



### Iran Crisis Update, December 17

Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Zachary Coles, Dana Alexander Gray, and Frederick W. Kagan

December 17, 5:00 pm ET

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**Iranian security personnel clashed with prisoners in Karaj, Alborz Province on December 17, reportedly killing one and injuring up to 100 others.** A foreign-based Iranian human rights organization reported that Karaj Central Prison security personnel violently suppressed prisoners protesting inmate executions and other acts of violence, citing an informed source. The source alleged that protests erupted after security personnel transferred four prisoners to solitary confinement and intended to execute them at an unspecified time. Inmates from units two, three, and five reportedly chanted anti-regime slogans and broke doors and cameras within the prison.<sup>1</sup> Prison guards opened fire on the protesting inmates in an attempt to quell the unrest, resulting in roughly 100 inmate casualties and at least one death.<sup>2</sup> Karaj residents and social media users additionally reported local internet outages and a heavy security presence in the vicinity of the Karaj Central Prison on the evening of December 17.<sup>3</sup>

State-affiliated media and a local judiciary official confirmed clashes between prison guards and inmates held in the narcotics ward of the Karaj Central Prison on December 17. Iranian media initially claimed that some inmates had set fire to blankets, which security personnel allegedly contained rapidly and without casualties.<sup>4</sup> The Alborz Province Judiciary Chief later acknowledged that the clashes resulted in the death of one inmate and injured several others but claimed that casualties were sustained by prisoners "throwing stones" at one another for unspecified reasons.<sup>5</sup>

**The regime's violent suppression tactics suggest incompetence and mismanagement within the Karaj Central Prison.** Large-scale riots are indicative of poorly-run prisons with insufficient resources. Competent prison authorities and guards should be able to control prisoners without resorting to lethal force. Losing control over a state-owned facility to this extent constitutes a significant failure of the regime, which may be struggling to handle the enormous influx of inmates it has generated by mass arrests of protesters.

**Some protest organizations could be playing increasingly prominent roles within a localized and relatively decentralized anti-regime actor nexus.** The Neighborhood Youth Group of Karaj circulated a five-point plan on how to sustain acts of anti-regime defiance on December 16, as CTP previously reported.<sup>6</sup> The group called on its followers to plan protests in crowded and well-known areas and conceptualize new ways to demonstrate against the regime. Social media users documented several protests on multiple Tehran subway platforms the next day on December 17.<sup>7</sup> CTP has

observed protest activity in Tehran metro stations before, and this protest location is not novel. Increased anti-regime demonstrations within Tehran subways could nevertheless suggest that protesters are adapting their tactics to adhere to the Neighborhood Youth Group of Karaj's recommendations. IRGC Intelligence Organization officers similarly described an arrested 15-person protest organization located in a town neighboring Karaj as local leaders on December 17, although the regime has previously used similar language to characterize arrested protest coordinators in other areas.<sup>8</sup>

The regime may struggle to contain decentralized protest and strike coordinators. Anti-regime activity and calls for unrest on December 17 showed participation from diverse swaths of the Iranian population, including medical professionals, workers, and neighborhood youth groups.<sup>9</sup> Iranian media has publicized the arrest of several leaders within the protest movement in the past several weeks. These arrests have not stopped the movement, however, which continues to adapt under regime pressure and to put renewed pressure on the regime in turn. The absence of public leadership and coordination among multiple anti-regime actors will likely complicate security efforts to stop the unrest.

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Iranian security personnel clashed with prisoners in Karaj, Alborz Province, reportedly killing one and injuring up to 100 others.**
- **Some protest organizations could be playing increasingly prominent roles within a localized and relatively decentralized anti-regime actor nexus.**
- **At least 11 protests took place in seven cities across five provinces**
- **The Iranian rial reached a new all-time low.**
- **Iranian media reported that Meta rejected regime demands to nominate a representative to Iran, setting conditions to block or permanently restrict domestic access to Instagram and WhatsApp.**
- **A large, unattributed explosion occurred in Kani Qirzhala, Erbil Province, Iraqi Kurdistan.**
- **Turkish forces shelled alleged Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militia positions near Amedi, Duhok Province, Iraqi Kurdistan.**

### **Anti-Regime Protests**

**At least 11 protests took place in seven cities across five provinces on December 17.** CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

