



Iran Crisis Update, October 23
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Iranian university and high school students are sustaining the momentum of the ongoing anti-regime protest movement, leading the demonstrations into their 37th consecutive day. Iranian students led 15 of 16 documented protests on October 23.¹ Some students are challenging regime regulations within academic spaces. Sharif University students reportedly repelled Iranian security forces trying to enforce gender segregation on campus on October 23, for instance.² The surge in student protest activity on October 23 compared to recent days suggests that students remain capable of successfully coordinating countrywide demonstrations despite intensifying regime censorship and disruptions to telecommunications.

Some Iranian teachers are publicly supporting student protesters. Iranian teachers in at least nine cities in five provinces participated in strikes condemning the regime's detention of and violence toward high school protesters on October 23.³ The Iranian Educators Trade Union Organization called for additional countrywide strikes on October 24.⁴

Iranian officials are increasingly framing educational institutions as the nuclei of anti-regime sentiment and the ongoing unrest. An Iranian parliamentarian stated that Iran's enemies are using Iranian schools to foment unrest on October 23, echoing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's address on October 19.⁵ Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Major General Hossein Salami similarly framed Iranian schools as an ideological battlefield on October 16.⁶

A senior Iranian Sunni cleric—Maulvi Abdol Hamid—may emerge as a local protest leader in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province. Abdol Hamid is a historically vocal regime critic and the Sunni religious leader in Zahedan. Abdol Hamid and regime officials have rhetorically clashed in recent days over the regime's brutal protest crackdown in Zahedan on September 30.⁷ Abdol Hamid criticized Khamenei during a Friday sermon on October 21 after which hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Zahedan.⁸ The IRGC and Interior Ministry separately accused Abdol Hamid of instigating the protests during his sermon.⁹ Abdol Hamid responded to the IRGC and Interior Ministry on October 23, reaffirming his support for the protesters and calling for the arrest of the individuals responsible for the crackdown.¹⁰ Abdol Hamid also criticized President Ebrahim Raisi for ignoring the people's demands and refusing to sympathize.¹¹ Abdol Hamid could instigate future anti-regime demonstrations and sentiment in Zahedan as the countrywide protest wave continues.

Key Takeaways

- **Iranian university and high school students are sustaining the momentum of the ongoing protest movement, leading the demonstrations into their 37th consecutive day.**

- **A senior Iranian Sunni cleric—Maulvi Abdol Hamid—may emerge as a local protest leader in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province.**
- **Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 16 cities in 13 provinces.**
- **Iranian state media and proxy Telegram channels reported that unidentified militants launched four rockets at the al Omar oilfield, which houses US forces, in eastern Syria.**

Anti-Regime Protests

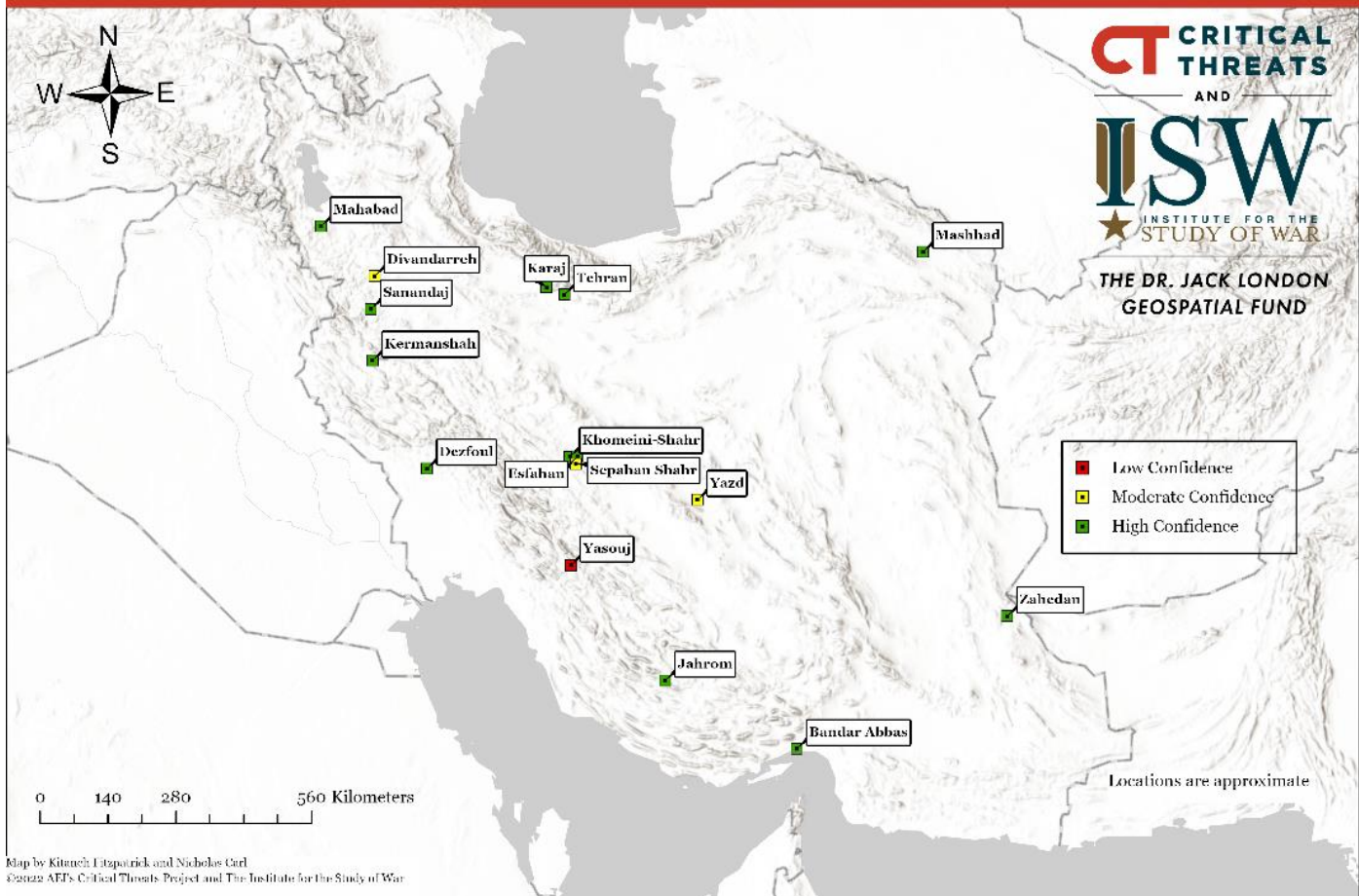
Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 16 cities in 13 provinces on October 23. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

