



## **Iran Crisis Update, October 26**

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**October 26, 5:00 pm ET**

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**The ongoing, anti-regime protests in Iran expanded significantly on October 26, occurring in at least 33 cities in 23 provinces.** These protests are the most reported in a single day since CTP began publishing daily protest updates on September 28.<sup>1</sup> Thousands of Iranians took to the streets to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> day since the regime killed Mahsa Amini.<sup>2</sup> Protesters shot and killed an IRGC intelligence officer in Maleyer, Hamedan Province, raising the death toll of security forces members to at least 33 since this protest wave began on September 16.<sup>3</sup>

The largest gathering occurred in Saghez, Kurdistan Province—Mahsa Amini’s hometown and resting place. Iranian state media reported that around 10,000 individuals gathered in Saghez to commemorate Mahsa Amini, although the actual number could be higher.<sup>4</sup> The regime blocked roads around Saghez to prevent protests.<sup>5</sup> Videos on social media depict mourners and protesters traveling on foot to the cemetery in Saghez, walking along roads and through fields.<sup>6</sup> Security forces attacked and arrested protesters at the cemetery.<sup>7</sup>

Protest organizations have called on disaffected citizens to sustain this large-scale turnout daily.<sup>8</sup> Some protest organizations have called for demonstrators to commemorate on October 27 the 40<sup>th</sup> day since Nika Shakarami died.<sup>9</sup> These protest organizations have also noted that Cyrus the Great Day is October 29—another date around which protesters could rally.<sup>10</sup> The regime has long sought to incorporate historical Persian nationalism into its ideology, and protest calls such as this one are part of an effort to reclaim pride in Persian history for the anti-regime movement.

**The regime will likely exploit a militant attack on a Shia shrine in Shiraz, Fars Province to deflate the protests.** At least one gunman entered the Shah Cheragh Mosque in Shiraz and shot worshippers on October 26, killing around 15 and injuring around 40, according to Iranian state media.<sup>11</sup> The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack although it is very unlikely that the Islamic State was directly involved in it.<sup>12</sup>

The regime will use this attack to redirect Iranian public attention away from the protests and channel anger toward foreign adversaries such as the Islamic State and Saudi Arabia. Outlets affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) reported that the gunman was a non-Iranian Wahhabist.<sup>13</sup> An IRGC-affiliated journalist claimed that Saudi Arabia ordered the attack and called on the IRGC to retaliate.<sup>14</sup> The regime may attack Islamic State positions abroad or Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the militant attack in Shiraz. The regime conducted ballistic missile attacks against Islamic State targets in eastern Syria after the group claimed responsibility for attacks in Iran in June 2017 and September 2018.<sup>15</sup> The regime could do so again to draw public attention away from the protests. The regime also seeks to retaliate against Saudi Arabia for its alleged role in stoking the protests as CTP previously reported.<sup>16</sup>

The regime may also use this attack to justify more violent protest suppression. Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf accused protesters of enabling anti-regime militants to conduct the attack.<sup>17</sup>

**The Islamic State is trying to capitalize on the shrine attack and protests to stoke instability and sectarian conflict in Iran.** The Islamic State likely claimed responsibility for the attack opportunistically without having ordered or directly enabled it.<sup>18</sup> The attack does not match the typical Islamic State attack pattern, suggesting that the group may not have explicitly directed the attack. The attacker was not wearing a suicide vest and was captured wounded but alive--a very unusual occurrence for Islamic State terrorists. Islamic State statements claiming credit for the attack were also confused, offered no details other than those already available in the media when they were released and lacked the specificity that is common in claims of credit for attacks that the Islamic State actually directs. The Islamic State has previously claimed attacks opportunistically such as the Las Vegas shooting in October 2017.<sup>19</sup> The Islamic State Khorasan Province expressed support for protesters fighting the regime on October 26 as well likely to further stoke sectarian divides.<sup>20</sup> The effort to fuel sectarian violence has been a hallmark of the Islamic State and its predecessor, al Qaeda in Iraq, distinguishing it from al Qaeda affiliates that are usually more reluctant to stoke sectarian hostilities directly.

**White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby stated that Russia may be advising the Iranian regime's protest crackdown on October 26.**<sup>21</sup> Moscow has extensive experience in protest crackdowns domestically and abroad. The Kremlin advised and supported the suppression of protests in Belarus in late 2020 and Kazakhstan in early 2022.<sup>22</sup> Russian security personnel participated directly in both of those crackdowns, but CTP has not yet observed indications that Russians are in Iran actively helping the regime crack down at the moment.

