “this year, death of the army, death to the whole system” in Apadana.*²⁶
- *50-100 student protesters gathered outside Allameh Tabataba’i University and threatened to shut down the university if any students were threatened.*²⁷
- *An undetermined number of students from West Tehran University chanted “You are the Basiji army of ISIS.”*²⁸
- *Several dozen students from the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences gathered at the university and were seen chanting “freedom.”*²⁹
- *50-100 protesters gathered in Behest-e Zahrato to commemorate the 40-day anniversary of Siavash Mahmoudi’s death as a protest martyr and chanted anti-regime rhetoric.*³⁰
- *An undetermined number of protesters reportedly set up roadblocks and blocked traffic.*³¹

Zanjan City, Zanjan Province

- *One to two dozen students held a sit in at Zanjan University of Medical Sciences and chant “words, threats, advice are no longer effective.”*³²

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

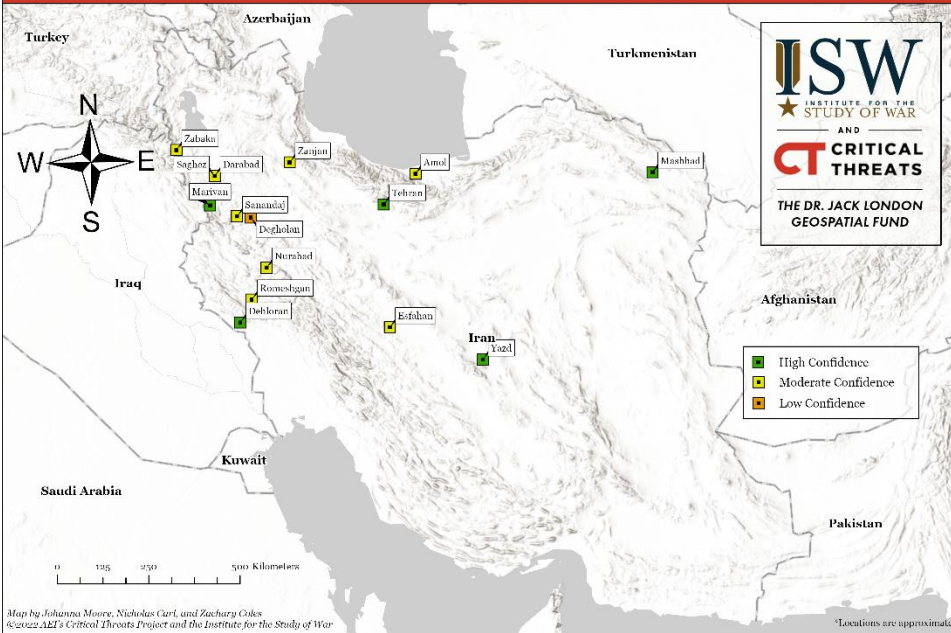
Darabad, Ardabil Province

- *An undetermined number of protesters were heard chanting “death to the dictator.”*³³

Dehgolan, Kurdistan Province

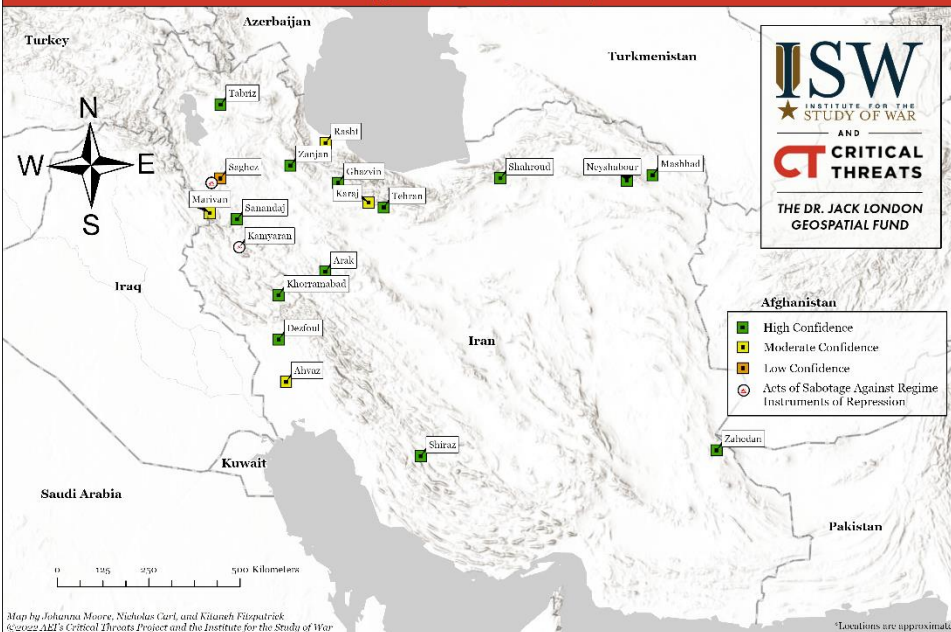
- *An undetermined number of students protested in the streets of Degholan.*³⁴

Protest Activity in Iran as of November 1, 5:00 PM ET



Protest Activity in Iran October 31

(Updated November 1, 12:00 PM ET)



CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that university students participated in anti-regime sit-ins in the following location:

Esfahan City, Esfahan Province

- *25-50 Esfahan University of Technology students chanted, held signs, and partially blocked the road.*³⁵

Amol, Mazandaran Province

- *One or two dozen protesters held a sit-in at Amol University.*³⁶

Tehran City, Tehran

- *50-100 students and faculty protesters held a sit-in at the Amir Kabir University of Technology to protest Ali Baradran's arrest.*³⁷

Yazd City, Yazd Province

- *Two dozen students held a sit-in for the 150+ students suspended and arrested during protests.*³⁸

IRGC South Khorasan Provincial Corps Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Mehdavi warned on October 30 that the Basij has restrained itself against protests but will stop doing so if protests continue.³⁹ Mehdavi commands the IRGC and Basij personnel in South Khorasan Province and is therefore responsible for overseeing the crackdown there. His remarks are consistent with the harsher rhetoric that Iranian political and security leaders have begun toward the protests in recent days.

