



Iran Crisis Update, January 3, 2023
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The organizational structure of the protest movement is continuing to evolve and morph as its leaders try to cohere the movement. Several different umbrella organizations for the smaller protest groups have emerged in recent months. These umbrella organizations include the Iranian Neighborhood Youth Union (INYU) and the similarly named Iranian Neighborhood United Front (INUF), among others. The INYU and INUF have both circulated lists of their members in recent days, highlighting how some protest groups belong to both umbrella organizations, and other protest groups belong to only one.¹ This apparent disunity may indicate that different protest leaders are vying for influence within the movement. This possibly internal struggle is a somewhat natural consequence of the growing cohesion within the protest movement. It does not mean that the protest movement is irrevocably divided but is a challenge protest leaders must overcome.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei have both expressed concern about the Iranian economy in recent days, possibly indicating their doubts that President Ebrahim Raisi can improve the economic situation. Ghalibaf stated that he is trying to reach a consensus within the regime on “modernizing regime governance” to solve economic issues.² Ghalibaf praised Raisi for replacing the Central Bank of Iran governor on December 29 but added that further “structural, policymaking, and managerial reforms” are necessary. Ejei similarly stated that the regime does not have a coherent economic plan.³ The Iranian rial has depreciated significantly in recent months, and social media users have claimed that some Iranian banks do not have enough hard currency for cash withdrawals.⁴ Ghalibaf’s and Ejei’s comments follow previous reports of frustration with the Raisi administration. The Fars News Agency bulletin that leaked in November 2022 reported that Ghalibaf told Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei that the Raisi administration is indecisive and unorganized.⁵

Unidentified individuals shot and killed an IRGC member outside his home in Tehran Province on January 3.⁶ The IRGC commanded local Basij members in his neighborhood. Around 73 security personnel have died since the protests began in September 2022.⁷

Key Takeaways

- **The organizational structure of the protest movement is continuing to evolve and morph as its leaders try to cohere the movement.**
- **Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei have both expressed concern about the Iranian economy in recent days, possibly indicating their doubts that President Ebrahim Raisi can improve the economic situation.**
- **Unidentified individuals shot and killed an IRGC member outside his home in Tehran Province.**
- **At least two protests took place in two cities across two provinces.**
- **The LEC clashed with an armed “terrorist team” in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.**
- **The IRGC Intelligence Organization seized 700 kilograms of explosive materials in Gharchak, Tehran Province.**

Anti-Regime Protests

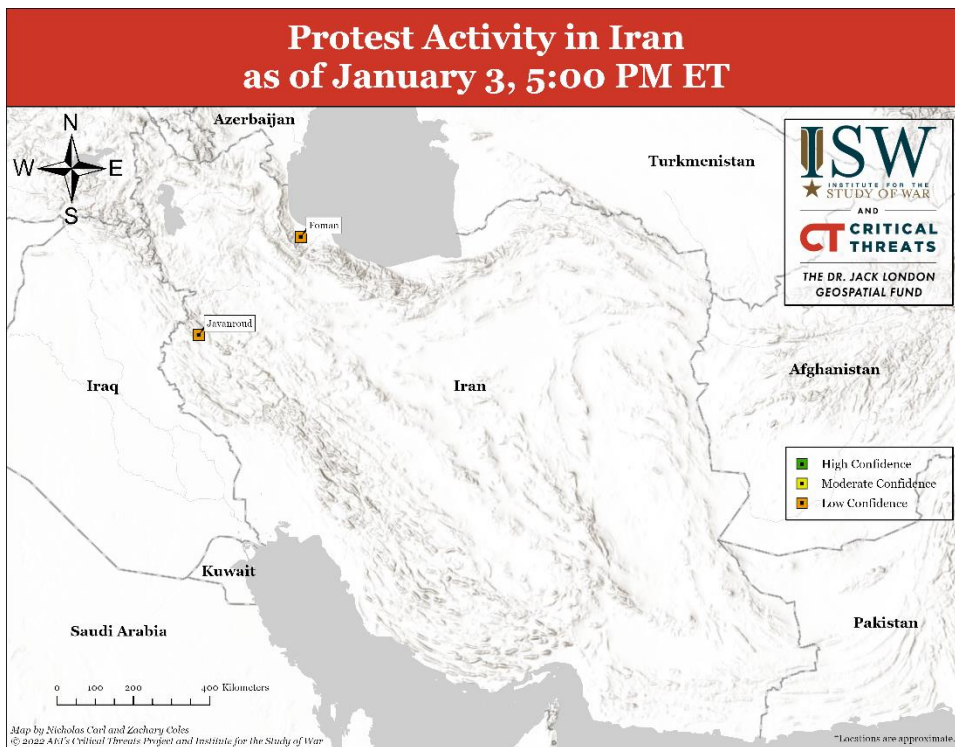
At least two protests took place in two cities across two provinces on January 3. CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

Fouman, Gilan Province⁸

- Size: Small to Medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Protester Activity: Protesters gathered for the 40-day commemoration ceremony for protest martyr Mehran Basir Tavana

Javanroud, Kermanshah Province⁹

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Students



Protest coordinators and organizations circulated calls for demonstrations and strikes on the following days:

January 6-8¹⁰

- Type: demonstrations and strikes
- Location: countrywide

January 8¹¹

- Type: placing flowers on graves of citizens whom the regime has killed
- Location: countrywide

The Law Enforcement Command (LEC) clashed with an armed “terrorist team” in Sistan and Baluchistan Province on January 3.¹² The LEC reported that it has arrested the gunmen and accused them of attacking police patrols in recent weeks.

