



## Iran Crisis Update, November 17

Nicholas Carl, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Zachary Coles, and Frederick W. Kagan  
November 17, 5:00 pm ET

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*Contributor: LJ Trevette*

**Certain components of the ongoing protest movement in Iran may have reached the threshold identified in US military doctrine for a “latent and incipient” insurgency.** American counter-insurgency doctrine, using a modified version of the Maoist insurgency framework, defines the lowest level of insurgency as follows:

*“The first phase is latent and incipient. During this phase, activities include the emergence of insurgent leadership, creation of initial organizational infrastructure, training, acquisition of resources, and political actions, such as organizing protests. A group that eventually becomes members of an insurgency may simply be a legitimate political group at this stage. Governmental actions and changes in society can transform political groups into insurgencies.”<sup>1</sup>*

Components of the protest movement are approaching or have already achieved some of these requirements. The neighborhood youth groups and other protest organizations have seemingly continued playing significant roles in coordinating and planning demonstrations on specific days and in specific locations. These protest organizations are also encouraging and supporting citizens to attack and undermine the regime. The Mashhad Neighborhood Youth, for instance, published statements on November 16 and 17 calling on protesters to cooperate with one another to wage partisan warfare, block roads, and use explosives against security forces, among other activities, and referred to its “operational teams,” implying some level of organization.<sup>2</sup> The group advised protesters to wear protective clothing “according to previous training.”<sup>3</sup> The Mashhad youth group also stated that it is fighting a “full-scale war” against the regime—rhetoric that is consistent with the revolutionary tone used by other protest organizations in recent weeks.<sup>4</sup>

CTP has documented previous instances of protesters cooperating with one another. Protesters have coordinated extensively in certain locations in recent weeks using militant tactics to respond to the

regime crackdown.<sup>5</sup> Protesters are furthermore developing the infrastructure necessary to stage a protracted struggle against the regime, such as establishing an informal medical care network.<sup>6</sup>

CTP cannot verify that any of these youth groups and other protest organizations are in control of the movement or able to carry through on some of their directives. The regime has indicated that at least some of these groups have a local presence. Iranian state media reported on November 17 that the IRGC Intelligence Organization arrested over 25 members of the Oroumīyeh Neighborhood Youth.<sup>7</sup> An unidentified source spoke to *Mehr News Agency* claiming that the group organized the blocking of roads and destruction of public property. The Twitter account of the Oroumīyeh Neighborhood Youth has continued posting since the reported arrests.<sup>8</sup>

CTP is not prepared to forecast the trajectory of these protester networks or how they will behave in the weeks and months ahead. We have not yet observed clear signs of coordination across these groups at this time. CTP will continually update and reevaluate this analysis based on observed indicators, which we will continue reporting in these daily updates.

**Regime security personnel sustained relatively significant casualties on November 17.** At least six security personnel have died across Iran in the past 24 hours. Unidentified individuals stabbed and killed two Basij members and injured three more in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province.<sup>9</sup> Unidentified individuals also stabbed and killed a Law Enforcement Command (LEC) officer in Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province.<sup>10</sup> An LEC Special Units member died on November 17 after unidentified gunmen shot him in Esfahan City, Esfahan Province on November 16.<sup>11</sup> And two LEC Border Guards members died in an unspecified “accident” near Saravan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province.<sup>12</sup> Anti-regime militancy and smuggling is common around Saravan.

**Protest organizations are trying to sustain the recent high protester turnout for at least three to four more days.** Protests have surged across Iran since November 15 in commemoration of the three-year anniversary of the regime’s crackdown on the Bloody Aban protest wave in November 2019.<sup>13</sup> The Karaj Neighborhood Youth called for these commemorative protests to continue until November 20.<sup>14</sup> The Countrywide Youth similarly called for these protests to continue until November 21.<sup>15</sup> Protest turnout in the coming days may offer insight into how influential these particular protest organizations are.