### **Key Takeaways**

- **The ongoing, anti-regime protests in Iran expanded significantly on October 26, occurring in at least 33 cities in 23 provinces.**

- **The regime will likely exploit a militant attack on a Shia shrine in Shiraz, Fars Province to contain the protests.**
- **The Islamic State is trying to capitalize on the shrine attack and protests to stoke instability and sectarian conflict in Iran.**
- **US officials stated that Russia may be advising the Iranian regime's protest crackdown.**
- **IRGC-affiliated media continued to spread disinformation to downplay protests and discredit frustrated citizens**

### **Anti-Regime Protests**

**Anti-regime protests occurred in at least 33 cities in 23 provinces on October 26.** CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

- Karaj, Alborz Province (*50-100 Karaj Azad University students protested on campus; undetermined number of protesters set fire to a statue of General Soleimani*)<sup>23</sup>
- Ardabil City, Ardabil Province (*100-200 Mohaghegh Ardabil University students protested on campus*)<sup>24</sup>
- Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province (*100-150 University of Tabriz students protested on campus*)<sup>25</sup>
- Shahinshahr, Esfahan Province (*Security forces reportedly fired tear gas at protesters gathered outside Fars Medical Clinic; several dozen protesters set fires and protested in Shahinshahr streets*)<sup>26</sup>
- Esfahan City, Esfahan Province (*100-150 female Isfahan University students protested on campus; several dozen protesters gathered in Esfahan streets*)<sup>27</sup>
- Najafabad, Esfahan Province (*150-300 Najafabad University students protested on campus and stomped on pictures of Khamenei*)<sup>28</sup>
- Shiraz, Fars Province (*150-300 Shiraz Azad University students protested on campus*)<sup>29</sup>
- Rasht, Gilan Province (*100-200 Gilan University students protested on campus and chanted "neither Gaza nor Lebanon, I sacrifice my life for Iran"; protesters set fires in Rasht streets and chanted "freedom, freedom, freedom"*)<sup>30</sup>
- Lahijan, Gilan Province (*Several dozen protesters set fires and demonstrated in Lahijan streets; protesters reportedly ambushed security forces and set fire to their motorcycle*)<sup>31</sup>
- Gorgan, Golestan Province (*One or two dozen protesters demonstrated in Gorgan streets; protesters set fire to a Basij base*)<sup>32</sup>
- Hamedan, Hamedan Province (*150-300 Islamic Azad University of Hamedan and Boali Sina University students protested on their respective campuses*)<sup>33</sup>
- Ilam City, Ilam Province (*50-100 protesters demonstrated in Ilam streets and chanted "Death to the dictator" and "woman, life, freedom"; security forces reportedly used tear gas against protesters inside a pharmacy*)<sup>34</sup>
- Kerman City, Kerman Province (*50-150 Bahnar University of Kerman and Islamic Azad University of Kerman students protested on campus and chanted "students die, do not accept humiliation"*)<sup>35</sup>