The IRGC Intelligence Organization seized 700 kilograms of explosive materials in Gharchak, Tehran Province, on January 3.¹³ The IRGC Intelligence Organization also arrested an individual during the seizure. The explosive materials included lead oxide and aluminum powder, which the BBC reported is commonly used to produce homemade fireworks in Iran. Protesters have used these materials to produce rudimentary hand grenades as well.¹⁴

An explosion occurred at a steel factory in Garmsar, Semnan Province, on January 3.¹⁵ The explosion killed one and injured five.

Prominent Sunni cleric Moulana Abdol Hamid tweeted on January 3 criticizing security forces for attacking mourners at ceremonies commemorating killed protesters.¹⁶ Abdol Hamid added that citizens using anti-regime protest chants does not justify regime brutality.

Iranian journalist Saeed Aganji has continued tweeting on intra-regime infighting to replace Ali Shamkhani as Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) secretary. Aganji previously claimed on December 30 that Asghar Ali Hejazi—a senior political and security adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei—blocked former IRGC Intelligence Organization Chief Hossein Taeb from becoming SNSC secretary.¹⁷ Aganji later claimed on January 3 that at least three different human networks in the IRGC (the Khuzestan circle, the Mashhad circle, and the Shiraz circle) are competing to install their preferred candidate.¹⁸ Western analysts commonly divide senior IRGC officers into these human networks based on their hometowns or local connections.¹⁹ These human networks are described in greater detail below. Aganji suggested that the Khuzestan circle prefers Gholam Ali Rashid, the Mashhad circle prefers Saeed Jalili, and the Shiraz circle prefers Ahmad Vahidi. CTP cannot verify these rumors and is treating them with skepticism.

Khuzestan circle:²⁰

- Former IRGC Commander and current Vice President for Economic Affairs Major General Mohsen Rezaei
- SNSC Secretary RADM Ali Shamkhani
- Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters Major General Gholam Ali Rashid

Mashhad circle:²¹

- Parliament Speaker Brigadier General Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf
- IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani
- Former Basij Commander Brigadier General Alireza Afshar

Shiraz circle:²²

- Interior Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi
- Former Basij Chief Brigadier General Gholam Hossein Gheyb Parvar
- Former Roads and Urban Development Minister Brigadier General Rostam Ghassemi (now deceased)
- IRGC Sarallah Regional Operational Headquarters Deputy Commander Brigadier General Hossein Nejat
- IRGC Quds Force Deputy Commander Brigadier General Reza Fallah Zadeh
- Expediency Discernment Council Secretary Brigadier General Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah delivered a speech to commemorate the third anniversary of the US killing Qassem Soleimani.²³ He offered reassurances that he has recovered after canceling a speech on December 30 due to health concerns.

Iranian proxies in Iraq and Syria did not attack US forces on the three-year anniversary of the US killing Qassem Soleimani.

¹ https://t.me/gor_javanan/119; https://twitter.com/bmahalat_ir/status/1610300028777537538

² <https://www.etemadonline.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-9/589497-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%85-%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%DB%8C-%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AD%DA%A9%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C>

³ <https://www.sharghdaily.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-100/866200-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%AF-%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%AF-%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%85-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%85>

⁴ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-january-2-2023>

⁵ <https://www.iranintl.com/202211304302>

⁶ www.fa.alalam dot ir/news/6496783

⁷ <https://twitter.com/Alfoneh/status/1609532809923772416>

⁸ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1610316686137098252?s=20&t=Ylde-YcywqFW2nanacfmrQ>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1610352991093014530?s=20&t=zm2Uy8LkfdevFqtLqbO-Gg>

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1609883019308843010?s=20&t=SW6ER8cf604U_gsZY_kmow

¹¹ https://twitter.com/esmaeilion/status/1609663751879270401?s=20&t=bKh2ncamNpLW_K6WB4KAKw

¹² <https://www.irna dot ir/news/84988397>

¹³ www.farsnews dot ir/tehran/news/14011013001030

¹⁴ https://t.me/hmd_javanan/251

¹⁵ <https://isna dot ir/xdN4Hd>

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/AbdolhamidNet/status/1610345961548812288>

¹⁷ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-31>

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/SaeedAganji/status/1610319553619263490>

¹⁹ <https://institute.global/policy/irgc-age-ebrahim-raisi>

²⁰ <https://institute.global/policy/irgc-age-ebrahim-raisi>

²¹ <https://institute.global/policy/irgc-age-ebrahim-raisi>

²² <https://institute.global/policy/irgc-age-ebrahim-raisi>

²³ <https://today dot lorientlejour dot com/article/1323342/no-reason-to-worry-nasrallah-reassures-his-supporters-after-health-related-rumors.html>