



### Iran Crisis Update, December 3

Nicholas Carl, Zachary Coles, Dana Alexander Gray, and Frederick W. Kagan

December 3, 5:30 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](#).

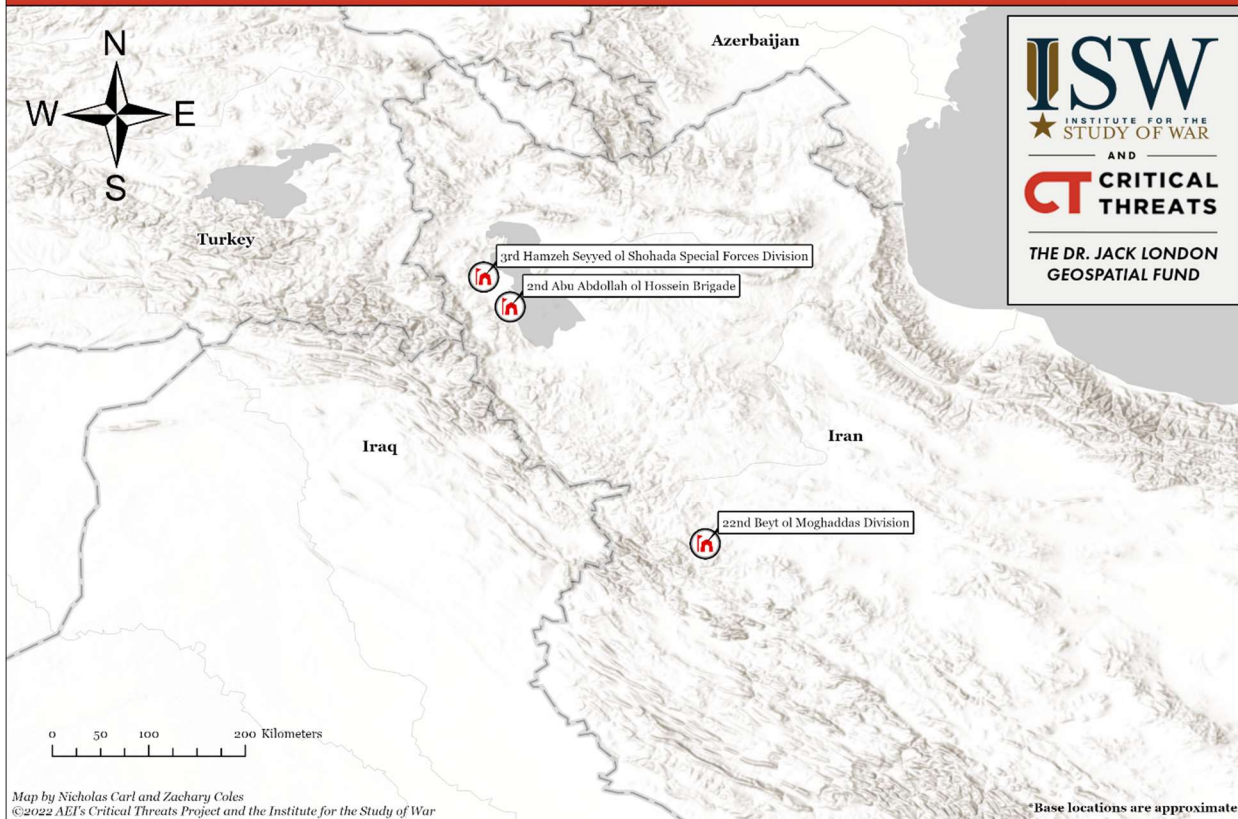
Protest coordinators and organizations continued issuing guidance on December 3 in preparation for the planned countrywide protests and strikes on December 5-7. The Hamedan Neighborhood Youth posted instructions on how to make hand-thrown explosives, Molotov cocktails, and pepper spray.<sup>1</sup> The Karaj Neighborhood Youth and others published maps of planned protest locations.<sup>2</sup> The Shiraz Neighborhood Youth advised citizens to prepare basic necessities and cash for themselves given the planned strikes.<sup>3</sup>