Anti-regime outlet Iran International reported that the regime flew around 150 personnel from Kataib Hezbollah and other Iraqi proxies from Baghdad to Mashhad on October 31 to support the protest crackdown.⁴⁰ Kataib Hezbollah is one of Iran's most loyal and well-equipped militias in Iraq. Israeli media similarly reported on October 16 that the IRGC is using members of Lebanese Hezbollah and Iraqi proxies to suppress protests in Iran.⁴¹ CTP cannot verify these reports and has not seen evidence to corroborate these claims.

If these reports are true, the regime is likely using these proxies to mitigate the bandwidth constraints of the security forces.⁴² Incorporating foreign militias into the internal security forces would likely serve two primary functions: reinforcing the security apparatus with additional manpower and mitigating the risk of widespread dissent among the state security services. Iranian leaders fear disloyalty and insubordination among security personnel ordered to repress their fellow citizens. Foreign proxy fighters are less prone to insubordination because they lack the personal connections to Iran's neighborhoods that the native IRGC and LEC members have.

The Intelligence and Security Ministry announced on October 31 the arrest of six accomplices of the gunman who attacked the Shiraz shrine.⁴³ The ministry described the individuals as part of the gunman's "terrorist team." Intelligence and Security Minister Esmail Khatib later announced the arrest of a seventh individual.

Protesters have halted operations at some industrial and mining sites in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.⁴⁴ These sites include a gold mine and gold purification plant among other nearby industrial facilities. Protesters demonstrated against the regime crackdown in Zahedan. A

provincial official, Mahmoud Reza Rahmatian, called on the regime to end the protests and warned that the closure of the sites could reduce investor confidence.

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

Iran is likely supporting Russian-led efforts to reach a political settlement to the ongoing-conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. President Ebrahim Raisi hosted Armenia Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on November 1 to discuss these negotiations.⁴⁵ Pashinyan previously traveled to Sochi on October 31 and met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to discuss the conflict.⁴⁶ Iranian leaders likely aim for a political settlement to disrupt the Azerbaijani efforts to connect Azerbaijan proper to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic via a land corridor.⁴⁷ Iran's opposition to this land corridor has fueled tensions between Baku and Tehran in recent weeks, as CTP previously reported.⁴⁸

Azerbaijani's State Security Service announced the arrest of a group of citizens who received funds and training from Iranian intelligence on November 1, which will likely further strain Iranian-Azerbaijani relations.⁴⁹ The State Security Service identified the group as the Muslim Unity Movement.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-u-s-on-high-alert-after-warning-of-imminent-iranian-attack-11667319274>

² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-6;> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-27>

³ [www dot tasnim dot ot com/fa/news/1400/06/30/2576194](http://www.dot-tasnim.com/fa/news/1400/06/30/2576194)

⁴ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-21>

⁵ https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/yemens-houthis-and-the-expansion-of-irans-axis-of-resistance/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=zimmerman

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemen-truce-expires-un-keeps-pushing-broader-deal-2022-10-03/>

⁷ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-saudi-pipeline-attacks-originated-from-iraq-11561741133>

⁸ https://www.voanews.com/a/middle-east_saudi-arabia-drone-attacks-halted-half-its-oil-production/6175830.html

⁹ https://twitter.com/vahid_1987/status/1587521188208803840?s=20&t=O3uX40pV4WNR1vtiESryWw

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/Iran_Padeshahie/status/1587559663188733952?s=20&t=O3uX40pV4WNR1vtiESryWw;

<https://twitter.com/irannewsjavanan/status/1587553659918995458?s=20&t=O3uX40pV4WNR1vtiESryWw>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/gholamkhshani/status/1587472071835222017?s=20&t=O3uX40pV4WNR1vtiESryWw>

¹² <https://twitter.com/Mojahedineng/status/1587484612732796935?s=20&t=O3uX40pV4WNR1vtiESryWw>

¹³ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587358575709519874?s=20&t=6o6l7-GPxDyUIvTjtBOZvg;>

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587418099376087040>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587409496686706688>

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587415039736258561>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587466309809459201>

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587383608876171266>

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587463271992418305?s=20&t=q1NSdmn59T3c7u-PqBS3yQ>

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1587364494614925313>

²¹ https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1587418583382036482?s=20&t=f_8EUXTI7BKvgAYXC19jOg

²² <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587317114184105984>

²³ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587352464512229376> ;

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587380538494558208>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587352706062196736>

²⁵ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587379271860887553>

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- 34 <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587469841610457088>
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- 37 <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587355870438084609> ;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587356327524945920>
- 38 https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1587363973216833543?s=20&t=f_8EUXTI7BKvgAYXC19jOg ;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1587351696631635969>
- 39 <https://www.etemadonline dot com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-9/580209-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B6%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86>
- 40 <https://www.iranintl.com/202211012249>
- 41 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-17>
- 42 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/whatever-it-takes-to-end-it-irans-shift-toward-more-oppressive-governance>
- 43 <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/553218>
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- 45 <http://www.president dot ir/fa/140532>
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- 48 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-17>
- 49 <https://www.jpost dot com/international/article-721211>