### **Key Takeaways**

- **Certain components of the ongoing protest movement in Iran may have reached the threshold identified in US military doctrine for a “latent and incipient” insurgency.**
- **Regime security personnel sustained relatively significant casualties.**
- **Protest organizations are trying to sustain the recent high protester turnout for at least three to four more days.**
- **At least 40 protests took place in 33 cities across 18 provinces.**

- **The regime may be trying to blame the Izeh attack on the Islamic State (IS) as part of an effort to associate the protests with terrorism.**
- **Anti-regime outlet *Iran International* published purported leaked memos from the Artesh Ground Forces.**
- **Likely Iranian proxies conducted a rocket attack on US forces in northeastern Syria.**

### **Anti-Regime Protests**

**At least 40 protests took place in 33 cities across 18 provinces on November 17, despite reports of rain throughout the country.** Protest activity may surge in Khuzestan Province in the coming days as protesters seek to commemorate Kian Pirlalak, a ten-year-old boy whom security personnel killed when suppressing an anti-regime protest on November 16.<sup>16</sup> Security forces reportedly shot and killed fourteen-year-old Sepehr Maghsoudi in Izeh on that same date.<sup>17</sup> CTP assesses with moderate to high confidence that protests occurred in the locations below.

**Note: CTP is using asterisks to denote protests that included mourners commemorating killed protesters.**

#### **Bandar-e Ganaveh, Bushehr Province (population: approximately 64,110)**

- *Dozens of protesters gathered on a Ganaveh city street.*<sup>18</sup>

#### **Bushehr, Bushehr Province (population: approximately 223,504)**

- *Footage shows security personnel shooting at an undetermined number of protesters who lit fires on a city street corner.*<sup>19</sup>

#### **Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province (population: approximately 1,559,000)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered on a Tabriz city street.*<sup>20</sup>

#### **\*Esfahan City, Esfahan Province (population: approximately 1,961,00)**

- *Over 100 mourners marched to Ahmad Shokrollahi's 40-day commemoration ceremony in Esfahan. Security personnel killed Shokrollahi for participating in anti-regime protests.*<sup>21</sup>

#### **Fouladshahr, Esfahan Province (population: approximately 88,426)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters—but likely over 50--gathered on a city street. Protesters appear to have lit a fire in the vicinity of a Fouladshahr city square or street.*<sup>22</sup>

#### **Vilashahr, Esfahan Province (population: unknown)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters lit fires on a Vila Shahr city street.*<sup>23</sup>

#### **Neyriz, Fars Province (population: approximately 113,291)**

- *Dozens of protesters clashed with security personnel on a Neyriz city street.*<sup>24</sup>

**Masal, Gilan Province (population: approximately 52,368)**

- *Hundreds gathered on a Masal city street. Over 50 protesters lit fires and chanted anti-regime slogans later that evening. Footage shows security personnel purportedly throwing stones at protesters from a nearby rooftop.<sup>25</sup>*

**Sarableh, Ilam Province (population: approximately 12,393)**

- *Roughly 50 protesters lit a fire and gathered on a Sarableh city street.<sup>26</sup>*

**Paveh, Kermanshah Province (population: approximately 25,771)**

- *Dozens of protesters lit a fire and chanted anti-regime slogans on a Paveh city street.<sup>27</sup>*

**Sabzevar, Khorasan Razavi Province (population: approximately 243,700)**

- *A still image depicts dozens of protesters gathering and lighting fires on a city corner. Footage suggests that protesters set fire to security vehicles.<sup>28</sup>*

**Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province (population: approximately 3,001,000)**

- *Fewer than a dozen protesters were captured on video clashing with security personnel. Over 50 protesters lit fires on a city street. Some social media users reported that protesters damaged a local Basij building.<sup>29</sup>*

**Baghmalek, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 114,343)**

- *Dozens of protesters marched on a Baghmalek city street. Audible gunfire is heard on the video.<sup>30</sup>*

**Bandar-e Mahshahr, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 162,797)**

- *Dozens of protesters chanted anti-regime slogans on a Bandar-e Mahshahr city street.<sup>31</sup>*

**Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 1,185,000)**

- *Dozens of protesters chanted "death to the dictator" on an Ahvaz city street.<sup>32</sup>*

**Izeh, Khuzestan Province (population: approximately 119,399)**

- *Footage shows large crowds chanting "death to Khamenei" while carrying the coffin of Kian Pirfalak, a ten-year-old boy whom security personnel killed in anti-regime protests on November 16.<sup>33</sup>*

**Bijar, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 50,014)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered on a city street, and cars honked in solidarity.<sup>34</sup>*

**Ghorveh, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 78,276)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters lit fires on a Ghorveh city street. Other footage shows dozens of protesters running away, likely from security personnel.*<sup>35</sup>

**\*Kamyaran, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 57,077)**

- *Dozens of protesters gathered on a Kamyaran city street.*<sup>36</sup>
- *Hundreds of protesters chanted "martyrs never die" in front of Fouad Mohammad's house. Security personnel killed Mohammad for participating in anti-regime protests on November 15.*

**\*Saghez, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 165,258)**

- *Over 100 protesters gathered to mourn Daniel Pabandi, a 17-year-old boy whom security personnel killed for participating in anti-regime protests on November 16.*<sup>37</sup>
- *Footage shows that protesters targeted security personnel with fireworks and firecrackers at an unspecified location. A clip shows security personnel purportedly throwing rocks at protesters, suggesting that they had depleted their ammunition. It is unclear if these events occurred in the same location.*<sup>38</sup>

**\*Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province (population: approximately 453,000)**

- *Hundreds of protesters marched on a city street to commemorate 40 days since security personnel killed four Sanandaj residents for participating in anti-regime protests. Footage shows protesters severely injuring a purported LEC officer. Social media users reports that security personnel killed two protesters. Security personnel reportedly attacked the Kowsar Hospital. Audible gunfire was reportedly all across the city.*<sup>39</sup>

**Doroud, Lorestan Province (population: approximately 121,638)**

- *Over 50 protesters lit a fire and chanted anti-regime slogans on a Doroud city street.*<sup>40</sup>

**Khomein, Markazi Province (population: approximately 76,706)**

- *Over 100 protesters marched on a Khomein city street.*<sup>41</sup>

**Qom City, Qom Province (population: approximately 1,201,000)**

- *Dozens of protesters chanted "death to the dictator" and lit a fire on a Qom city street.*<sup>42</sup>

**Eyvanekey, Semnan Province (population: approximately 13,518)**

- *Footage shows an undetermined number of protesters carrying a protester shot by security personnel. Roughly 50 protesters set fire to a regime-affiliated bank.*<sup>43</sup>

**\*Goyoum, Shiraz Province (population: approximately 7,297)**

- *Roughly 100, possibly more, protesters gathered to commemorate three years since security personnel killed Amir Alwandi for participating in the 2019 gasoline protest wave. Protesters chanted "we will stand by our wounded comrades until the end."*<sup>44</sup>

### **Tehran City, Tehran Province (population: approximately 8,700,00)**

- *Dozens of protesters gathered in what appears to be a park or public square in Ekbatan in western Tehran.*<sup>45</sup>
- *Over 50 protesters chanted "freedom, freedom, freedom" on trashcan barricades on an undetermined Tehran city street.*<sup>46</sup>
- *Roughly 70-100 protesters gathered in the vicinity of the Sadeghiyeh district in Tehran.*<sup>47</sup>
- *Dozens of protesters gathered in the Gisha district in Tehran. NOTE: This may be the same protest as protest 2.*<sup>48</sup>
- *Dozens of protesters chanted anti-regime slogans in the Tehran City Theatre metro station.*<sup>49</sup>