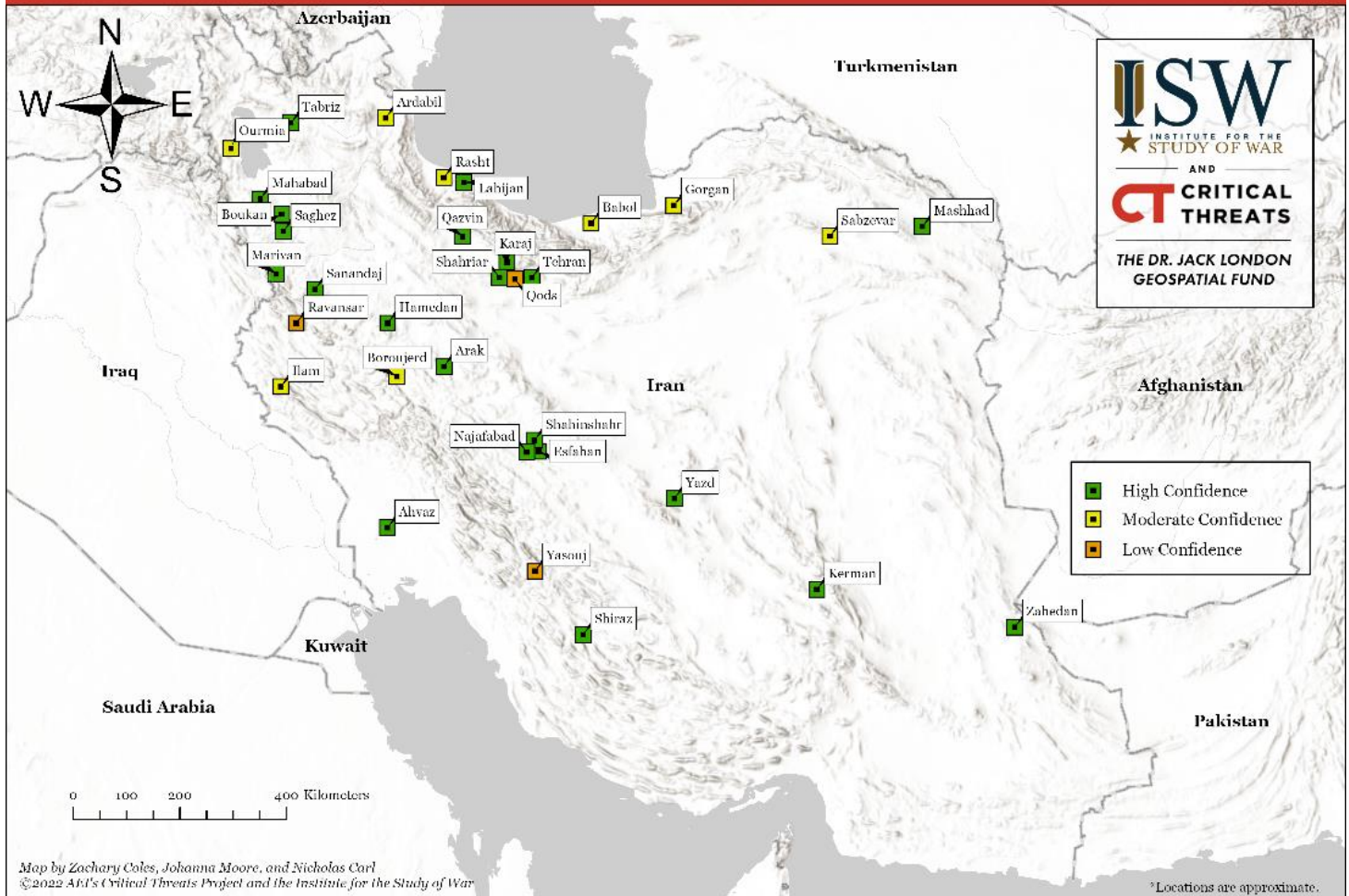
- Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province (*Several dozen Ferdowsi University of Mashhad students protested on campus; Underdetermined number of protesters marched through Mashhad streets*)<sup>36</sup>
- Sabzevar, Khorasan Razavi Province (*150-300 Hakim University and Sabzevar University students protested on their respective campuses; Sabzevar University students chanted “1500 people killed in our Bloody November”*)<sup>37</sup>
- Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province (*50-100 Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz and Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz students protested on campus*)<sup>38</sup>
- Saghez, Kurdistan Province (*10,000 protesters or more traveled from multiple cities in Iran to attend Mahsa Amini’s funeral at the Aichi Mausoleum*)<sup>39</sup>
- Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province (*50-100 Kurdistan University in Sanandaj students protested on campus; several dozen protesters set fires in the Sanandaj streets and threw Molotov cocktails at security forces; security forces reportedly used live ammunition against protesters*)<sup>40</sup>
- Marivan, Kurdistan Province (*Undetermined number of protesters set fires in Marivan streets; security forces reportedly used live ammunition against protesters*)<sup>41</sup>
- Boroujerd, Lorestan Province (*Several dozen Boroujerd University students protested on campus and chanted “death to the dictator”*)<sup>42</sup>
- Arak, Markazi Province (*50-100 Arak University students protested on campus and marched through Arak streets*)<sup>43</sup>
- Babol, Mazandaran Province (*Several dozen Noshirvani University of Babol protested on campus; security forces reportedly prevented students from exiting or entering the university*)<sup>44</sup>
- Qazvin City, Qazvin Province (*50-100 Qazvin University students protested in the Qazvin streets; security forces used live ammunition against protesters*)<sup>45</sup>
- Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province (*Several dozen Zahedan University of Medical Sciences students protested on campus and chanted “death to the dictator”; security forces prevented students from exiting or entering the university and reportedly stormed the women’s dormitory to stifle protests*)<sup>46</sup>
- Shahriar, Tehran Province (*Several dozen protesters chanted “death to the dictator” in Shahriar streets; security forces reportedly employed tear gas against protesters*)<sup>47</sup>
- Tehran City, Tehran Province (*An undetermined number of students and faculty protested at Tehran Technical College; 50-100 university students protest at Khajeh Nasir University; an undetermined number of students gathered at Tehran Azad Dental Facility; security forces reportedly attacked about a dozen protesters in Amirabad; 150-300 protesters held a sit in at Beheshti University of Medical Sciences; 50-100 protesters gathered on Abuzar street and were seen burning objects; 50-100 protesters were seen gathering in Tehran’s metro*)<sup>48</sup>
- Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province (*Security forces reportedly clashed with high school students in Boukan streets; one or two dozen protesters set fires in Boukan streets*)<sup>49</sup>
- Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province (*Several dozen protesters chanting “woman, life, freedom” and lighting fires in Mahadbad streets*)<sup>50</sup>

