



Iran Crisis Update, November 13

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Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is likely escalating against prominent Sunni Cleric Moulana Abdol Hamid, who has become increasingly critical of the regime in recent weeks. Iranian media reported that Khamenei dispatched a high-ranking delegation headed by Friday Prayer Leader Policy Council Chief Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari to Sistan and Baluchistan Province on November 13.¹ Ali Akbari has previously advocated for harsh sentences for protesters and called people participating in anti-regime demonstrations “barbaric rioters.”² Ali Akbari had a meeting with Abdol Hamid and other local Sunni academics in which Abdol Hamid reportedly described the regime’s recent protest crackdowns throughout Sistan and Baluchistan as an example of discrimination against the Iranian Sunni community according to an outlet claiming direct or indirect access to Abdol Hamid. Abdol Hamid additionally criticized the regime for failing to publicly condemn security forces’ violent suppression of anti-regime demonstrations in Zahedan and Khash cities.³ Abdol Hamid has voiced similar criticisms of the regime in recent weeks, and some of his commentary has likely incited further unrest throughout Sistan and Baluchistan Province.⁴ Social media users have documented hundreds of Zahedan residents participating in anti-regime protests following Abdol Hamid’s Friday prayer sermons in recent weeks.⁵ Ali Akbari’s meeting with Abdol Hamid is likely intended to discourage him from further public criticism of the regime. Abdol Hamid faces a decision point to cease stoking unrest or disobey what was likely a directive from the supreme leader to stop doing so. Abdol Hamid’s initial comments suggest that he may choose to do the latter.

Ali Akbari’s visit could also signal Khamenei’s disapproval of how local provincial leaders are responding to anti-regime protests throughout Sistan and Baluchistan Province. Ali Akbari’s visit in and of itself is somewhat anomalous: Khamenei has representatives in each of Iran’s 31 provinces, and therefore should not typically require further representation in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.⁶ Ali Akbari insinuated that the Sistan and Baluchistan supreme leader representative and provincial governor had taken some measures to confront ongoing unrest, but that

his team would implement a “special plan” detailed by the Supreme Leader.⁷ Ali Akbari’s comments could suggest that the supreme leader blames provincial officials for failing to quell ongoing unrest in Sistan and Baluchistan or that Khamenei has lost confidence in them to do so.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tehran on November 12. Raisi and Putin reportedly discussed bilateral cooperation on economic and political issues.⁸ Iranian media did not appear to advertise the call. Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev additionally met with Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani on November 8, possibly to discuss the potential sale of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia, as CTP previously reported.⁹

Putin’s continued engagement with the Iranian regime over security cooperation could indicate that Iranian negotiators may be asking for more than Putin is readily willing to offer in return for Iranian missiles and drones.

Key Takeaways

- **Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is likely escalating against prominent Sunni Cleric Moulana Abdol Hamid, who has become increasingly critical of the regime in recent weeks.**
- **Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi held a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on November 12 and may have discussed Iranian ballistic missile sales to Russia.**
- **At least 12 protests took place in seven cities across five provinces.**
- **The mistreatment of imprisoned Iranian human rights activist Hossein Ronaghi may reinvigorate ongoing, anti-regime protests.**
- **The Iranian judiciary issued preliminary sentences against protesters arrested in Tehran Province, including one death sentence.**
- **Israeli combat aircraft conducted an airstrike against on a likely Iranian precision-guided munition cache at Shayrat Airbase, Homs Province, Syria.**

Anti-Regime Protests

- **At least 12 protests took place in seven cities across five provinces on November 13.** CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

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

- *A dozen high school or college students marched through a Karaj city street and chanted “death to the dictator,” “freedom, freedom, freedom,” and other anti-regime slogans.¹⁰*

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

- *Dozens of senior citizens gathered on a street in Esfahan City to protest and chant “only by hitting the streets will we get our rights.”¹¹*

