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|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Country        | Iran                           |                      |
| Period covered | 20 October to 22 November 2022 | November 2022 Sitrep |

## Key Recommendations

One would be hard-pressed to recall a period in recent years when the Islamic Republic was concurrently facing such a durable anti-regime movement internally, and such concerted diplomatic pressure from abroad. The protests that erupted following the death of Mahsa Amini in September remain a potent and determined series of events that the state's heavy-handed response has failed to quell, while prompting an international response that, along with nuclear intransigence and military cooperation with Russia, now constitute three strikes increasingly placing Tehran out in the international cold. The Iranian government's response appears inclined to double down on suppressing the protests, but coercion may well instead end up fanning further unrest.

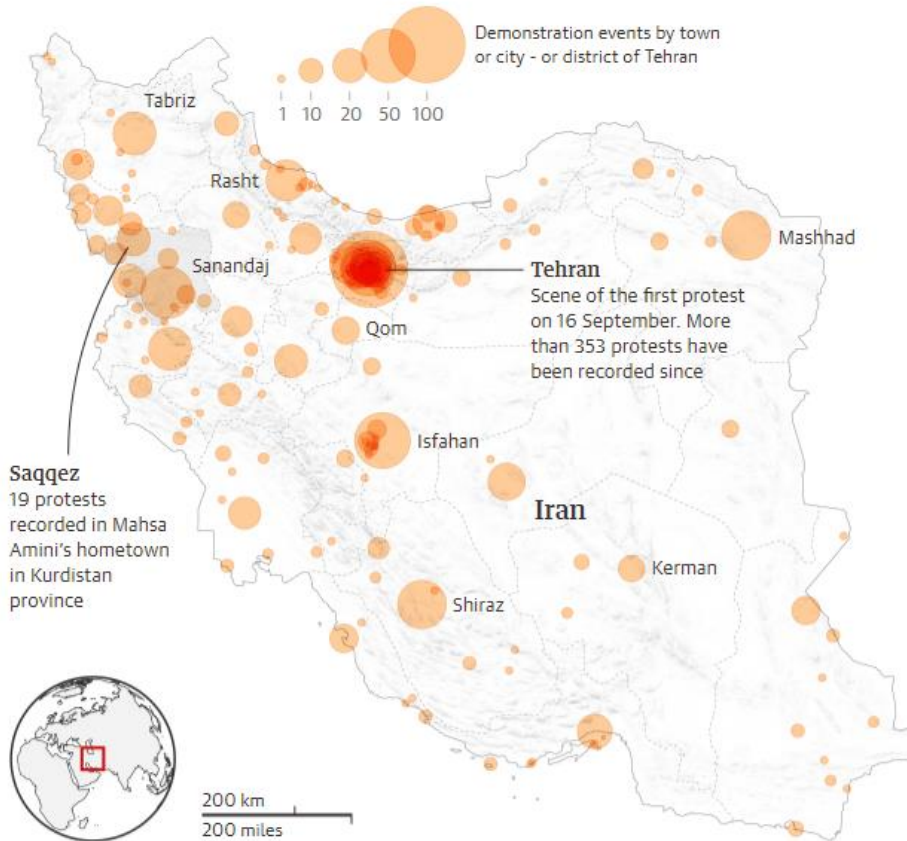
## Developments and Analysis

*Iran's Autumn of Unrest.* Nationwide protests have continued into their third month, with occasional ebbs rising into major flows around commemoration ceremonies for those killed by security forces and the mid-November anniversary of the 2019 protests (see the visual below, published by [The Guardian](#), on their scope and intensity through 11 November). Human rights groups estimate that the number of fatalities may [exceed](#) 400, [including](#) 50 children; a senior IRGC commander on 20 November [indicated](#) that fatalities among the security forces was around 60. In a lengthy 28 October [statement](#), the government's intelligence organs repeated and expanded on claims that the unrest was a U.S.-led plot, supported by Western and regional allies, and foreign agitation remains the state's go-to excuse against the deeply-rooted discontent it has failed to either address or suppress.

There are risks that the situation could worsen on three fronts. The first is internal, where the state may increase the use of force in an effort to subdue dissent, especially in north-western [Kurdish-majority](#) regions, and this could in turn further fuel public outrage. The second is regional spillover: the IRGC carried out cross-border missile and UAV [attacks](#) into northern Iraq on 14 November, resuming its campaign against "terrorist groups" - that is, exiled Iranian Kurdish rebel groups which it claims have fanned the unrest - and drawing strong [condemnation](#) from the Iraqi government. The IRGC carried out a further [wave](#) of missiles and drones strikes overnight 20-21 November, and media reports claim that Iranian military officials have [warned](#) of further and expanded action into Iraq's Kurdish areas. Iran also blames Saudi Arabia for funding anti-government propaganda; media reports 1 November [indicated](#) that the kingdom had provided the U.S. with intelligence on Iranian intentions to attack Saudi Arabia; Iran's intelligence minister 9 November [warned](#) Riyadh that Tehran's "strategic patience" might wear out. The third risk is international, with both the [UK](#) and [Canada](#) in recent days publicly disclosing concerns that Iran may target its critics abroad.