- Karaj, Alborz Province (*Over 100 Azad Alborz University students chanting “support [us], support [us]”*)¹²
- Esfahan City, Esfahan Province (*Esfahan University Arts, Architecture and Urban Planning students holding hands and stomping feet. Dozens of high school students chanting anti-regime slogans on campus*)¹³
- Khomeinishahr, Esfahan Province (*Over 100 Azad Khomeinishahr University students chanting “shameless, shameless”*)¹⁴
- Sepahan Shahr, Esfahan Province (*Roughly 50 Ashrafi Esfahani students protested on campus*)¹⁵
- Jahrom, Fars Province (*Dozens of Jahrom University students*)¹⁶
- Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province (*Undetermined number of Azad Bandar Abbas University students chanting “support [us], support [us]”*)¹⁷
- Kermanshah City, Kermanshah Province (*Undetermined number of Razi University student protesters. Kermanshah high school student protesting on campus*)¹⁸
- Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province (*dozens of Ferdowsi University protesters*)¹⁹
- Dezful, Khuzestan Province (*Over 100 Azad Dezful University students chanting “support [us], support [us]”*)²⁰
- Divandarreh, Kurdistan Province (*unspecified number of protesters gathered on street*)²¹
- Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province (*Iranian security forces shot at student protesters to disperse demonstrations on the street*)²²
- Tehran City, Tehran Province (*Over 100 Sharif University students protested and broke gender segregation rules on campus, reportedly successfully repelling security forces. Over 100 Allameh Tabatabaei students clashed with pro-regime protesters. Undetermined number of Tehran University Social Science students and Amir Kabir University students protested on their respective campuses*)²³
- Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province (*Dozens of student protesters on city streets*)²⁴
- Yazd City, Yazd Province (*Over 50 Yazd University Art and Architecture students protesting on campus. Footage could be from 22 October.*)²⁵
- Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province (*Roughly 50 Zahedan University Medical Sciences students chanting “our money is in Lebanon, our youth in prison” on campus*)²⁶

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

- Yasouj, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer and Ahmad Province (*Reports of Yasouj University student protests, no footage available*)²⁷

Protest Activity in Iran as of October 23, 4:30 PM ET



The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) confirmed on October 23 that the Black Reward group hacked the email server of one of the AEOI subsidiaries.²⁸ The AEOI is the regime entity responsible for overseeing Iran's nuclear facilities and program. The AEOI accused an unidentified foreign country of responsibility for the hack.²⁹ The AEOI was responding to Black Reward publishing 50 gigabytes of documents related to the Iranian nuclear program on October 22, as CTP previously reported.³⁰

