



Iran Crisis Update, December 26

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Protest coordinators and organizations are encouraging citizens to demonstrate more regularly and spontaneously rather than awaiting planned protests. The United Neighborhood Youth called for decentralized demonstrations and for protesters to “break the cycle of waiting.”¹ The Karaj Neighborhood Youth published a graphic illustrating the protest activity that preceded the Iranian revolution in 1979 to argue that the movement must sustain itself through an extended period of spikes and lulls to gradually weaken the regime.²

These protest coordinators and organizations are likely trying to reverse a natural consequence of the growing cohesion within the movement. Many protesters may be increasingly awaiting calls for protests and other guidance rather than acting independently as the movement has developed more obvious leadership. But these protest coordinators and organizations have demonstrated that they cannot consistently generate significant surges in protest activity themselves, possibly due to mistrust toward them among demonstrators and/or the challenges of organizing under the tremendous pressure the regime is exerting against them. The persistence of protests has been a remarkable feature of this movement and has put great strains on the regime and its security forces. If the protesters can resume more decentralized and less predictable activities, they can add to that strain even with small numbers of demonstrators in the streets at a time.

Protest coordinators and organizations are continuing their efforts to stoke a fiscal crisis and disrupt the transportation sector. The Hamedan Neighborhood Youth reiterated its calls for citizens to withdraw their savings to further encourage a run on the banks.³ The Iranian rial reached a new record low, selling for around 415,200 to the US dollar, on December 26.⁴ The United Neighborhood Youth separately called for countrywide protests and strikes on January 6-8 to commemorate the three-year anniversary of the IRGC shooting down a Ukrainian civilian airplane. The group urged protests and strikes around airports, fire stations, and ports in particular. It remains unclear what net effect the fiscal crisis and strikes will have on the Iranian economy, but the continuation of this protest movement seems likely to generate some level of economic disruption.

Mounting economic issues could drive further protest activity in turn, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. Economic issues have fueled several violent protest waves in Iran in recent years, including the 2017-18 Dey protests and

2019 Aban protests.⁵ The Gilan Neighborhood Youth called on protesters to remember the Dey protests, which began on December 28, 2017, and were focused largely on economic hardship and rising prices.⁶ The dollar sold for around 42,010 Iranian rial when the Dey protests began.⁷

The regime is further shuffling the authorities responsible for internal security in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, likely to improve efforts to stabilize the province. President Ebrahim Raisi and his cabinet approved the appointment of IRGC Brigadier General Mohammad Karami as Sistan and Baluchistan provincial governor on December 25.⁸ Karami has been the commander of the IRGC Ground Forces Quds Operational Headquarters—the military entity that oversees the IRGC conventional units and internal security in Sistan and Baluchistan and Kerman provinces—since February 2020.⁹ Karami will chair the Sistan and Baluchistan Provincial Security Council in his capacity as governor, coordinating and overseeing security affairs in the province. He may hold even more authority and influence if he continues to command the Quds Operational Headquarters as well; IRGC leadership has yet to appoint his replacement. The Law Enforcement Command (LEC) previously installed a new commander for Sistan and Baluchistan Province on November 9 as part of this effort to improve how the regime imposes social control there.¹⁰

The Khuzestan Neighborhood Youth posted a tweet claiming that the regime escalated against Izeh, Khuzestan Province residents on December 25 and 26. The regime deployed a large number of security forces and completely disrupted local internet services, according to the Khuzestan group.¹¹ The Khuzestan group reported the sound of gunfire and claimed that security forces blocked major roads leading into and out of the city.¹² The Khuzestan group also called for unrest in other locations throughout Khuzestan Province to stretch the bandwidth of security forces and prevent them from concentrating around Izeh. CTP cannot verify any of these rumors. They are plausible, however, given that Iranian authorities likely expected unrest in Izeh on December 26—the 40th day since the Izeh terror attack on November 16.¹³