### **\*Boukan, West Azerbaijan Province (population: 193,501)**

- *Dozens—likely more--protesters lit fires and joined hands in a Boukan city street.*<sup>50</sup>
- *Hundreds of mourners commemorated Mohamad Hassan Zadeh and Salar Mojaver, whom security forces killed for participating in anti-regime protests on November 16. Protesters from Mahabad reportedly walked to Boukan to attend the funerals. One social media account compared Boukan to a warzone. Protesters reportedly set fire to several security vehicles and vandalized a store that is allegedly regime-affiliated for failing to participate in anti-regime strikes. Uncorroborated reports suggest that protesters penetrated and/or damaged a Boukan municipality building. Security personnel reportedly shot at protesters, killing one and injuring several others.*<sup>51</sup>

### **Piranshahr, West Azerbaijan Province (population: 95,716)**

- *Dozens of protesters chanted "woman, life freedom" and "death to the dictator" and lit fires on a Piranshahr city street.*<sup>52</sup>

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

### **Hamedan City, Hamedan Province (population: approximately 554,406)**

- *Footage shows an undetermined number of protesters clashing with security personnel. Protesters threw what appear to be Molotov cocktails at security personnel.*<sup>53</sup>

### **Kermanshah City, Kermanshah Province (population: approximately 946,651)**

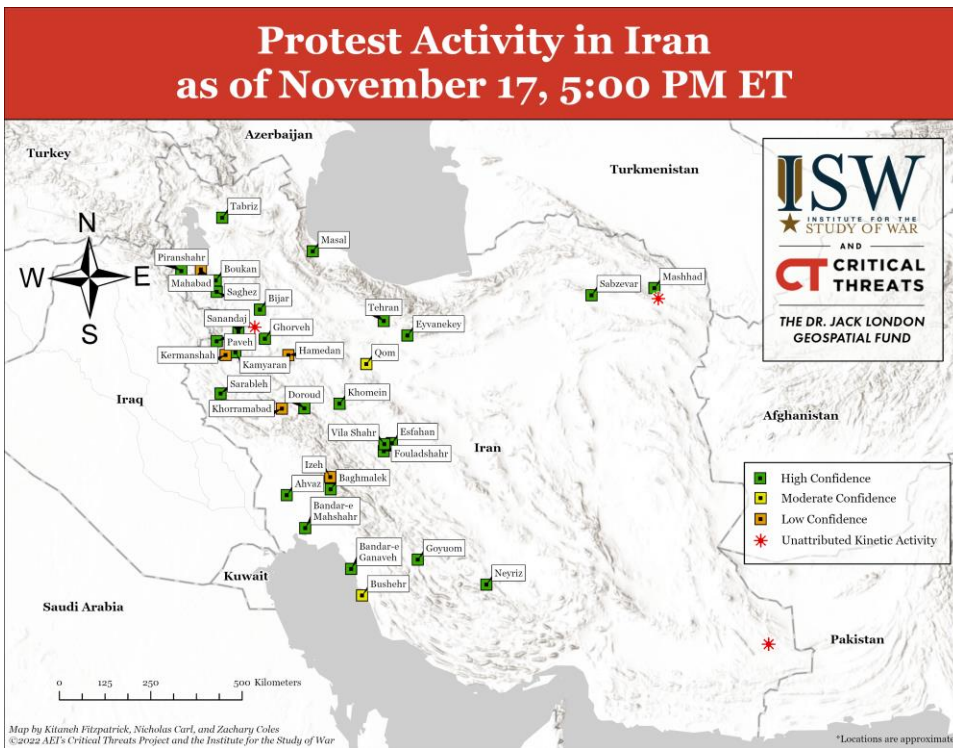
- *Dozens of protesters gathered on a Kermanshah city street. There is insufficient data to assess with high to moderate confidence that this event occurred.*<sup>54</sup>

### **Khorramabad, Lorestan Province (population: approximately 373,416)**

- *An undetermined number of protesters gathered on a Khorramabad city street. It is unclear from available footage if this event meets CTP's threshold for protest activity.*<sup>55</sup>

### **Mahabad, West Azerbaijan Province (population: 168,393)**

- An undetermined number of protesters lit fires on a Mahabad city street, possibly suggesting that protests occurred on this date. It is unclear if this event meets CTP's threshold for protest activity.<sup>56</sup>



