

Iran Crisis Update, November 3

Nicholas Carl, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Zachary Coles, and Frederick W. Kagan
November 3, 6:00 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](#).

Contributor: LJ Trevette

Violent clashes erupted between security forces and protesters in Karaj, Alborz Province on November 3. Mourners and protesters gathered around Karaj, which is just outside Tehran City, to commemorate the 40th day since the regime killed Hadis Najafi.[1] Security forces blocked roads leading to the cemetery where Najafi is buried and fired live ammunition and tear gas at protesters.[2] Protesters attacked security forces stations and vehicles.[3] Protesters stabbed and killed a Basij member and injured five Law Enforcement Command (LEC) officers.[4] Protesters also severely injured a cleric.[5]

IRGC Telegram channels characterized the protesters as “domestic ISIS” to demonize them and frame them as rioters and terrorists to the rest of the population.[6] Iran similarly framed all the Syrian opposition as ISIS in the Syrian civil war to turn domestic and international audiences against the opposition and rally support for despot Bashar al Assad.[7] The IRGC is feeding the narrative that the US is stoking the protests by referring to protesters as ISIS because Iranian leaders frequently argue that the US created ISIS.[8]

Protesters coordinated extensively to respond to the regime crackdown in Karaj, possibly reflecting growing organization within the movement. Some transported stones via truck to throw at security forces.[9] Others made Molotov cocktails.[10] Protesters lined up behind barriers to throw stones and possibly Molotov cocktails at security personnel.[11] Protesters also built a wall of cinderblocks to block a street.[12] This organization to resist repression in Karaj resembles the tactics that protesters used against security forces in Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province on October 28.[13]

The regime may be struggling to reach a consensus on how to manage the protests at this stage. The regime has not seemingly deployed the full extent of its internal security services to the crackdown yet despite the warning from Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Major General Hossein Salami calling for the immediate end of protests on October 30.[14] Some Iranian officials likely recognize that conducting an even more brutal crackdown will produce more secular martyrs and 40-day ceremonies around which protesters will rally. President Ebrahim Raisi also may lack the decisiveness to manage the crackdown competently, although he is not the only senior decisionmaker involved in the protest suppression.

American and Persian Gulf officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that the likelihood of an imminent Iranian attack on Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries has decreased but is not gone entirely.[15] American and Saudi officials previously warned that Iran would attack Saudi Arabia and possibly Erbil in retaliation for the perceived role of the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia in stoking the ongoing protests.[16] Tehran will nevertheless likely conduct a dramatic attack abroad--likely with drones and missiles--in retaliation for the Shiraz attack in the coming days or weeks for the domestic Iranian audience.

Key Takeaways

- **Violent clashes erupted between security forces and protesters in Karaj, Alborz Province on November 3.**
- **Protesters coordinated extensively to respond to the regime crackdown in Karaj, possibly reflecting growing organization within the movement.**
- **The regime may be struggling to reach a consensus on how to manage the protests at this stage.**
- **American and Persian Gulf officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that the likelihood of an imminent Iranian attack on Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries has decreased but is not gone entirely.**
- **At least 22 protests took place in 17 cities across 12 provinces.**
- **The IRGC Intelligence Organization arrested three members of an “anti-security team” in Ilam City, Ilam Province.**

- **LEC Sistan and Baluchistan Provincial Commander Ahmad Taheri announced that unidentified gunmen shot and killed a Shia cleric in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province.**
- **Skirmishes may erupt between pro- and anti-regime protesters on November 4.**
- **The Artesh may have prepared its forces to participate in protest suppression in Zahedan.**
- **An IRGC Telegram channel circulated on November 3 an op-ed calling for the IRGC Quds Force to establish a 30-kilometer-deep buffer zone into Iraqi Kurdistan to counter anti-regime Kurdish militants there.**
- **Turkey reaffirmed its support for Azerbaijan amid the growing tensions between Tehran and Baku.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least 22 protests took place in 17 cities across 12 provinces on November 2. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

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

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

- See above for protest characterization.