## Protests in Iran sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini have entered their third month

Of 1,265 protests between 16 Sep and 11 Nov, at least 1,158 were led by women



Guardian graphic. Sources: ACLED demonstration events data derived from a wide range of local, regional and national sources. Note: events sharing characteristics may be counted as one. Data covers 16 September to 11 November and is subject to revisions

**International Response.** The twin specter of the Iranian government's crackdown and Russian deployment of Iranian drones in Ukraine (the transfer of which has been acknowledged after repeated earlier denials, though qualified with the [insistence](#) that it occurred prior to the war) has prompted significant Western action in the past month. The Biden administration rolled out a series of sanctions designations over the reporting period across multiple areas of U.S. concern. On 28 October Washington [targeted](#) the 15 Khordad Foundation, an Iranian institution that had issued a bounty on Salman Rushdie, the celebrated author who suffered major [injuries](#) when attacked at an event in New York state in August. Two sets of designations, on 26 October and 16 November, were in response to the ongoing protests: the former [targeting seventeen](#) persons and entities including government officials and military commanders implicated in the crackdown, and the latter [blacklisting](#) half a dozen employees of Iran's [state media](#). A 3 November action focused on what the Treasury Department [described](#) as "an international oil smuggling network that facilitated oil trades and generated revenue for Hizbollah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force", followed up on 17 November with another set of energy-related [sanctions](#) against thirteen companies engaged in petrochemical and petroleum sales. On 15 November, the U.S. [sanctioned](#) three Iranian entities, including the IRGC Aerospace Force, in a larger set of [designations](#) involving Russian and UAE-based companies implicated in the transfer of drones being used by Russia in Ukraine. The European Union on 14 November [approved](#) sanctions against 32 individuals and entities over the Iranian government's crackdown against protesters as well as UAV provision to Russia; the UK in parallel [sanctioned](#) two dozen Iranian officials. Canada's government issued three sets of sanctions over the reporting period (over [human rights](#) as well [UAV](#) transfers), in addition to travel [restrictions](#) on senior Iranian officials.

In addition to sanctions, there has been a concerted push to highlight human rights concerns in international fora: The U.S., along with Albania, on 2 November co-hosted a UN Security Council Arria-formula [meeting](#) on the protests; Vice-President Kamala Harris the same day [announced](#) that the U.S. would "work with our partners to remove Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women". The Third Committee of General Assembly 16 November [passed](#) a Canada-led resolution on Iran's human rights situation by 80 votes to 28, with 68 states abstaining. Germany, whose foreign minister on 26 October [declared](#) that "there can be no 'business as usual'" with Iran, and Iceland have also spearheaded a special session of the UN Human Rights Council to be [held](#) on 24 November in Geneva.

*Safeguards Censure.* The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on 16 November started its quarterly Board of Governors meeting in Vienna, with Director General Rafael Grossi [noting](#) that curtailed monitoring and verification "will have a significant impact on the Agency's ability to recover and reestablish the necessary continuity of knowledge" should the JCPOA be restored; the IAEA's [survey](#) of Iranian nuclear activity, dated 10 November, pegs the growing stockpile of uranium enriched to 60 per cent at 62.3kg. Grossi also shared "serious concern" over the lack of progress in resolving safeguards concerns related to past activities at undeclared nuclear sites. On 17 November, a censure [resolution](#) proposed by the U.S. and E3 (Germany, France and the UK) deeming Iranian cooperation "essential and urgent" secured 26 out of 35 votes; Russia and China, as they had June, voted against the measure, while five countries abstained and two were not present. Iran's atomic energy agency on 22 November [announced](#) that enrichment to 60 per cent had commenced at the bunkered Fordow enrichment facility in response to the censure, along with additional deployment of advanced centrifuges at Natanz. The IRCG 5 November [reported](#) the successful testing of a solid fuel satellite carrier, which the U.S. [said](#) was "unhelpful and destabilising".

*Maritime Intrigue.* The U.S. 5th fleet on 15 November [announced](#) the interdiction a week earlier of a stateless dhow, crewed by four Yemenis, "smuggling lethal aid, including a large quantity of explosive material, from Iran to Yemen". Iran [denied](#) the implication of violating a UN arms embargo. Also on the maritime front, the *MV Pacific Zircon*, an Israeli-owned Liberian-flagged tanker, was attacked on 15 November off Oman's coast. The ship's operator [reported](#) "minor damage to the vessel's hull", and in a statement on 16 November U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [assessed](#) that "Iran likely conducted this attack using a UAV".

### What's Coming Up

22 November: EU parliament debate on Iran protests; High Representative Josep Borrell attending

24 November: Special [session](#) on Iran at the UN Human Rights Council

Exact date TBC [December]: Semiannual UN Security Council 2231 briefing