



Iran Crisis Update, January 14, 2023
Nicholas Carl and Zachary Coles
January 14, 2023, 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](#).

The Iranian judiciary announced on January 14 the execution of Alireza Akbari—a former deputy defense minister and British-Iranian dual national.¹ The judiciary previously announced on January 11 that it had sentenced Akbari to death for espionage charges.² Iranian officials and media have accused Akbari of providing information to British intelligence services. CTP has previously assessed that some elements of the security establishment are coopting Akbari's case to force Ali Shamkhani from his position as Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) secretary.³ CTP is not prepared to assess the likelihood of Shamkhani's departure, however.

The potential replacement of Shamkhani could have profound implications for the development and implementation of Iranian security policy domestically and abroad. The SNSC is the highest defense and foreign policy body within the regime. The council, under Khamenei, also dictates and oversees all efforts to quash protests. Its members are senior Iranian political and security figures, including the president, parliament speaker, judiciary chief, and the commanding officers responsible for the Armed Forces General Staff, Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Artesh, and Law Enforcement Command (LEC). The supreme leader sends personal representatives to the council on his behalf to articulate his parameters and preferences. Shamkhani dual hats as the SNSC secretary and one of Khamenei's two representatives to the council. Then-President Hassan Rouhani appointed Shamkhani as SNSC secretary in 2013.

Some protest organizers have called for pro-Pahlavi demonstrations on January 16 to commemorate the anniversary of the Shah leaving Iran in 1979. The Iranian Neighborhood United Front released a statement with another group named the Voice of the People Coalition calling for such demonstrations.⁴ CTP has no assessment of the degree to which this pro-Pahlavi sentiment represents any part of the protest movement. The Iranian Neighborhood Youth Union—the other major umbrella organization for protest groups—has not acknowledged these calls for demonstrations at the time of this writing.

Key Takeaways

- **The Iranian judiciary announced the execution of Alireza Akbari—a former deputy defense minister and British-Iranian dual national.**
- **The potential replacement of Ali Shamkhani as SNSC secretary could have profound implications for the development and implementation of Iranian security policy domestically and abroad.**
- **Some protest organizers have called for pro-Pahlavi demonstrations on January 16 to commemorate the anniversary of the Shah leaving Iran in 1979.**
- **At least two protests occurred in two cities across two provinces.**
- **An LEC officer died in a hospital due to injuries he sustained in a clash with armed smugglers in Markazi Province days prior.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least two protests occurred in two cities across two provinces on January 14. CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

Tehran City, Tehran Provinces⁵

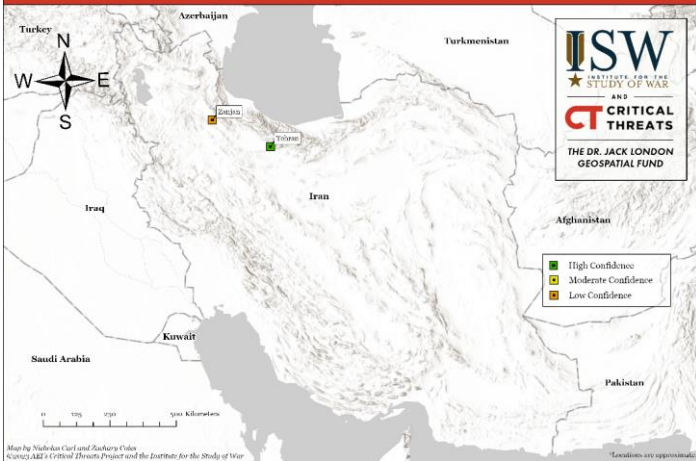
- Size: Small
- Notes: Family members of prisoners sentenced to death held a protest in front of a judiciary building in Tehran

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

Zanjan City, Zanjan Province⁶

- Size: Small
- Demographic: Industrial workers
- Notes: Vegetable oil factory workers protested in support of higher wages

Protest Activity in Iran as of January 14, 5:30 PM ET



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<https://criticalthreats.imeetcentral.com/p/aQAAAAFAqo4>

CD Link to Shapefile:

<https://criticalthreats.imeetcentral.com/p/aQAAAAFAqo5>

Protest coordinators and organizations have circulated calls for demonstrations and strikes on the following days:

January 16

- Type: demonstrations to commemorate the anniversary of the Shah leaving Iran in 1979
- Location: countrywide

January 19-20⁷

- Type: demonstrations
- Location: countrywide

An LEC officer died in a hospital on January 14 due to injuries he sustained in a clash with armed smugglers in Markazi Province days prior.⁸

The Mashhad Neighborhood Youth urged protesters on January 14 to conduct “sabotage operations” against the regime.⁹ The Mashhad group encouraged protesters to set banks and government buildings on fire.¹⁰

President Ebrahim Raisi met with Law Enforcement Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan on January 14.¹¹ Raisi emphasized the readiness of his administration to support the LEC. Radan presented a report to Raisi on the current condition and objectives of the LEC. Radan is a hardline member of the IRGC and has extensive experience crushing political dissent and

protests. CTP has previously assessed that Radan will likely adopt a hardline on enforcing the mandatory hijab law.¹²

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian met with Syrian President Bashar al Assad and Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Miqdad in Damascus on January 14.¹³

Abdollahian announced that Assad had invited Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to meet with him in Damascus at an unspecified later date.¹⁴ Abdollahian added that Damascus and Tehran plan to renew their long-term strategic cooperation agreement.¹⁵

¹ www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/10/24/2836625

² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-january-11-2023>

³ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-january-12>

⁴ https://twitter.com/bmahalat_ir/status/1614319626397323264

⁵ https://twitter.com/hra_news/status/1614268416247971840?s=20&t=McJBY80dBmQgAC34oVizDA;
<https://twitter.com/RadioFarda/status/1614236157448970242?s=20&t=MyOWmciu2oGSucbBQTllzw;>
<https://twitter.com/bbcpersian/status/1614365257472049152?s=20&t=XLeSzxhUw8Zit8yWuwPURg>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1614182391437791234?s=20&t=U4PURkiKFJWNYkh4HnJsQg>

⁷ https://twitter.com/Javanan_gilan/status/1613173107316908032?s=20&t=oZsy55H_foM3VXhy__9xNA

⁸ www.hamshahrionline.ir/photo/734630

⁹ https://twitter.com/Javanan_mashhad/status/1614274381106106370

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/Javanan_mashhad/status/1614274387984764929

¹¹ www.president.ir/fa/141927

¹² <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-january-7-2023>

¹³ <https://www.alahednews.com.lb/article.php?id=49696&cid=116>

¹⁴ <https://www.alahednews.com.lb/article.php?id=49696&cid=116>

¹⁵ <https://sana.sy/en/?p=296792>