The Artesh Ground Forces announced that its 164th Mobile Assault Brigade began conducting a military exercise around Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan Province on October 22.³¹ The Artesh may use this exercise to signal its readiness to crackdown on protesters in northwestern Iran. The Artesh could also use this exercise as a cover for a partial mobilization to prepare for violent protest suppression. Cities and towns surrounding Piranshahr, such as Boukan, Mahabad, and Saghez, experienced protests on October 22.³²

The IRGC Ground Forces announced the death of a member of its 57th Abol Fazl Independent Brigade on October 22.³³ The IRGC Ground Forces stated that the individual died during a mission in northwestern Iran but did not provide further details.³⁴ The IRGC member may have died in clashes with anti-regime Kurdish militants or protesters. The 57th Brigade is headquartered in Khorramabad, Lorestan Province.³⁵ The presence of the 57th Brigade in northwestern Iran may indicate that the regime deployed units there from elsewhere around Iran to suppress the continuous protests among the Kurdish communities in West Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces.

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

Iranian state media and proxy Telegram channels reported that unidentified militants launched four rockets at the al Omar oilfield, which houses US forces, in eastern Syria on October 22.³⁶ CTP cannot verify this reporting. US CENTCOM has not confirmed the attack occurred. Iranian state media and proxy Telegram channels often claim false attacks on US positions. The IRGC may have ordered its proxies to attack the oilfield if the reporting is true to retaliate for the perceived US role in stoking the protests. The IRGC may have also sought to retaliate for the Israeli airstrike on a likely Iranian or Iranian-backed position near Damascus on October 21.³⁷ The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that Israel targeted an Iranian drone-assembly facility in the airstrike.³⁸

¹ <https://twitter.com/Javanmardi75/status/1584156999721197568?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg;>
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<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1584148622551093248?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg;>
<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1584133288326676480?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg;>
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² <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1584153545070194689;> <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1584133890310303744;>
<https://twitter.com/KhosroKalbasi/status/1584155119738056705;>
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³ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/irans-labor-strikes-give-protest-movement-added-momentum-11666532352;>
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⁴ <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1583700619688562688?s=20&t=wnnXJOjWyw9oplgXx9EQpw>

⁵ https://www.borna_dot_news/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A7-11/1389706-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%AF%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B4%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81-%D9%BE%DB%8C%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%81%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA; https://farsi.khamenei_dot_ir/news-content?id=51177

⁶ https://www.irna_dot_ir/news/84913847/%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%84%D8%B4%DA%A9%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B4-%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%DB%8C%DA%A9%D8%A7-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%AC%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%86%D9%87-%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D9%88-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B4-%D8%A2%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86

⁷ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-september-30>

⁸ https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-21#_edn1ce83e9ee9b158a4222bb338ce7043d31

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-guardians-warn-cleric-over-agitating-restive-southeast-2022-10-22;>
www.jahannews_dot_com/news/816247

¹⁰ https://abdolhamid_dot_net/persian/2022/10/21/12821/

¹¹ https://abdolhamid_dot_net/persian/2022/10/21/12821/

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- ¹² <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1584133288326676480?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg>;
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- ¹³ https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584225841801674754?s=20&t=4OkH4_vxzxrl0srNPXjr6A;
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- ¹⁶ https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584213485113987076?s=20&t=4OkH4_vxzxrl0srNPXjr6A
- ¹⁷ https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584246939641876480?s=20&t=4OkH4_vxzxrl0srNPXjr6A
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- ¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584151840056176641?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg>
- ²⁰ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1584168386736508930?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg>;
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- ²¹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584270969363128320?s=20&t=QibuRuDVZO3oLMSGnk-5NA>
- ²² <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1584167215707758593?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg>;
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- ²³ <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1584148622551093248?s=20&t=qGHW8qM7su8o840s7YniRg>;
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https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584214238788476928?s=20&t=4OkH4_vxzxrl0srNPXjr6A
- ²⁴ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1584161298736386053?s=20&t=f2slvQi2H6hNCi03YQwQ3w>
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- ²⁶ <https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1584251149443481600?s=20&t=QibuRuDVZO3oLMSGnk-5NA>
- ²⁷ <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1584152206722314240?s=20&t=r6Yqj5nHTLp8FaY7Ljw-PA>
- ²⁸ <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14010801000458>
- ²⁹ <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14010801000458>
- ³⁰ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-22>
- ³¹ <https://t.me/SEPAHCYBERY/54677>
- ³² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-22>
- ³³ <http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/07/30/2792164>
- ³⁴ <http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/07/30/2792164>
- ³⁵ <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Irans-Reserve-of-Last-Resort.pdf>
- ³⁶ https://twitter.com/isna_farsi/status/1583918417039413248; <https://t.me/sabreenS1/62506>
- ³⁷ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-reports-israeli-airstrikes-suburbs-damascus-91885225>
- ³⁸ <https://www.syriaahr.com/en/272927/>