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

- *Security personnel shooting at undetermined number of protesters. Security personnel fleeing from dozens of protesters throwing rocks. It is unclear if these interactions occurred in the same part of the city or at the same time.*
- *Undetermined number of protesters documented on a city street.[17]*

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

- *One or two dozen protesters gathered in Esfahan streets and chanted “death to the dictator.” Footage from social media shows many protesters who appear to be in high school.[18]*

***Fouladshahr, Esfahan Province (population: approximately 88,462)**

- *Large crowds gathered at an unspecified cemetery to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed Mahsa Mougoui for participating in anti-regime protests and chanted anti-regime slogans. Hundreds—likely over a thousand—similarly protested on city streets. Footage circulating on social media shows security personnel running away from protesters. Some social media users reported that clashes between security personnel and protesters left two security officers unconscious. Security personnel reportedly shot a protester in the head.[19]*

Fasa, Fars Province (population: approximately 104,825)

- *Roughly 75-100 protesters chanted “you’re the pervert, you’re the sleaze, I’m a freethinking woman” and “death to Khamenei” on a city street. Gunfire is audible in later protest footage.[20]*

***Ghazvin City, Ghazvin Province (population: approximately 402,748)**

- *Large crowds gathered at an unspecified location in Ghazvin to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed Javad Heydari for participating in anti-regime protests. Female protesters were documented dancing without their veils. An undetermined number of protesters similarly protested on city streets, including Khayyam Street, later that evening. Some protesters set fires on a city street.[21]*

***Bandar Anzali, Gilan Province (population approximately 118,564)**

- *Over 100 protesters gathered at an unspecified location in Bandar Anzali to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed Amir Nowrouzi for participating in anti-regime protests and chanted anti-regime slogans.[22]*

***Rasht, Gilan Province (population approximately 679,995)**

- *Large crowds gathered at an unspecified cemetery in Rasht to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed Behnam Laikpour for participating in anti-regime protests and chanted anti-regime slogans including “woman, life, freedom.” An undetermined number of protesters similarly protested and lit*

*fires on city streets later that evening. Footage circulating on social media shows security personnel fleeing from protester throwing rocks.***[23]**

***Eslamabad-e Gharb, Kermanshah Province (population: approximately 90,599)**

- *Large crowds gathered at an unspecified cemetery in Eslamabad-e Gharb to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed Saeed Mohammadi for participating in anti-regime protests and chanted anti-regime slogans including “death to the dictator.”***[24]**

Baneh, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 115,325)

- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered in Baneh streets and set fires in the road.***[25]**

Kamyaran, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 55,077)

- *At least a dozen protesters gathered in Kamyaran streets and threw Molotov cocktails at security forces.***[26]**

Marivan, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 136,654)

- *One or two dozen Marivan Azad University students protested on campus and chanted “students will die, but they will not be humiliated.”***[27]**
- *An undetermined number of protesters reportedly set fires in Marivan streets and chanted “death to the Islamic republic.”***[28]**

***Amol, Mazandaran Province (population: approximately 237,528)**

- *Large crowds gathered at an unspecified cemetery in Amol to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed Ghazaleh Chalavi for participating in anti-regime protests and chanted anti-regime slogans including “my dear Ghazaleh, I will avenge your blood.” Over 100 mourners similarly protested on city streets.***[29]**

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

- *Hundreds gathered to commemorate seven days since security personnel killed Merhshad Shahidi for participating in anti-regime protests. Mourners chanted anti-regime slogans including “don’t be scared, we’re all in this together.” Mourners additionally marched in the city streets.***[30]**