**The regime may be trying to blame the Izeh attack on the Islamic State (IS) as part of an effort to associate the protests with terrorism.** Iranian media outlets, including the Raisi-administration-controlled Islamic Republic News Agency, have circulated a seemingly fake IS claim of responsibility for the attack.<sup>57</sup> A BBC journalist argued that the statement is likely fake due to its grammatical errors and presentation.<sup>58</sup> The regime has intensified its information operation to link the protests to terrorism since the Shiraz attack on October 26 to delegitimize protesters and their grievances.<sup>59</sup>

**Anti-regime outlet *Iran International* published purported leaked memos from the Artesh Ground Forces on November 17.**<sup>60</sup> The Artesh Ground Forces reportedly issued a memo on November 7 requiring unit commanders to report daily whether any service members or their families participated in anti-regime protests or used anti-regime language. The Artesh Ground Forces reportedly issued a second memo on November 9, warning that anti-regime actors may sabotage military facilities. If true, these memos indicate that Artesh leadership is concerned about service members and their families joining and sympathizing with protesters. The English-language version of the *Iran International* article mischaracterized these memos, however, reporting that they “show that [Artesh] staff and their families have been supporting the popular anti-government protests since September.”<sup>61</sup> There is no information in the memos to corroborate this claim nor can CTP verify their authenticity.



**Law Enforcement Deputy Commander Brigadier General Ghassem Rezaei denied that LEC officers are tired on November 17—a remark which could frustrate the low-level security personnel heavily involved in the crackdown and killing citizens.** CTP has reported that security personnel are facing bandwidth constraints, exhaustion, and low morale since September 2022.<sup>62</sup> Rezaei stated that the security personnel's tirelessness is evident from “their cheerful faces.” Rezaei’s comments are particularly tone-deaf given the rate at which security personnel are dying.

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

**An unidentified senior Western official told a BBC journalist that the IRGC Aerospace Force conducted the drone attack on the Israeli-owned tanker on November 16 from Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchistan Province.**<sup>63</sup> The IRGC Aerospace Force is the primary operator of the regime’s drone and missile arsenals.

**Likely Iranian proxies conducted a rocket attack on US forces in northeastern Syria on November 17.**<sup>64</sup> The attack caused no casualties or damage to the facility. The IRGC may renew its regular proxy attacks against US positions in Iraq and Syria to expel US forces from the region and also respond to Washington’s perceived role in stoking the protests.

**Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi held a phone call with Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu to discuss security cooperation against terrorism, among other issues, on November 17.**<sup>65</sup> Tehran and Ankara may increase cooperation against anti-regime Kurdish militant groups in northern Iraq and northern Syria in the coming weeks. CTP previously reported that Kurdish military and political groups in Iraq and Syria may face increasing attacks from Iran and Turkey simultaneously.<sup>66</sup> Vahidi is nominally responsible for administering the LEC in his capacity as interior minister. He likely plays a more prominent role in influencing regime defense and foreign policies, however, given his connections to the IRGC and his experience as the IRGC Quds Force commander from 1988 to 1998.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/web/fm3\\_24.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/fm3_24.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://twitter.com/Javanan\\_mashhad/status/1592780084876038145](https://twitter.com/Javanan_mashhad/status/1592780084876038145);

[https://twitter.com/Javanan\\_mashhad/status/1593189464058527744](https://twitter.com/Javanan_mashhad/status/1593189464058527744)

<sup>3</sup> [https://twitter.com/Javanan\\_mashhad/status/1592780084876038145](https://twitter.com/Javanan_mashhad/status/1592780084876038145)

<sup>4</sup> [https://twitter.com/Javanan\\_mashhad/status/1593189464058527744](https://twitter.com/Javanan_mashhad/status/1593189464058527744)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-3>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-october-30>

<sup>7</sup> [www.mehrnews.com/news/5634385](http://www.mehrnews.com/news/5634385)

<sup>8</sup> [https://twitter.com/ur\\_javanane](https://twitter.com/ur_javanane)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/08/26/2805901>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.yjc.com/news/fa/news/8285756>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/08/26/2805785>