#### **Asalouyeh, Bushehr Province<sup>10</sup>**

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Oil and gas workers
- Protest Activity: Strike and protest

#### **Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province<sup>11</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Chamran University students

#### **Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province<sup>12</sup>**

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Oil and gas workers
- Protest Activity: Strike and protest

#### **Mahshahr, Khuzestan Province<sup>13</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Oil and gas workers
- Protest Activity: Strike and protest

**Gachsaran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province<sup>14</sup>**

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Oil and gas workers
- Protest Activity: Strike and protest

**Tehran, Tehran Province<sup>15</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Location: Unknown metro platform

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

**Shiraz, Fars Province<sup>16</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Demographic: Shiraz Medical University students
- Protest Activity: Chanted anti-regime slogans

**Tehran, Tehran Province<sup>17</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Location: Darvazeh Shemiran station

**Tehran, Tehran Province<sup>18</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Location: Artillery subway station

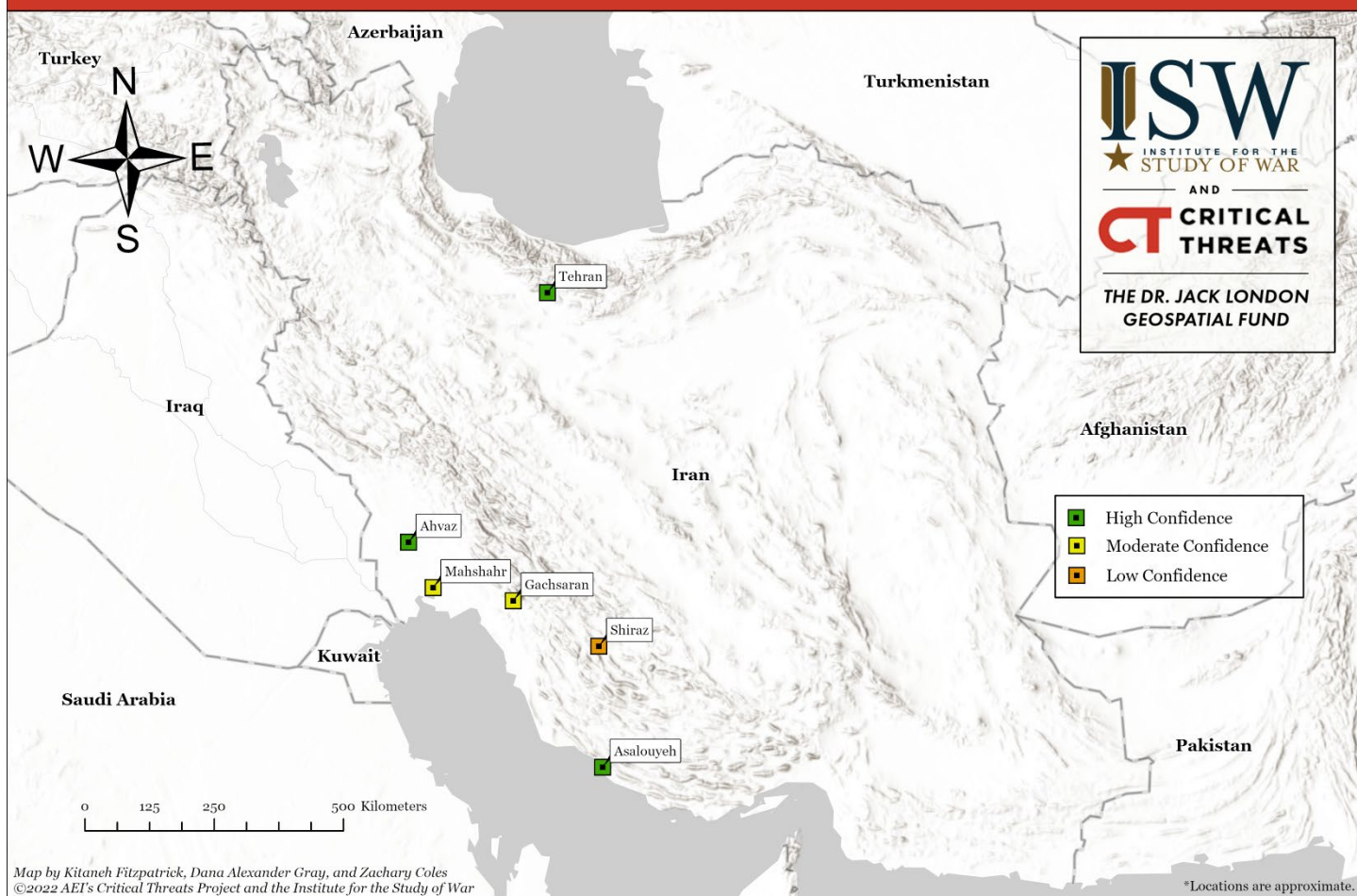
**Tehran, Tehran Province<sup>19</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Location: Darvzadeh Dolat station