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

- *Dozens of protesters chanted “don’t be scared, we’re all in this together” on a city street in Nazi Abad in southern Tehran.***[31]**
- *Unspecified number of protesters gathered in Tehran Pars in northeastern Tehran.***[32]**
- *Roughly fifty protesters chanted “death to the dictator” in Sa’adat Abad in Northern Tehran. Social media users reported skirmishes between Iranian LEC personnel and plainclothes Basij. CTP cannot corroborate this rumor.***[33]**
- *Footage circulating on social media suggests that security personnel shot birdshot at a two-year-old child at an unspecified location in Tehran.***[34]**

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

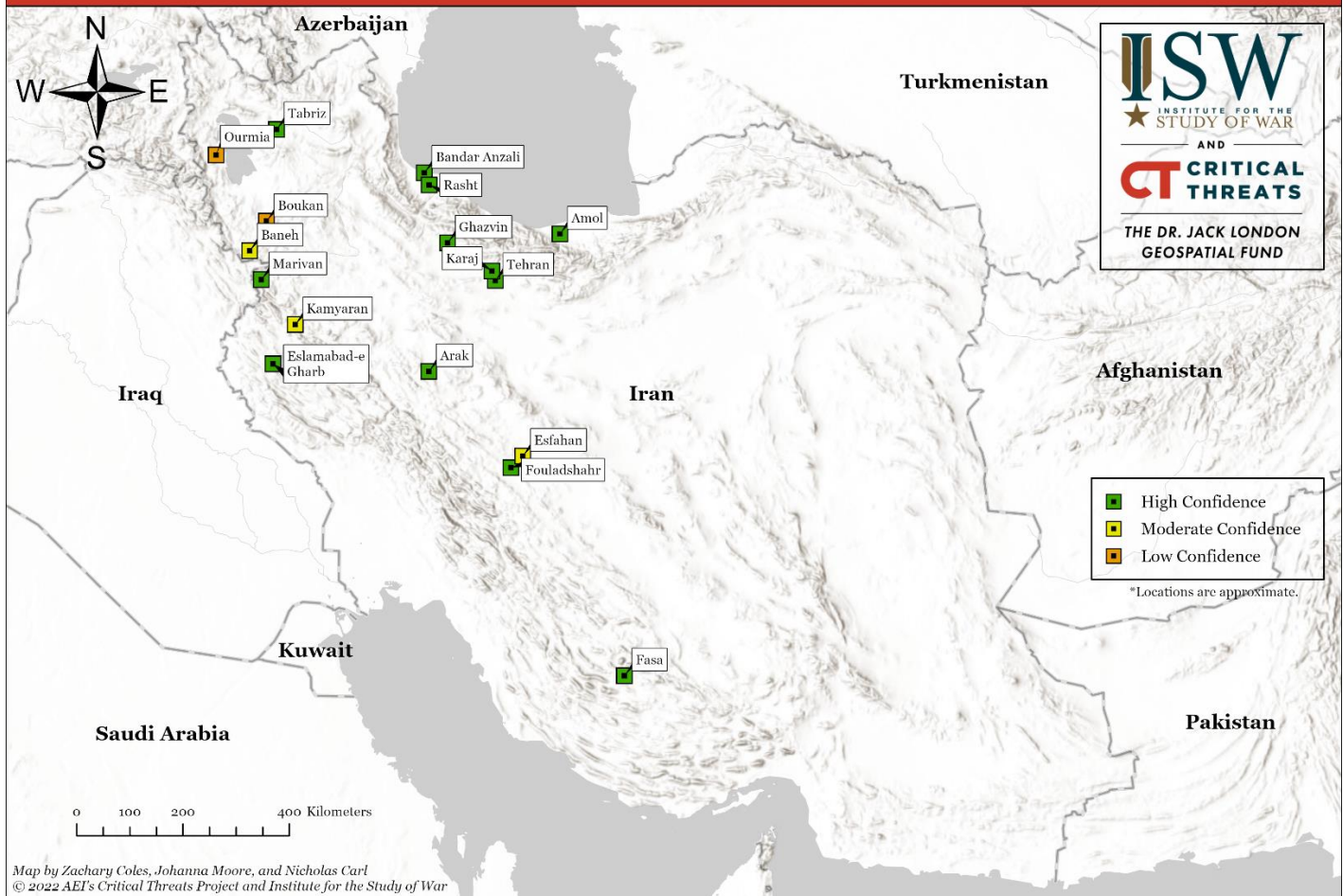
Boukan, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 193,501)

