



Iran Crisis Update, December 15
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December 15, 5:00 pm ET

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The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is likely conducting an information operation to discredit the neighborhood youth protest organizations among demonstrators. IRGC-affiliated media outlets and social media accounts claimed on December 15 that these neighborhood groups have helped security forces identify and arrest protesters who send the groups information.¹ These IRGC outlets claimed, contradictorily, that the neighborhood groups are reporting protesters to perpetuate unrest in Iran. These outlets also accused these neighborhood groups of having ties to Saudi Arabia and the Mojahedin-e Khalq. The claims that these neighborhood groups are simultaneously cooperating with the regime and its external adversaries seem incompatible but are likely part of an information effort to confuse protesters and sow distrust. The IRGC is likely trying to deter protester cooperation with these groups and prevent protesters from attending the groups' planned demonstrations. These IRGC reports are the first major regime acknowledgement of the neighborhood youth groups, reflecting how seriously the regime perceives the threat they now pose.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi discussed expanding regime censorship in a speech on December 15—comments which the regime later denied that Vahidi made. Vahidi warned that an uncontrolled internet will destroy the minds and spirit of Iranian youth and that therefore “cyberspace is becoming completely restricted.”² The Interior Ministry soon denied that Vahidi made such remarks.³ Iranian state media excluded Vahidi's remarks about censorship in its reporting on his speech.⁴

Key Takeaways

- **The IRGC is likely conducting an information operation to discredit some protester coordinators among demonstrators.**
- **Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi discussed expanding regime censorship in a speech—comments which the regime later denied Vahidi made.**
- **At least three protests took place in three cities across three provinces.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least three protests took place in three cities across three provinces on December 15. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

Abdanan, Ilam Province⁵

- Size: Small
- Note: Celebrations for the regime releasing a protester imprisoned for over a month.

Tehran City, Tehran Province⁶

- Size: Small

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

Eslamabad-e Gharb, Kermanshah Province⁷

- Size: Undetermined
- Demographic: Mourners
- Note: Protest martyr Alireza Karimi's 40-day commemoration ceremony.



The Hamedan Neighborhood Youth called on protesters to glue shut public facilities on December 15.⁸ The Hamedan group stated that potential targets include banks, electrical and telecommunications facilities, government offices, and schools.

President Ebrahim Raisi traveled to South Khorasan Province to meet with economic managers and officials on December 15.⁹ Raisi's visit comes as Iran faces a mounting fiscal crisis, but it is not obvious why he would attempt to address these problems in South Khorasan.¹⁰

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan proposed a series of trilateral meetings between Russian, Turkish, and Assad regime officials.¹¹ Erdogan suggested cabinet-level trilateral meetings would strengthen diplomatic relations between Turkey and the Assad regime, which would also serve as an antecedent to the three leaders' meeting.¹² Erdogan claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin has communicated that he is in favor of the proposal.¹³ Erdogan likely intends to use the potential diplomatic thaw to secure approval from the Assad regime for a renewed ground invasion into SDF-held territory in northern Syria.

Local residents killed an Irish peacekeeping soldier in southern Lebanon on December 15. Residents shot and killed the soldier as his convoy traveled through al Aqbieh, South Province, Lebanon.¹⁴ The area is a support zone for Lebanese Hezbollah, but Hezbollahi leadership has labored to give the impression that the incident occurred without their orders.¹⁵

¹ <http://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/09/24/2821749>; <https://t.me/SEPAHCYBERY/58541>

² https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:1YVmr0_homkJ:https://www.entekhab.com/ir/fa/news/707058/%25D9%2588%25D8%25B2%25DB%258C%25D8%25B1-%25DA%25A9%25D8%25B4%25D9%2588%25D8%25B1-%25D9%2581%25D8%25B6%25D8%25A7%25DB%258C-%25D9%2585%25D8%25AC%25D8%25A7%25D8%25B2%25DB%258C-%25D8%25A8%25D9%2587-%25D8%25B7%25D9%2588%25D8%25B1-%25DA%25A9%25D8%25A7%25D9%2585%25D9%2584-%25D9%2581%25DB%258C%25D9%2584%25D8%25AA%25D8%25B1-%25D9%2585%25DB%258C%25E2%2580%258C%25D8%25B4%25D9%2588%25D8%25AF-%25D9%2587%25D8%25B1%25DA%2586%25D9%2586%25D8%25AF-%25D8%25AF%25D8%25B4%25D9%2585%25D9%2586%25D8%25A7%25D9%2586-%25D8%25AF%25D8%25B1-%25D8%25AF%25D8%25B3%25D8%25AA%25D9%2588%25D8%25B1-%25DA%25A9%25D8%25A7%25D8%25B1-%25D8%25AE%25D9%2588%25D8%25AF-%25D8%25B3%25D8%25A7%25D8%25AE%25D8%25AA-%25D9%2581%25DB%258C%25D9%2584%25D8%25AA%25D8%25B1%25D8%25B4%25DA%25A9%25D9%2586%25E2%2580%258C%25D9%2587%25D8%25A7-%25D8%25B1%25D8%25A7-%25D8%25AF%25D8%25A7%25D8%25B1%25D9%2586%25D8%25AF&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk

³ <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/09/24/2822026>

⁴ <https://www.irna.com/news/84971218>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1603445219218931714?s=20&t=nO4OJwl1anQk9ek-8extBA>; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1603442059272241189>; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1603441370890469376>; <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1603445967273218048>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1603500950337032192?s=20&t=Ra9H-ZzXqiVhScIppP209sg>

⁷ https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1603394862950367233?s=20&t=28sWg_NfCTFQvTVPGRsCSg

⁸ https://t.me/hmd_javanan/335

⁹ <https://president.com/ir/fa/141409>

¹⁰ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-14>

¹¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkey-seeks-trilateral-mechanism-with-russia-syria-erdogan-2022-12-15/>

¹² <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkey-seeks-trilateral-mechanism-with-russia-syria-erdogan-2022-12-15/>

¹³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/turkey-seeks-trilateral-mechanism-with-russia-syria-erdogan-2022-12-15/>

¹⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/irish-soldier-killed-un-peacekeeping-mission-lebanon-2022-12-15/>

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/irish-soldier-killed-un-peacekeeping-mission-lebanon-2022-12-15/>