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

- *Dozens of protesters marched through Tehran streets and chanted “death to the dictator,” “death to the police,” “death to Khamenei,” and other anti-regime slogans. Audio from footage circulated on social media suggests the protesters may be primarily high school students.¹²*
- *Dozens of Allameh University students protested on campus and chanted anti-regime slogans.¹³*
- *An undetermined number of Tehran University students demonstrated on campus against regime security forces arresting protesting during previous protests on campus.¹⁴*
- *Dozens of Soura University students protested on campus and chanted “we will stand until the end by the blood of our comrades.”¹⁵*
- *Dozens of protesters gathered in front of Dey Hospital to demonstrate against regime security forces for brutalizing arrested protester Hossein Ronaghi. Security forces prevented protesters from entering the hospital and then fired tear gas in an attempt to disperse the protesters.¹⁶*

***Sardasht, West Azerbaijan Province (population: approximately 68,165)**

- *Dozens of protesters marched through a village on the outskirts of Sardasht for the third consecutive day to protest against regime security forces killing a local resident. Likely high school-age protesters chanted “we are the children of fire and blood, we will avenge the martyr.”¹⁷*

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

- *Dozens of Azad University at Ourmia students protested on campus and chanted “1,500 people killed in our November,” “don’t be afraid, we are all together,” and other anti-regime slogans.¹⁸*

CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

Saghez, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 165,258)

- *Iranian social media accounts circulated footage depicting cars honking in solidarity with high school students reportedly protesting on a Saghez street off-camera.¹⁹*

Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province (population: approximately 193,501)

- *Iranian social media accounts circulated footage reportedly of a fire in a Boukan street set by an undetermined number of protesters.²⁰*

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



The mistreatment of imprisoned Iranian human rights activist Hossein Ronaghi may reinvigorate ongoing, anti-regime protests. Social media users expressed increased concern for Ronaghi’s safety on November 13.²¹ Ronaghi’s brother stated that he had been transferred from Evin Prison to the Dey Hospital in Tehran, but that the regime may seek to kill him instead of providing him with medical treatment.²² Some protesters in Tehran gathered in the vicinity of the Dey Hospital on the evening of November 13 to express support for Ronaghi.²³ Iranian authorities have imprisoned Ronaghi for participating in the Green Movement protests in 2009, condemning an internet restriction bill in February 2022, and for promoting the Mahsa Amini protests on an anti-regime outlet in September 2022.

The Iranian judiciary issued preliminary sentences against protesters arrested in Tehran Province, including one death sentence. This marks the first death sentence issued against a protester arrested during the 2022 Mahsa Amini protest wave. Five other protesters received five-to-ten-year prison sentences for participating in protests.²⁴ Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei called on judicial authorities to expedite the prosecution and sentencing of arrested protesters on November 7, as CTP has previously reported.²⁵

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry sent foreign embassies a report defending its human rights record and denying that its Law Enforcement Command killed Mahsa Amini on September 16. The report allegedly accused the US and other unspecified European countries of intervening in Iranian internal affairs by supporting protesters, thereby fomenting unrest.²⁶ The report coincides with news that the UN Human Rights Council will hold an emergency meeting on Iran’s violent protest suppression tactics

on the week of November 21.²⁷ The regime often criticizes external actors for their role in stoking unrest, but rarely issues reports defending its human rights record to these actors.

IRGC Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Headquarters Commander Mohammad Taghi Osanlou announced that his officers had arrested more than 100 members from “anti-revolutionary” groups and seized a significant number of weapons in recent weeks.

Osanlou called on the Iraqi government to provide better security on the Iran-Iraq border.²⁸

Osanlou’s comments may indicate that he has faced increasing pressure to quell unrest in recent weeks.