Statements from the neighborhood youth groups portray a protest movement that is still trying to cohere and experimenting with different approaches. The Karaj group, among others, called for increasingly concentrated protests on each day from December 5 to 7.<sup>4</sup> The Tehran group repeated on December 3 its calls for a different approach, in contrast. The Tehran group acknowledged "differences of opinion" and insisted that citizens only strike on December 5 because security forces can more easily identify protesters and traverse city streets during strikes due to the reduced traffic.<sup>5</sup> The Tehran group called for protests on December 6 and 7. This iteration within the protest movement is a natural step as it tries to coalesce and organize.

Senior Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) officer Brigadier General Mohammad Taghi Osanlou reiterated demands that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) disarm Kurdish militant groups in Iraqi Kurdistan and extradite some of them to Iran on December 3. Osanlou is the commander of the IRGC Ground Forces Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Headquarters, which controls IRGC units in Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan provinces.<sup>6</sup> Osanlou is therefore one of the principal officers responsible for any IRGC attacks into Iraqi Kurdistan. His comments are also noteworthy because he rarely makes prominent statements, in contrast with other senior IRGC officers. The main units he controls include:

- The 3rd Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Special Forces Division (Oroumiyeh, West Azerbaijan Province);
- The 22nd Beyt ol Moghaddas Operational Division (Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province); and
- The 2nd Abu Abdollah ol Hossein Brigade (Oroumiyeh, West Azerbaijan Province).

# Main IRGC Units under the Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Headquarters



Osanlou stated that the Iran-Iraq border is presently stable but expressed dissatisfaction with the KRG's failure to meet Iranian demands. Osanlou's remarks diverge slightly from those of Foreign Affairs Minister Amir Abdollahian, who boasted that the Iraqi central government committed to disarming and removing Kurdish militants from the border region, on November 23.<sup>7</sup> IRGC leadership may remain dissatisfied with the Iraqi central government's efforts thus far to adhere to Iranian demands.

## Key Takeaways

- **Protest coordinators and organizations continued issuing guidance in preparation for the planned countrywide protests and strikes on December 5-7.**
- **Statements from the neighborhood youth groups portray a protest movement that is still trying to cohere and experimenting with different approaches.**
- **At least nine protests took place in seven cities across seven provinces.**
- **The State Security Council threatened to confront protests "decisively and without tolerance" in a statement, likely to deter turnout of mass protests planned for December 5-7.**

## Anti-Regime Protests

**At least nine protests took place in seven cities across seven provinces on December 3.** CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

**Karaj, Alborz Province<sup>8</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Khwarazmi University of Karaj students
- Notes: Students protested a mass food poisoning reportedly perpetrated by regime security personnel.

**Abdanan, Ilam Province<sup>9</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Regime Repression: Regime security personnel reportedly attacked protesters.

**Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province<sup>10</sup>**

- Size: Small

**Arak, Markazi Province<sup>11</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Arak University of Technology students
- Notes: Students protested a mass food poisoning reportedly perpetrated by regime security personnel.

**Tehran City, Tehran Province<sup>12</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Industrial workers
- Protest Activity: Strike and protest

**Tehran City, Tehran Province<sup>13</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Protest Activity: Fire lit in street

**Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province<sup>14</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Protest Activity: Fire lit in street