Key Takeaways

- **Protest coordinators and organizations are encouraging citizens to demonstrate more regularly and spontaneously rather than awaiting planned protests. These protest coordinators and organizations are likely trying to reverse a natural consequence of the growing cohesion within the movement.**
- **Protest coordinators and organizations are continuing their efforts to cause a fiscal crisis for the regime and disrupt the transportation sector. Mounting economic issues could drive further protest activity in turn, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.**
- **The regime is further shuffling the authorities responsible for internal security in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, likely to improve efforts to stabilize the province.**
- **The Khuzestan Neighborhood Youth posted a tweet claiming that the regime escalated against Izeh, Khuzestan Province residents.**
- **At least five protests occurred in three cities across three provinces on December 25, and at least seven protests occurred in six cities across five provinces on December 26.**
- **Elon Musk tweeted that almost 100 Starlink devices are currently operating in Iran.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least five protests occurred in three cities across three provinces on December 25. The Iranian Meteorological Organization issued winter-storm warnings for several central and southern provinces from

December 26-28, which may depress turnout during this period.¹⁴ CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations on December 25:

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

Chersaneh, Kurdistan Province¹⁵

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Notes: Barhan Karmi's 40-day commemoration ceremony

Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province¹⁶

- Size: Medium
- Regime Repression: Security forces shot at protesters
- Notes: Protest began at a cemetery, 40-day commemoration ceremonies for multiple killed protesters. Protests then resumed on Boukan city streets. Both protests at the cemetery and on the city streets occurred during daylight hours.

Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province¹⁷

- Size: Undetermined
- Demographic: High school students

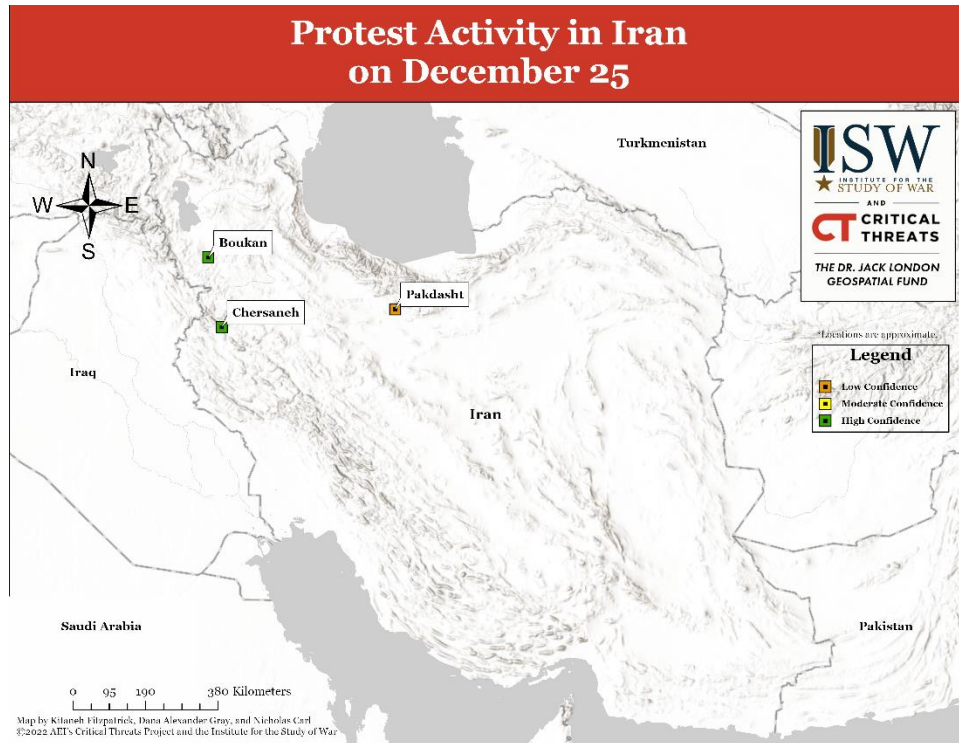
CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the following locations on December 25:

Pakdasht, Tehran Province¹⁸

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Industrial workers
- Notes: Protest and strike

Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province¹⁹

- Size: Undetermined
- Protester Activity: Fires lit in street
- Notes: Footage captures fires lit at a later time of the day than other documented protests in Boukan on December 25



At least seven protests occurred in six cities across five provinces on December 26. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

Dashti, Hormozgan Province²⁰

- Size: Small to medium
- Protester Activity: Fires lit in street
- Notes: Following 40-day commemoration ceremony of killed protester Hamed Melai, evening

Dashti, Hormozgan Province²¹

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Mourners
- Notes: 40-day commemoration ceremony of killed protester Hamed Melai, daytime

Izeh, Khuzestan Province²²

- Size: Medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Notes: 40-day commemoration ceremony of nine-year-old killed protester Kian Pirfalak

Saghez, Kurdistan Province²³

- Size: Small to medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Notes: 40-day commemoration ceremony of seventeen-year-old killed protester Daniel Pabandi

Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province²⁴

- Size: Small to medium
- Demographic: Mourners
- Notes: 40-day commemoration ceremony of killed protester Aram Habibi

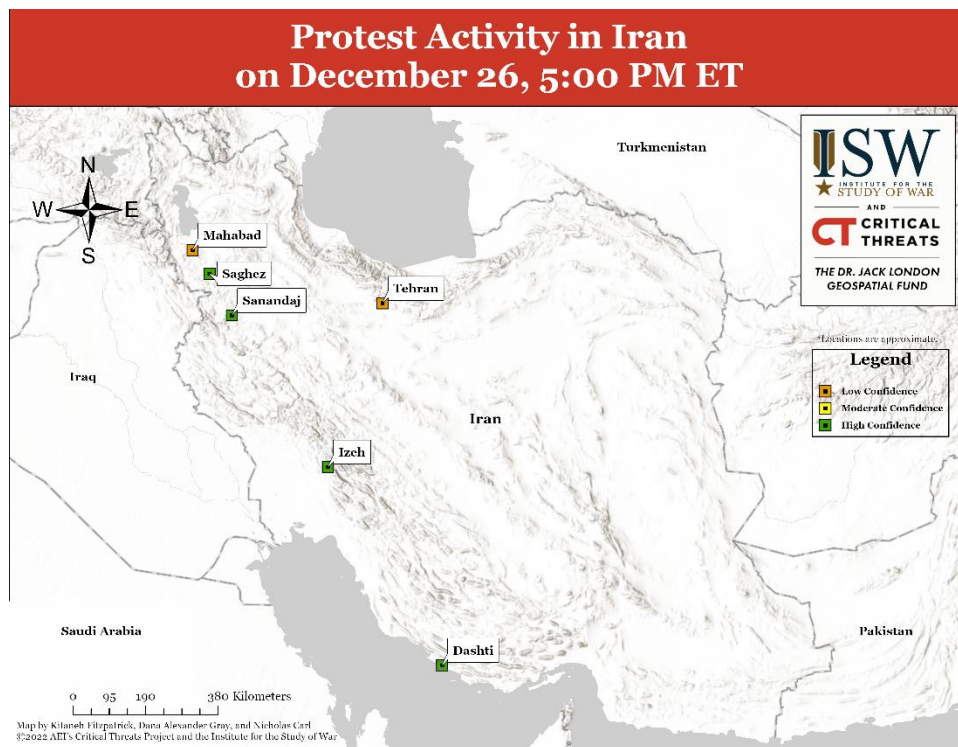
CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the following locations on December 26:

Tehran City, Tehran Province²⁵

- Size: Undetermined
- Notes: Gathered in front of the Roads and Urban Development Ministry to protest land dispute

Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province²⁶

- Size: Undetermined
- Protester Activity: Fires lit in street



The Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced arrested protester Mahsa Peyravi to 10 years in prison for failing to adhere to mandatory veiling laws on December 23.²⁷ The court charged Peyravi with “promoting corruption and prostitution” for allegedly waving her headscarf during a protest in Tehran.