- Ourmia, West Azerbaijan Province (*One or two dozen protesters attacked a security officer and set a fire to a banner depicting Khamenei in Ourmia streets; undetermined number of protesters chant “Azerbaijan is awake, Azerbaijan supports Kurdistan”*)<sup>51</sup>
- Yazd City, Yazd Province (*50-100 Islamic Azad University of Yazd and Yazd University students protested on their respective campuses*)<sup>52</sup>

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

- Yasouj, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province (*At least 50 protesters protested outside Yasouj University chanting “woman, life, liberty”*)<sup>53</sup>
- Ravansar, Kermanshah Province (*Undetermined number of protesters set a fire in Ravansar streets*)<sup>54</sup>
- Qods, Tehran Province (*Undetermined number of Islamic Azad University of Qods City students protested and chanted “death to the oppressor, be it the Shah or Khamenei”*)<sup>55</sup>

## Protest Activity in Iran as of October 26, 5:00 PM ET



## **Iranian social media users documented anti-regime strikes among merchants and industrial workers in 10 cities in six provinces on October 26, including:<sup>56</sup>**

- Esfahan City, Esfahan Province
- Rasht, Gilan Province
- Lahijan, Gilan Province
- Javanroud, Kermanshah Province
- Saghez, Kurdistan Province
- Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province
- Marivan, Kurdistan Province
- Tehran City, Tehran Province
- Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province
- Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province

**IRGC-affiliated media continued to spread disinformation to downplay protests and discredit frustrated citizens on October 26.** IRGC-affiliated media dismissed reports that security forces attacked protesters and denied that the regime blocked roads around Saghez.<sup>57</sup> IRGC-affiliated media also denied that Mahsa Amini's family planned to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> day since her death.<sup>58</sup> IRGC Telegram accounts reported that Nika Shakarami committed suicide to obfuscate the fact that security forces killed her in Tehran around September 20.<sup>59</sup>

**The Artesh Ground Forces plan to conduct an electronic warfare (EW) exercise around Esfahan on October 27.**<sup>60</sup> Iranian state media reported that the Artesh Ground Forces will practice offensive and defensive EW operations. The regime could use these exercises to disrupt electronic and satellite communications systems to further limit the free flow of information within and out of Iran.

**Senior Iranian Sunni cleric Maulvi Abdol Hamid reiterated his support for the protesters in a private meeting with his inner circle on October 24, according to Reuters.**<sup>61</sup> Abdol Hamid also called for the regime to recognize the rights of Iranian Baloch and Sunnis. CTP previously assessed that Abdol Hamid may emerge as a local protest leader in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province.<sup>62</sup> Hamid has criticized Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the regime crackdown in recent days.<sup>63</sup> Iranian security officials have accused Abdol Hamid of instigating protests in Zahedan.<sup>64</sup>

## **Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments**

**There was nothing significant to report today.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-updates>

<sup>2</sup> [www.isna dot ir/news/1401080402843](http://www.isna.ir/news/1401080402843)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.irna dot ir/news/84924522](http://www.irna.ir/news/84924522); <https://twitter.com/Alfoneh/status/1585359267892457472>

<sup>4</sup> [www.isna dot ir/news/1401080402843](http://www.isna.ir/news/1401080402843)

<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/KhosroKalbasi/status/1585157172979122176>

<sup>6</sup> <https://twitter.com/KhosroKalbasi/status/1585189523238969344>;

<https://twitter.com/KhosroKalbasi/status/1585157172979122176>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranian-security-forces-shoot-people-gathered-amini-grave-witness-2022-10-26/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://twitter.com/iran\\_javanan/status/1585326099302477825](https://twitter.com/iran_javanan/status/1585326099302477825); [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_t/status/1585349189122170881](https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1585349189122170881)

<sup>9</sup> [https://twitter.com/iran\\_javanan/status/1585377305190277120](https://twitter.com/iran_javanan/status/1585377305190277120); [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_t/status/1585349189122170881](https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1585349189122170881)