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

**Esfahan City, Esfahan Province<sup>15</sup>**

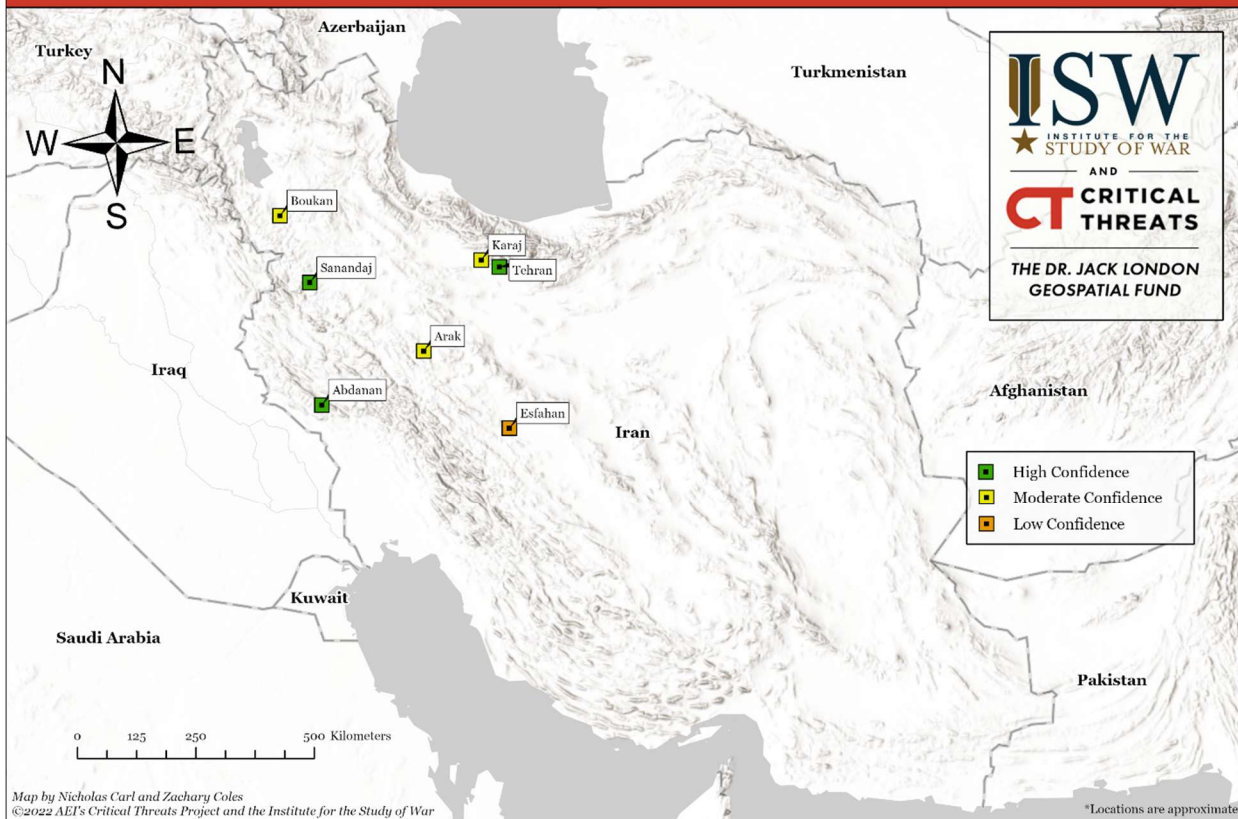
- Size: Small
- Demographic: Farmers
- Notes: Farmers protested in front of the regional water department building in Esfahan City.

**Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province<sup>16</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Kurdistan University students

**Note: CTP defines small protests as fewer than 100 individuals, medium protests as between 100 and 1,000, and large protests as over one thousand.**

## Protest Activity in Iran as of December 03, 5:30 PM ET



**Shirin—a Persian-language protester social media account—created a website to document its political manifesto on December 2.**<sup>17</sup> The group initially tweeted the manifesto on October 14, which called for a democratic, secular Iranian republic, and revised it on October 18, as CTP previously reported.<sup>18</sup>

**The State Security Council threatened to confront protests “decisively and without tolerance” in a December 3 statement, likely to deter turnout of planned protests on December 5-7.**<sup>19</sup> The security body reiterated regime claims that foreign enemies, such as the West and Saudi Arabia, are waging a hybrid war against Iran and thus responsible for the protests. The security body also reported an “unprecedented” level of arms smuggling into Iran. Interior Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi chairs the State Security Council, which is under the Interior Ministry and responsible for domestic security issues. Other members include representatives from the Intelligence and Security Ministry, IRGC, Artesh, and Law Enforcement Command.<sup>20</sup>

