



Iran Crisis Update, January 7, 2023
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Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei continues to empower hardline security figures to enforce his uncompromising position toward the protests and mandatory hijab law. Khamenei appointed Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan as law enforcement commander on January 7.¹ Radan will thus head the Law Enforcement Command (LEC)—Iran’s national police force and first line of defense against protests. Khamenei called on Radan to provide public security, improve LEC capabilities, properly compensate LEC employees, and train specialized police units for different security missions.

Radan is a hardline member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and has extensive experience crushing political dissent and protests. Radan joined the Basij and IRGC as a teenager to fight in the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.² He transferred to the LEC after the war, where he held several key positions, including commanding the police units responsible for Kurdistan, Sistan and Baluchistan, Khorasan, and Tehran provinces. Radan likely acquired experience quashing anti-regime dissent and militancy while overseeing police forces in the restive border provinces. Radan served as law enforcement deputy commander from 2008 to 2014, during which time he played critical roles in cracking down on the 2009 Green Movement and suppressing protests in Syria.³ Radan traveled to Damascus in 2011 to meet with Syrian security services and support their crackdown against the Syrian people. He finally headed the LEC Strategic Studies Center from 2014 to 2023, where he likely developed new concepts and doctrine that he could introduce to the LEC.

Radan will likely adopt a hard line on enforcing the mandatory hijab law. Radan was an architect of the morality patrol program while he was law enforcement deputy commander.⁴ He is an aggressive supporter of the hijab requirement and of penalizing citizens for attire that the regime deems inappropriate. CTP has previously argued that the regime may end or reduce the morality patrol but will likely use other means to enforce the mandatory hijab law, such as facial recognition and surveillance cameras.⁵

Khamenei likely appointed Radan as law enforcement commander partly due to dissatisfaction with the performance of the incumbent in responding to the protests. Radan replaced Brigadier General Hossein Ashtari, who had held the position since 2015. The dismissal of Ashtari is particularly noteworthy given Khamenei’s apparent trust in him historically. Khamenei shuffled and replaced many senior officers responsible for internal security after previous major protest waves in Iran.⁶ But Khamenei kept Ashtari as law enforcement

commander—even after the 2017-18 Dey protests and 2019 Aban protests—likely reflecting Khamenei’s confidence in him at the time. Ashtari may have since lost that confidence. It is unclear what position he will hold next.

The Judiciary executed two additional protesters—Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Mohammad Hosseini—on January 7. Iranian authorities tortured Karami and Hosseini and convicted them in sham trials for their alleged roles in killing a Basij member Ruhollah Ajamian in Karaj, Alborz Province on November 3.⁷ The regime may have timed these executions immediately before the planned protests on January 8 to intimidate citizens and reduce turnout. Karami and Hosseini mark the third and fourth individuals whom the regime has executed since protests began on September 16. Iranian human rights organizations and activists estimate that the judiciary has sentenced at least 14 other arrested protesters to death and that these individuals face imminent executions.⁸

Protest organizers tied to the Iranian Neighborhood Youth Union again failed to generate increased protest activity on January 7, despite their repeated calls for countrywide demonstrations and strikes on January 6-8.⁹ Protest groups affiliated with the Iranian Neighborhood United Front have contrastingly called for protests only on January 8. CTP has previously argued that discordant messaging and internal fissures within the protest movement may be one of the factors driving decreased turnout.

Key Takeaways

- **Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei continues to empower hardline security figures to enforce his uncompromising position toward the protests and mandatory hijab law.**
- **The Judiciary executed two additional protesters—Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Mohammad Hosseini.**
- **Protest organizers tied to the Iranian Neighborhood Youth Union again failed to generate increased protest activity, despite their repeated calls for countrywide demonstrations and strikes on January 6-8**
- **At least two protests occurred in two cities across two provinces.**
- **Unknown gunmen shot and killed one person and injured two others at the Gachsaran Oil and Gas Company in Gachsaran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province.**
- **State security services arrested reformist journalist Saeid Seyf Ali, according to his wife.**

Anti-Regime Protests

At least two protests occurred in two cities across two provinces on January 7. CTP assesses with low confidence that protests occurred in the following locations:

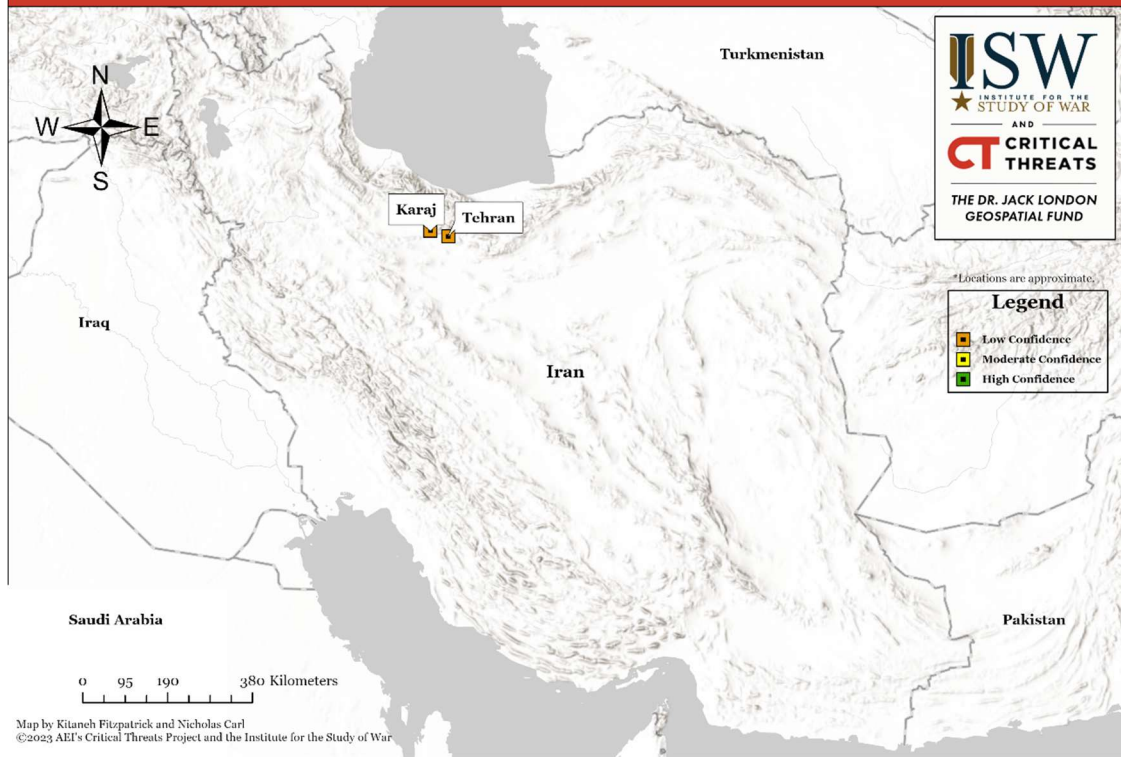
Karaj, Alborz Province¹⁰

- Size: Undetermined
- Demographic: Mourners
- Notes: Footage may be from January 5 or 6, which marked the birthday of killed protester Hadis Najafi

Tehran City, Tehran Province¹¹

- Size: Small

Protest Activity in Iran as of January 7, 5:00 PM ET



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

January 8¹²

- Type: demonstrations and strikes
- Location: countrywide

January 8¹³

- Type: placing flowers on graves of citizens whom the regime has killed
- Location: countrywide

Unknown gunmen shot and killed one person and injured two others at the Gachsaran Oil and Gas Company in Gachsaran, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province on January 7.¹⁴

State security services arrested reformist-affiliated journalist Saeid Seyf Ali, according to his wife on January 7.¹⁵ Seyf Ali is the manager of reformist-affiliated outlet Didban Iran. Seyf Ali is at least the third journalist tied to the reformist faction whom state security services have arrested in recent days.¹⁶

Iranian website Jobvision reported that one in five Iranian online workers have become unemployed within the past four months due to ongoing internet restrictions.¹⁷ A separate study estimated that Iranian internet outages in 2022 resulted in a cumulative loss of \$773 million.¹⁸

Parliament is considering legislation that would restrict international travel for former Iranian officials. The proposed bill would particularly affect former officials who hold dual citizenship or whose families live abroad. The legislation, if approved, would require designated officials to obtain permission from regulatory entities, such as the Judiciary, IRGC, and LEC, before leaving the country.¹⁹

Axis of Resistance and Regional Developments

There was nothing significant to report.

¹ <http://www.leader dot ir/fa/content/26235>

² <http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/10/17/2833046>

³ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/tg1224>

⁴ https://www.radiofarda.com/a/f10_iran_police_hijab_unveil/24233430.html

⁵ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-december-23>

⁶ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Whatever-it-takes-to-end-it.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.sharghdaily.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-6/866426-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%AD-%D9%85%D9%85%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AC%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A6%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3 ;>

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-executes-2-men-detained-amid-nationwide-protests-96281485>; <https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/01/two-more-men-executed-in-iran-in-connection-with-protests-others-at-imminent-risk/>

⁸ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-executes-2-men-detained-amid-nationwide-protests-96281485> ; <https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/01/two-more-men-executed-in-iran-in-connection-with-protests-others-at-imminent-risk/>

⁹ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-january-4-2023>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1611750403485351938?s=20&t=I4iJ0WwjAEKy31nYuEQ3hw ;>

<https://twitter.com/VOAfarsi/status/1611397845818671104?s=20&t=I4iJ0WwjAEKy31nYuEQ3hw>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1611779520113041410?s=20&t=UWJtoXnVaFYp7jnTMX110A ;>

https://twitter.com/bmahalat_ir/status/1611768966287966208?s=20&t=y5zZCgZ7Mout5IKHDD8YGg

¹² https://twitter.com/javanane_t/status/1609883019308843010?s=20&t=SW6ER8cf604U_gsZY_kmow

¹³ https://twitter.com/esmaeilion/status/1609663751879270401?s=20&t=bKh2ncamNpLW_K6WB4KAKw

¹⁴ www.entekhab dot ir/fa/news/709782

¹⁵ <https://www.sharghdaily.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-6/866454-%D8%B3%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%81-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%AA-%D8%B4%D8%AF>

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

¹⁶ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-january-2-2023>

¹⁷ <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32213387.html>

¹⁸ <https://donya-e-eqtesad.com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AC%DB%8C%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%84-19/3933039-%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%84%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C->

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%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84
¹⁹ [http://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1401/10/17/2832909](http://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/10/17/2832909); <https://www.sharghdaily dot com/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA-6/866426-%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%AD-%D9%85%D9%85%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AC%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A6%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3>