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

Israeli combat aircraft conducted an airstrike on a likely Iranian precision-guided munition cache at Shayrat Airbase, Homs Province, Syria.²⁹ The Syrian Arab News Agency reported the airstrikes killed two Syria Arab Army soldiers and wounded three more.³⁰ Social media users circulated footage and images of multiple explosions after the initial airstrike, suggesting the airstrike detonated a large number of explosive munitions.³¹ The Israeli Air Force also targeted and killed multiple IRGC and Iranian proxy personnel transporting likely precision-guided munitions and oil through eastern Syria on November 8, as CTP has previously reported.³² Iran frequently retaliates against US forces for Israeli actions in Syria.³³ Iran may intensify retaliatory measures against US forces in response to increasingly frequent Israeli airstrikes.

- ¹ <https://irna dot ir/xjKZm8> ; <https://www.yjc dot news/00Ykd2>
- ² <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-cleric-calls-tough-crackdown-protesters-2022-09-30/>
- ³ <http://www.ensafnews dot com/380905/%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%B3-%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%DA%AF%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%85%D9%87-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87/>
- ⁴ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-4> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-28>
- ⁵ <https://twitter.com/farzinkadhodae/status/1591086896155099137?s=20&t=y2oucROgQgN34kMQs1lesw> ; https://twitter.com/ICHRI/status/1591079697093636096?s=20&t=9xqWMgPaTenYSyTJo_A8SA ; https://twitter.com/Omid_M/status/1585964374522478592?s=20&t=9xqWMgPaTenYSyTJo_A8SA ; https://twitter.com/DrRohamAlvandi/status/1585161951046664197?s=20&t=9xqWMgPaTenYSyTJo_A8SA ; https://twitter.com/ICHRI/status/1586099548614795265?s=20&t=9xqWMgPaTenYSyTJo_A8SA
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- ⁷ <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/08/22/2803554/%D8%AD%D8%B6%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%87%DB%8C%D8%A6%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%B3%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%B8%D9%85-%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%A8%D9%84%D9%88%DA%86%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AA>
- ⁸ <http://kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/69828> ; <https://president dot ir/fa/140651>
- ⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-ally-patrushev-iran-tass-2022-11-09/>
- ¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591811127985557505?s=20&t=jcnbF84fhTJ2ChI8J9QXBA>
- ¹¹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591911065180323840?s=20&t=3drnUH7SS0rHTKbXIXdlCg>
- ¹² <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591833275244371968?s=20&t=BGVPtEU9cukbgMfNixBcog> ; https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591719234555760641?s=20&t=sG9Z4gr4sLsLfuDgjUV_OQ
- ¹³ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591749071932624896?s=20&t=zKmpylXf967fO33b1qQ6pw>
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- ¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591796088662806530?s=20&t=GCDPMYtcZmr4iVRdUOPRZg> ; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591875155302944768?s=20&t=ScCC50WthGR5b4nOfGr9xA> ; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591771867781767168?s=20&t=HkfcCuwT6bqo5HhFOWXYWQ>
- ¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591725474622984192?s=20&t=rdmwNO6IH3Yc8heedGvBcQ>
- ²⁰ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1591853555895664642?s=20&t=Llwns8v-qkHf2VWRvQnl-w>
- ²¹ https://twitter.com/LeahRemini/status/1591856195824144384?s=20&t=Fr0c86ly_pdc_Z1Z7nVQ ; https://twitter.com/mamadporii/status/1591873844100358145?s=20&t=Fr0c86ly_pdc_Z1Z7nVQ ; https://twitter.com/NazaninBoniadi/status/1591904782188699651?s=20&t=Fr0c86ly_pdc_Z1Z7nVQ
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- ²³ https://twitter.com/1500tasvir_en/status/1591878783098929154?s=20&t= Fr0c86ly_pdc_Z1Z7nVQ ;
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- ³⁰ http://sana_dot_sy/?p=1783830
- ³¹ <https://twitter.com/QalaatM/status/1591832059613687808?s=20&t=NIG1DW9nMsgg4K1PinvBzQ>
- ³² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-9>
- ³³ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-9>; http://www.tasnimnews_dot_com/fa/news/1400/09/29/2629184/