- *An undetermined number of protesters set fires and established obstacles with debris on a road that connects Boukan to Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province.***[35]**

Ourmia, West Azerbaijan Province (population: approximately 736,224)

- *Footage shows fires on city streets, possibly suggesting protesters’ attempts to prevent security personnel from entering a future protest area.***[36]**

Protest Activity in Iran as of November 3, 6:00 PM ET



The IRGC Intelligence Organization arrested three members of an “anti-security team” in Ilam City, Ilam Province on November 2.[37] The IRGC Intelligence Organization claimed that the individuals were preparing hand grenades and incendiary weapons to attack military and security sites. The IRGC Intelligence Organization also accused the individuals of having ties to unspecified foreign countries. Protesters have attacked a Basij base in Ilam Province with Molotov cocktails on at least one occasion on October 15.[38]

Intelligence and Security Minister Esmail Khatib issued a statement vowing to punish protesters on November 3.[39]

LEC Sistan and Baluchistan Provincial Commander Ahmad Taheri announced that unidentified gunmen shot and killed a Shia cleric in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province on November 3.[40] This attack is part of an uptick in anti-regime militancy in Sistan and Baluchistan Province in recent days. Unidentified gunmen attacked LEC officers in Iranshahr and Khash on October 30 and November 2, respectively, as CTP previously reported.[41]

Skirmishes may erupt between pro- and anti-regime protesters on November 4. Anti-regime protest organizations have called for countrywide demonstrations on November 4, which marks the 40th day since the regime killed several protesters across Iran.[42] Large-scale protests have consistently erupted around the 40th-day memorial services for killed protesters in recent days. Large-scale and violent protests have become particularly common in Zahedan on Fridays as well and will likely occur again on November 4.[43] The regime has planned countrywide demonstrations for November 4 as well to condemn the US and commemorate the shah’s brutal crackdown on student protesters in 1978.[44] The IRGC has described the planned demonstrations as signifying Iran defeating the Western-Israeli hybrid war against the Islamic Republic.

The Artesh may have prepared its forces to participate in protest suppression in Zahedan on November 4.

Artesh Commander Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi traveled to Zahedan on November 2 ostensibly to inspect air defense elements stationed there.[45] Mousavi condemned the protests during the inspection. The timing of his visit to Zahedan is noteworthy given the growing anti-regime militancy there and planned protests for November 4. The regime may seek to involve the Artesh in protest suppression to mitigate the security forces' bandwidth constraints or apply more extreme force against demonstrators.

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

An IRGC Telegram channel circulated on November 3 an op-ed calling for the IRGC Quds Force to establish a 30-kilometer-deep buffer zone into Iraqi Kurdistan to counter anti-regime Kurdish militants there.

[46] The op-ed accused the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other non-state actors of seeking to erode Iran's territorial integrity and exploit its natural resources.[47] The op-ed particularly noted the threat that anti-regime Kurdish militants in Iraqi Kurdistan pose to the Islamic Republic. Iranian officials have historically accused the US and Israel of supporting Kurdish militias against the regime and using them to stoke unrest.[48] The op-ed cited Turkey's efforts to establish a buffer zone in northern Syria to argue that Iran has the same right to establish a buffer zone in Iraq. It is unclear to what extent this op-ed reflects the calculus of IRGC leadership.

Turkey reaffirmed its support for Azerbaijan amid the growing tensions between Tehran and Baku.