<sup>10</sup> [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_t/status/1585349189122170881](https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1585349189122170881)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mashreghnews dot ir/news/1429983/> عملیات- تروریستی- در- شاهچراغ- شیراز- با- ۱۵- شهید- و- ۴۰- زخمی- تروریست

<sup>12</sup> [https://twitter.com/Rita\\_Katz/status/1585352001608552448?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f\\_ReEhDhWYOW;%20https://twitter.com/TracTe](https://twitter.com/Rita_Katz/status/1585352001608552448?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f_ReEhDhWYOW;%20https://twitter.com/TracTe)  
[rrorism/status/1585347448830308352?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f\\_ReEhDhWYOW](https://twitter.com/TracTerrorism/status/1585347448830308352?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f_ReEhDhWYOW)

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/nournewsen/status/1585306372950077441>; <http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/08/04/2794303>;  
<http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/08/04/2794291>

<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/HosseinDalirian/status/1585294314900705280>;  
<https://twitter.com/HosseinDalirian/status/1585334093407191040>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.tehrantimes dot com/news/414399>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/world/middleeast/iran-isis-missile-syria.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-18>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.irna dot ir/news/84924513>; <http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/08/04/2794330>

<sup>18</sup> [https://twitter.com/Rita\\_Katz/status/1585352001608552448?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f\\_ReEhDhWYOW](https://twitter.com/Rita_Katz/status/1585352001608552448?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f_ReEhDhWYOW);  
[https://twitter.com/TracTerrorism/status/1585347448830308352?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f\\_ReEhDhWYOW](https://twitter.com/TracTerrorism/status/1585347448830308352?s=20&t=DPL5AFsAs3f_ReEhDhWYOW)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/las-vegas-shooting/las-vegas-shooting-isis-claim-responsibility-sign-desperation-say-experts-n807076>

<sup>20</sup> [https://twitter.com/khorasandiary/status/1585186985592770560?s=46&t=LYPdKz\\_HJcZFL1xl-xZcQ](https://twitter.com/khorasandiary/status/1585186985592770560?s=46&t=LYPdKz_HJcZFL1xl-xZcQ)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/26/politics/white-house-russia-iran-protests/index.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/belarus-warning-update-kremlin-begins-security-forces-support-lukashenko-following>; <https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-59894266>

<sup>23</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585153634668773378>  
[https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585208286957441025?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585208286957441025?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA)

<sup>24</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585228627373064193?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585228627373064193?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA)  
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<sup>25</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585228139935907842?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585228139935907842?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA)  
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<sup>26</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585203891548827648?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585203891548827648?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA)  
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<sup>27</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585136701659176960>  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585345359211270144>

<sup>28</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585209465988874248?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585209465988874248?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA)  
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<sup>29</sup> [https://twitter.com/Omid\\_M/status/1585261262757597184?s=20&t=w9V11bPPH42E1mPf1MO6TA](https://twitter.com/Omid_M/status/1585261262757597184?s=20&t=w9V11bPPH42E1mPf1MO6TA)  
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<sup>30</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585338728049913856>; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585203359128358912>

<sup>31</sup> [https://twitter.com/no\\_itsmyturn/status/1585378937378639874?s=20&t=yzol0-gBhJADK-SXt1hFMg](https://twitter.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1585378937378639874?s=20&t=yzol0-gBhJADK-SXt1hFMg);  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585329340862324736>

<sup>32</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585322105515581440>;  
<https://twitter.com/IranNewsUpdate1/status/1585361771283755008?s=20&t=yzol0-gBhJADK-SXt1hFMg>

<sup>33</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585241371128266753?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585241371128266753?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA);  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585204308705878017>

<sup>34</sup> <https://twitter.com/Majid25Heyran/status/1585335719836651522?s=20&t=yzol0-gBhJADK-SXt1hFMg>;  
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<sup>35</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585184114176839680>;  
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<sup>36</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585187292876271621?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585187292876271621?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA);  
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<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585197700894466048>

<sup>37</sup> <https://twitter.com/arminarefi/status/1585200453708414976?s=20&t=gD1tux9Rbl-rXqegYEtVMw>;  
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<sup>38</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585242851968851969?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585242851968851969?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA);  
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<sup>39</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585220439026323458?s=20&t=jVspzmg0nZw9QTyKcaLyAA>;  
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<sup>41</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585284063966920710>;  
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<sup>42</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1585235781886480384>;

<sup>43</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585226616103665665?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585226616103665665?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA)  
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<sup>52</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585210678423392256?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP\\_5CdFRA;](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1585210678423392256?s=20&t=SnUDpM--xHhoAtP_5CdFRA;)  
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<sup>58</sup> <https://t.me/SEPAHCYBERY/54861>  
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