Elon Musk tweeted on December 26 that almost 100 Starlink devices are currently operating in Iran.²⁸ The Wall Street Journal previously estimated on December 22 that smugglers have imported around 200 Starlink devices into Iran.²⁹ The proliferation of these terminals inside Iran allows citizens to better communicate with one another and document the brutal protest crackdown, despite the expanding regime censorship and internet disruptions.

Iranian authorities ordered a Mahan Air flight transporting the wife and daughter of Ali Daei from Tehran to Dubai to divert to Kish Island so that they could be taken for questioning on December 26.³⁰ Mahan Air is tied to IRGC and historically supported regime efforts to send arms and personnel to Syria. Iranian media reported that the regime banned Daei's wife from leaving the country over her alleged ties to anti-regime groups.³¹ It is unclear why she was allowed on the flight to begin with if she had been banned from traveling or why the regime decided to take the drastic step of diverting a flight to question her. Daei has publicly supported the protests in recent weeks.³²

A paint factory exploded and caught on fire, wounding at least 65 individuals, near Azar Shahr, East Azerbaijan Province on December 26.³³ Local officials claimed that a gas leak caused the explosion and fire.

The mother of Mohammad Ghobadlou—an arrested protester on death row—released a video statement calling for support to oppose his execution.³⁴ The parents of another arrested protester, Mohammad Mehi Karami, previously released a video on December 18 calling on the judiciary to lift his death sentence, as CTP previously reported.³⁵

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

There was nothing significant to report today.

- 1 https://twitter.com/UYI_fa/status/1607404781030748161?s=20&t=b7qH3IP9sevtAShnhvjCqA
- 2 https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1606860148601155584?s=20&t=Hz2Ih6MI1pL9a9iN8k3rVw
- 3 https://twitter.com/javanane_hmd/status/1607062081420857345?s=20&t=WLBNIHICuz3xeVwSoSofw
- 4 www.bonbast.com/historical/usd/2022/12
- 5 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Whatever-it-takes-to-end-it.pdf>
- 6 https://twitter.com/Javanan_gilan/status/1607008950712684547?s=20&t=g-3H4ru_4uIitwVqNYGrqA
- 7 www.bonbast.com/historical/usd/2017/12
- 8 <https://president.ir/fa/141586>
- 9 www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1398/12/04/2209360; <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Irans-Reserve-of-Last-Resort.pdf>
- 10 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-9>
- 11 https://twitter.com/javanan_Kh/status/1607172510117957633
- 12 https://twitter.com/Javanan_Kh/status/1607292040001339394?s=20&t=twXsLF_feyWxqxlG1CtQxw
- 13 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-16>
- 14 <https://isna.ir/xdN2qh>
- 15 <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/160706517071034777?s=20&t=oRXHo5dmXBrYxa8xoylERg> ;
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- 23 <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1607356601341444096?s=20&t=WJ3F8dOCKU6AwfcdTpyu-Q> ;
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- 24 <https://twitter.com/HengawO/status/1607340501451120643?s=20&t=oRXHo5dmXBrYxa8xoylERg> ;
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- 25 https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1607360908615094272?s=20&t=3Vx2vvLooZlKmdfOF_e_JyA
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- 29 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/irans-online-crackdown-prompts-smuggling-of-starlink-kits-11671714080>
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- ³¹ <https://isna.ir/xdN2t5>; <https://isna.ir/xdN2sw>
³² <https://www.dw.com/en/iran-blocks-football-stars-family-from-leaving/a-64215407>
³³ <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/10/05/2827252>
³⁴ <https://twitter.com/ksadjadpour/status/1607186499875004416>
³⁵ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-18>