**Tehran, Tehran Province<sup>20</sup>**

- Size: Undetermined
- Protest Activity: Chanted anti-regime slogans on a metro train
- Location: Tehran Metro Line One

# Protest Activity in Iran as of December 17, 5:00 PM ET



**The Iranian rial reached a new all-time low on December 17.** The US dollar sold for as many as 395,600 rials on the unofficial market, up from 386,800 on December 16.<sup>21</sup> Some parliamentarians urged market intervention in response to the rial's declining value.<sup>22</sup> Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf minimized Iran's economic challenges in a speech to a regime youth group, however.<sup>23</sup> Iran's Central Bank Governor similarly claimed that Iran's monetary policy would stabilize markets in the coming year.<sup>24</sup> It is unclear how regime officials will concretely accomplish these tasks and improve the Iranian economy.

**President Ebrahim Raisi, Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, and Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf endorsed prosecuting arrested protesters in a meeting on December 17.**<sup>25</sup> Raisi, Ejei, and Ghalibaf also called on public officials to build trust with the Iranian people, although this objective is fundamentally incompatible with the continuation of sham trials for arrested protesters.

**Iranian media reported that Meta rejected regime demands to nominate a representative to Iran by December 17, setting conditions to block or permanently restrict domestic access to Instagram and WhatsApp.**<sup>26</sup> The regime's ultimatum to Meta could signal rhetorical fissures within a political establishment divided on how to quell ongoing unrest. It is possible that actors who support increased internet censorship issued the ultimatum to justify protracted restrictions to moderates and reformists, who have become increasingly critical of the economic ramifications of such measures.<sup>27</sup>

**Tehran and Alborz Province officials canceled most in-person university and high school classes from December 18-20 ostensibly due to high air pollution levels.**<sup>28</sup> Class cancellations coincide with calls for country-wide strikes and protests on December 19, 20, and 21. Remote schoolwork would require internet access, which may complicate regime efforts to censor coordination and documentation of anti-regime activity scheduled on these dates.

**Iranian Parliament and the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council have still not released an opinion on the mandatory veiling law--or how the regime chooses to police this law--on December 17.** Prosecutor General Mohammad Javad Montazeri stated on December 1 that Iranian officials were examining mandatory veiling and would release their findings by December 16, as CTP previously reported.<sup>29</sup>

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

**Turkish forces shelled alleged Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militia positions on December 17 near Amedi, Duhok Province, Iraqi Kurdistan.** The artillery strike hit mountainside locations away from populated areas in Amedi.<sup>30</sup> Kurdistan Regional Government officials did not report any casualties as a result of the attack. Turkish forces conducted the artillery strike likely in response to armed clashes between Turkish forces and PKK militants that took place on December 15 in Amedi.<sup>31</sup>

**A large, unattributed explosion occurred on December 17 in Kani Qirzhala, Erbil Province, Iraqi Kurdistan.** Social media footage showed a building that was on fire before the explosion, indicating the fire likely triggered the subsequent blast.<sup>32</sup> Iranian proxy social media channels circulated unsubstantiated claims that the building was an ammunition storage facility used by US and Peshmerga forces.<sup>33</sup> Kani Qirzhala is approximately seven kilometers from Erbil International Airport; it is otherwise not in the immediate vicinity of any Kurdistan Regional Government facility or any of the foreign consular located in Erbil.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hra-news.org/2022/hranews/a-38422/> ;  
<https://twitter.com/IHRights/status/1604082231449993216?s=20&t=FUeBejBF6GQC85wAnyDmnA>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hra-news.org/2022/hranews/a-38422/> ;  
<https://twitter.com/IHRights/status/1604082231449993216?s=20&t=KY2GkgufoXLEZtnBX6LGiA> ;  
[https://twitter.com/javanane\\_k/status/1604139144619429890?s=20&t=RiIj8Fx8H8ENTuA2\\_DcMLw](https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1604139144619429890?s=20&t=RiIj8Fx8H8ENTuA2_DcMLw)