This statement is noteworthy given how exceedingly rare announcements from the State Security Council are. It is unclear why Vahidi decided to publish this message through the State Security Council rather than issuing it himself. It is also unclear why the Supreme National Security Council did not publish the message. It may be related to the rumored departure of Ali Shamkhani as Supreme National Security Council secretary.<sup>21</sup>

## Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

**Likely Iranian-backed militants launched four rockets at a Turkish military base near Bashiqa, Ninewa Province in northern Iraq on December 3.** Two rockets landed within the base but did not cause any damage or casualties.<sup>22</sup> Liwa Ahrar al Iraq—an Iraqi front group with ties to Kataib Hezbollah—claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>23</sup> The group frequently claims responsibility for attacks on the base, including the last incident on October 8.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://t.me/hmd\\_javanan/251](https://t.me/hmd_javanan/251); [https://t.me/hmd\\_javanan/248](https://t.me/hmd_javanan/248); [https://t.me/hmd\\_javanan/249](https://t.me/hmd_javanan/249)

<sup>2</sup> [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_k/status/1599051848627138560](https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1599051848627138560); [https://twitter.com/sad\\_mahalle/status/1598737546338369536](https://twitter.com/sad_mahalle/status/1598737546338369536)

<sup>3</sup> [https://twitter.com/javananeh\\_Sh/status/1599041698977681413](https://twitter.com/javananeh_Sh/status/1599041698977681413)

<sup>4</sup> [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_k/status/1599051848627138560](https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1599051848627138560)

<sup>5</sup> [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_t/status/1599122345251115009](https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1599122345251115009)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Irans-Reserve-of-Last-Resort.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-23#\\_edn03071a284d187e7dd91b8066f9b6c35812](https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-23#_edn03071a284d187e7dd91b8066f9b6c35812)

<sup>8</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599061257940013056?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599061257940013056?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA);  
[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598976450895368192?s=20&t= G1gDyFzfCeXD8TUv7BMMw](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598976450895368192?s=20&t= G1gDyFzfCeXD8TUv7BMMw;);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598984420446244864?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598984420446244864?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA)

<sup>9</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1599081735383404545?s=20&t=5gtwb6d33xyFsKluAXz9Yw](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1599081735383404545?s=20&t=5gtwb6d33xyFsKluAXz9Yw;);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598994062161240064?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598994062161240064?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598981287045234688?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598981287045234688?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA)

<sup>10</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1599063636646961162?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1599063636646961162?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA)

<sup>11</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599086942053838850?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599086942053838850?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA)

<sup>12</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599070757434556416?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599070757434556416?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA)

<sup>13</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1599111455915347973?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1599111455915347973?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599113745137299457?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599113745137299457?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA);

[https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599112588389818368?s=20&t=tLTDN\\_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599112588389818368?s=20&t=tLTDN_uckZXXo6iVz0iRFA)

<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1599119488921718784?s=20&t=5gtwb6d33xyFsKluAXz9Yw>

<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598938993718046721?s=20&t=RU9TnlQoA832Gh7u6Gm7cA>

<sup>16</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1598974139582160896?s=20&t=TDidhSq9-jRuluaETygtZw>

<sup>17</sup> <https://theirancharter.org/>

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

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.isna.ir/news/1401091207586>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-features-50472083>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-18>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.dotshafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/The-Islamic-Resistance-Ahar-al-Iraq-attacks-Turkey-s-base-in-Zelikan>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.dotshafaq.com/en/Iraq-News/The-Islamic-Resistance-Ahar-al-Iraq-attacks-Turkey-s-base-in-Zelikan>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.rudawarabia.net/arabic/kurdistan/081020223>