<sup>12</sup> <https://mehrnews.com/xYTKh>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-crisis-update-november-16>

<sup>14</sup> [https://twitter.com/javanane\\_k/status/1593284968595263489](https://twitter.com/javanane_k/status/1593284968595263489)



<sup>15</sup> [https://twitter.com/iran\\_javanan/status/1593000512961777666](https://twitter.com/iran_javanan/status/1593000512961777666)

<sup>16</sup> [https://twitter.com/HichkasOfficial/status/1592964710185304065?s=20&t=vpkl\\_Zi7bsw\\_tEIVuf3fNA](https://twitter.com/HichkasOfficial/status/1592964710185304065?s=20&t=vpkl_Zi7bsw_tEIVuf3fNA)

<sup>17</sup> [https://twitter.com/ICHRI/status/1593259539633258496?s=20&t=vpkl\\_Zi7bsw\\_tEIVuf3fNA](https://twitter.com/ICHRI/status/1593259539633258496?s=20&t=vpkl_Zi7bsw_tEIVuf3fNA)

<sup>18</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593324230514458624?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593324230514458624?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw)

<sup>19</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593344477846011905?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593344477846011905?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw) ;  
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<sup>20</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593257105632411648?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593257105632411648?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw)

<sup>21</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593224311242121221?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593224311242121221?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw)

<sup>22</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593308749892145158?s=20&t=rqmVFiuFOI7eb-x\\_HsEfg](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593308749892145158?s=20&t=rqmVFiuFOI7eb-x_HsEfg) ;  
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<sup>23</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593287622725615616?s=20&t=GY4Ldo7\\_uiYwr9zyCjpbMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593287622725615616?s=20&t=GY4Ldo7_uiYwr9zyCjpbMw)

<sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593311811826237440?s=20&t=fWkgptsaDLqjcSHeLOTqFA> ;  
<https://twitter.com/indypersian/status/1593348889410682880?s=20&t=JvEkO5Rs9R0fojkjPR-xg>

<sup>25</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593302315842273281?s=20&t=SEmslC6kx00V4b6AFb7bog> ;  
<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593282755386818560?s=20&t=q7H0YLSBi3SDj3L3ksVjKw> ;  
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<sup>26</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593192853249085445?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593192853249085445?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw)

<sup>27</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593284888433725441?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593284888433725441?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw)

<sup>28</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593320626080649218?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593320626080649218?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw) ;  
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<sup>29</sup> <https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593323881531674625?s=20&t=KTnaIDMXHWhE9gLwNR3d5w> ;  
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<sup>30</sup> <https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593299778099634176?s=20&t=ETq1tZ-pJukLcXtKQizjrg> ;  
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[https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593312475344211968?s=20&t=7lmFO9BkYel1pK4Xh\\_Gd5Q](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593312475344211968?s=20&t=7lmFO9BkYel1pK4Xh_Gd5Q)

<sup>31</sup> [https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593284359313825792?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1593284359313825792?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw)

<sup>32</sup> [https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1593335519873830921?s=20&t=B9zeATL5sqbsnV\\_VrXfUMw](https://twitter.com/IranIntl/status/1593335519873830921?s=20&t=B9zeATL5sqbsnV_VrXfUMw) ;  
<https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593360961729069061?s=20&t=EMFeaYB5ATXkdV0BCudxUg>

<sup>33</sup> [https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593348869382967297?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng\\_icMpyzdqIMw](https://twitter.com/iranworkers/status/1593348869382967297?s=20&t=JtIBoffCng_icMpyzdqIMw) ;  
[https://twitter.com/IranIntl\\_En/status/1593171291561160709?s=20&t=sCeUrOIhmrzhYhHiKXEknw](https://twitter.com/IranIntl_En/status/1593171291561160709?s=20&t=sCeUrOIhmrzhYhHiKXEknw)

<sup>34</sup> <https://twitter.com/ManotoNews/status/1593365519281041408?s=20&t=oodvWWUQul-oYmHZVPpd4A> ;  
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