Turkish Army Major General Bahtiyar Ersay observed the ongoing Azerbaijani military exercise near the Iran-Azerbaijan border with Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov on November 3.[49] Azerbaijan announced the exercise, which includes air, artillery, and special forces elements, on November 2.[50] Baku is responding to the recent IRGC military exercise and Iranian threats toward Azerbaijan.[51]

Nour News Agency tweeted on November 3 claiming that Israel has established a psychological warfare headquarters in Bahrain to stoke protests in Iran.

[52] Nour News Agency is affiliated with the Supreme National Security Council—the regime body responsible for advising the supreme leader on defense and foreign policies.

[1] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63498820>

[2] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588102614268481537?s=20&t=js9EoHgbTmMqDijDM-cr3Q>; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588090096162668544?s=20&t=eU2kZrBiB2fsXkowk669FQ>

[3] <https://twitter.com/mamlekate/status/1588119634036801541?s=20>;
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588120165077905409>;
<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588165491847143424?s=20>;
<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588108803467264001?s=20>
; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588091458455851010?s=20>

[4] <http://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/08/12/2798495>

[5] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588139479130406915>

[6] <https://t.me/SEPAHCYBERY/55584>; https://t.me/Sepah_lr/72069

[7] <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/takfiris-tehran-sectarian-face-iranian-counterterrorism>

[8] <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202209033945>; <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-khamenei-isis-is-syria-soleimani/28869633.html>

[9] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588155700156538880>

[10] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588178058208772096>

[11] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588151217645133831>

[12] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588113417063305224>

[13] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-28>

- [14] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-30>
- [15] https://www.wsj.com/articles/threat-of-iran-attack-has-eased-u-s-and-persian-gulf-officials-say-11667502268?mod=world_major_2_pos1
- [16] <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudi-arabia-u-s-on-high-alert-after-warning-of-imminent-iranian-attack-11667319274>
- [17] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588211919781068803?s=20&t=JeDwtz48uS-nFksnEf55GA> ; https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1588214597483651072?s=20&t=_u2n2OadEs7rNtqi1KX67Q ; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588285499772653568?s=20&t=mNs25sordye3rR9HdN05Cg>
- [18] <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1588202405308821506?s=20&t=LLJDAoLTmcOCBC9HkCXcQ>
- [19] https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1588201512928436224?s=20&t=yZORlx_m5IO_lsVdoTjZzA ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588148864820846593?s=20&t=vj7vETTCJ9lIYKb7dH-KQw> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588153217954861057?s=20&t=oWFZkxonZo3Ip4EkXg2QWg> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588167575371886592?s=20&t=L3fRzh4VHcDYCRMqzehk6Q> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588175262109220865?s=20&t=7ADxk9wxCaskmldu8YPfeA> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588225345483952131?s=20&t=1zvHlGaYlISQKK322wU8Pw> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588252367618654209?s=20&t=r-qWCDEoIciP6EhZQgCaUA> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588176352666341376?s=20>
- [20] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588218276924067840?s=20&t=Y1FikzFT6tUakOyD9OcgJQ> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588214459205668864?s=20&t=xc8aMSSZa4x1pt75djsEQQ> ; <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1588244362546536448?s=20&t=HJNtlbvo21eES7ozLCOQg>
- [21] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588182323140272128?s=20&t=h881f8rDuwHXsVHQnlxV7g> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588238101167673344?s=20&t=YscEAIvju4bc3iK2rxhXAQ> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588234493864955910?s=20&t=z14I19yEm8cTawTnICWdbQ> ; https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588238101167673344?s=20&t=sJEocb8YDwanh208KYD_ZA ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588145193127231492?s=20&t=oBl2ueSOEtvWpJdCMZCjww> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588154905658892290?s=20&t=78AjawNWJfF4F2KOY3-ebQ> ; https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588164592374423553?s=20&t=APQFXLv61r4lLla4_tA5XQ
- [22] https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588162129924100098?s=20&t=b_gUXPZrdERnaAfnLvzGow ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588163675378094080?s=20&t=xpiwq4hGM4A981Nin38dBQ>
- [23] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588162953852985350?s=20&t=R6hgb9cwSpKCRoBL8JKiBQ> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588175381558763521?s=20&t=YscvYnncoAMch5SnDnN55g> ; <https://twitter.com/ToukAlii/status/1588208954160685057?s=20&t=GEqeq90V2-IQytMB-TM6Hbg> ; <https://twitter.com/ToukAlii/status/1588211630910963718?s=20&t=c1M8q1ttvqEPK42-KCW7Cg> ; https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588226335352274944?s=20&t=vqq6PnTg1NNxIshZULKa_w ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588244458193027073?s=20&t=AaORChA7FT1mPL97PBqnbq>
- [24] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588195745710194688?s=20&t=foyZOWGzPZzH9AKBvZn9wQ> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588195808456970241?s=20&t=iz4Tu67QxOedWm7kJrFVw>
- [25] https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1588200615616086018?s=20&t=RWPysRVBg85fZTg2EgE_LNg
- [26] <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588282832740577280?s=20&t=ElmlqH8iYBHXN23Om404rQ>
- [27] <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588069440691789825?s=20&t=10QUoMl5nXvXn4yBTJncuA> ; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588083252740472833?s=20&t=e7916JsxUGR685wuLcwyKw>
- [28] https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1588224534112784384?s=20&t=7w3gK_KwXobng4VmC2hsHg
- [29] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588154029233799169?s=20&t=rWCmkhYD-WWwp7u8tU3lflw> ; <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588174053118181376?s=20&t=Tg81gvlFdTdyVQnHALsvoQ>