<sup>3</sup> [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_k/status/1604133625359998978?s=20&t=akpvUj-XP7sJC9ZzH3hAFQ](https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1604133625359998978?s=20&t=akpvUj-XP7sJC9ZzH3hAFQ) ;  
[https://twitter.com/SedayeShahrivar/status/1604163857215127552?s=20&t=Jy2y\\_MAULE7P5HPBO5P4UA](https://twitter.com/SedayeShahrivar/status/1604163857215127552?s=20&t=Jy2y_MAULE7P5HPBO5P4UA) ;  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604176893372137475?s=20&t=J4YT76dyALs7xfpN-Jionw>

<sup>4</sup> <http://isna dot ir/xdMXJy>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.borna.news/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A7-11/1412165-%DB%8C%DA%A9-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B2->

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%D8%AF%DB%8C%DA%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-16>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1604163724050309126>, <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604175827247177729>,  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604175068833234946>, <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604188427905388545>,  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604189009843994625> ;  
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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/09/26/2822688/%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%AA%DB%8C%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B4%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-15-%D8%A2%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%A8%DA%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF> ; <https://www.khabarfoori.com/fa/tiny/news-2978067>

<sup>9</sup> <https://twitter.com/IranIntlbrk/status/1604134143868121088?s=20&t=A1YRwwQkgcoW4W-S4YGO9Q> ;

[https://twitter.com/javanane\\_k/status/1604170832640479233?s=20&t=tjtC4wF8UGYGHFP3auT8Q](https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1604170832640479233?s=20&t=tjtC4wF8UGYGHFP3auT8Q) ;

<https://twitter.com/BeniSabti/status/1604025794614898688?s=20&t=hVG5xejBZykbEUIPhTap6Q> ; HYPERLINK

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<sup>10</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1604035755935932420](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1604035755935932420), <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604065289062293504>

<sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604144220641447938> ;

<https://twitter.com/indypersian/status/1604155586614009857?s=20&t=H4i2tSqevwR2YGP6CNkTXQ>

<sup>12</sup> [https://twitter.com/RadioFarda\\_/status/1604090173456777217](https://twitter.com/RadioFarda_/status/1604090173456777217), <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604046527567208448>

; [https://twitter.com/iranwire/status/1604059549786316800?s=20&t=0JRGMAj0zKuLLL6y\\_AHoXA](https://twitter.com/iranwire/status/1604059549786316800?s=20&t=0JRGMAj0zKuLLL6y_AHoXA)

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604056070003064832> ;

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<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604079274633338881> ;

<https://twitter.com/indypersian/status/1604123197485764609?s=20&t=zl0mtx-dbh1TICByNnIVRw> ;

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<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1604163724050309126>, <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604175827247177729>,

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604175068833234946>, <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604188427905388545>,

<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604189009843994625>

<sup>16</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604144841893597186>

<sup>17</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604189009843994625?s=20&t=C0zHolCF5qSWE\\_YBw63m1Q](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604189009843994625?s=20&t=C0zHolCF5qSWE_YBw63m1Q)

<sup>18</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604188427905388545?s=20&t=C0zHolCF5qSWE\\_YBw63m1Q](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604188427905388545?s=20&t=C0zHolCF5qSWE_YBw63m1Q)

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604175827247177729?s=20&t=J4YT76dyALs7xfpN-Jionw>

<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1604217774796161025>

<sup>21</sup> <https://t.co/isfNOV3Hol>

<sup>22</sup> <https://isna dot ir/xdMXHs>, <https://isna dot ir/xdMXCN>, <https://isna dot ir/xdMVzB>, <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/09/26/2822490> بود-کشور-در-کشور-بود

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ilna dot ir/fa/tiny/news-1310010>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/09/26/2822411/-30> -شوک-های-تورمی-سال-آینده-تکرار-نمی-شود-کاهش-رشد-نقدینگی-به-زیر-30-

درصد-تا-پایان-امسال

<sup>25</sup> <https://president dot ir/fa/141470>

<sup>26</sup> <http://isna.ir/xdMXkD>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.etemadonline.com/fa/tiny/news-587620>