- [30] <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588120728448163841?s=20&t=ZDMrt359ZVaUeeRIfvejmw> ; https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588138051892649986?s=20&t=87H_LOwbeowDQMT6r_TwFA ; https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588159616067817474?s=20&t=123BsBLi8_R_chNnDkFifA
- [31] https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588212759036137472?s=20&t=pbVLhH6GGwca1tAsE_iBCA
- [32] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588224531847647233?s=20&t=8n8vL-NLoZ8Sm3Za10-5sA>
- [33] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588230748573782019?s=20&t=PmIfaNrTNu2hV9Ynbagogg> ; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1588273066001342464?s=20&t=p20KLiKOFCTZmX44kJWdIA>
- [34] <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1588221811963138050?s=20&t=wvxlmh4v9LC5Qsumu7mohA>
- [35] https://twitter.com/Hengaw_English/status/1587887049604206592?s=20&t=vzqQS5SDiOoJy3zNhFdIIQ
- [36] <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1588245325286105088?s=20&t=kFgrBchwqOLB39Sn6xiIFQ>
- [37] <https://www.yjc dot news/fa/news/8274191/>
- [38] <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1582340818614226945?s=20&t=EaXVfVVSXiYoXRDoZY9FWlg>
- [39] <https://www.isna.ir/news/1401081208404>
- [40] <https://www.irna dot ir/news/84931882>
- [41] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-2>
- [42] https://twitter.com/iran_javanan/status/1588251961832636416 ; <https://twitter.com/AlinejadMasih/status/1588285225485770752>
- [43] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-28>
- [44] <http://www.defapress dot ir/fa/news/553910>
- [45] <http://www.defapress dot ir/fa/news/553905>
- [46] <https://t.me/SEPAHCYBERY/55601>
- [47] <http://eghtesadsalem dot com/?p=53623>
- [48] www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1400/07/06/2580227 ; www.defapress dot ir/fa/news/477599
- [49] <https://haqqin dot az/news/264955>
- [50] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-2>
- [51] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-19>
- [52] <https://twitter.com/nournewsen/status/1588154536811716609>