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Iran Protests Update: January 16, 2026

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Since December 28, 2025, protests against the Iranian regime have erupted across Iran in response to the country's economic collapse. JINSA will release daily updates covering the demonstrations as long as they continue. The update below reflects information as of January 16, 2026, at 10:30 am ET.

Overview

The Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) has confirmed the deaths of at least [2,677](#) individuals during the ongoing protests. However, *Iran International* has reported that at least [12,000](#) have been killed, with many of those deaths reported as the country plunged into a nationwide internet outage on January 8 and 9. HRANA also reported that over [19,097](#) others have been detained as of January 16.

Protests

- Overnight on January 15 and 16, protests occurred in the city of [Zahedan](#) where protesters chanted that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali "Khamenei is a killer, his rule is illegitimate" after Friday night prayer services in Zahedan.
- Overnight on January 15 and 16, [clashes](#) between security forces and protesters reportedly occurred in the cities of Tehran, Islamabad-e Gharb, Ilam, Kermanshah, Isfahan, Gonbad-e Kavus, Mashhad, Kahrizak, Khoy, and Langarud.
- HRANA [reported](#) that as of January 16, 618 protests have occurred across 187 cities compared to [617](#) reported protests as of January 15, [614](#) reported protests as of January 14, and [606](#) reported protests as of January 13.
- On January 15, *Iran International* [published](#) a video from the funeral of 17-year-old protester Alireza Seydi in Abdaban where a large crowd of attendees chanted "death to Khamenei."
 - » The crowd also allegedly [chanted](#), "I will kill the one who killed my brother," "this country will not be a country until the mullahs are shrouded," and "this is the year of blood; Seyed Ali [Khamenei] will be overthrown."
- On January 15, a spokesperson from the Kurdistan National Army (SMK), the armed wing of the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), [requested](#) the support of the United States and Israel to confront the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Iran.

Regime Retaliation

- On January 16, *IranWire* [reported](#) that at least 600 protesters had to have their eyes removed after sustaining injuries during clashes with regime forces.

- On January 16, a [report](#) in *IranWire* indicated that the regime plans to extend its internet blackout until at least Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, which falls around March 20.
- On January 15, *CNN* [reported](#) that thousands of Iraqi militia fighters entered Iran to suppress protesters.

Regime Responses

- On January 16, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatmai, a prominent hardline prayer leader in Tehran, [called](#) for protesters to be executed during his Friday night sermon which was broadcast on Iranian state radio.
- On January 16, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian [thanked](#) Russian President Vladimir Putin during a phone call for “Russia’s position” in support of Tehran at the United Nations Security Council session in New York on January 15.
- On January 15, IRGC Commander Mohsen Rezaei [threatened](#) President Donald Trump, stating, “we will cut off his hand and his finger.”
- On January 15, Iran’s ambassador to France, Mohammad Amin Nejad, [stated](#) in a television interview that there “is undeniable support” from the majority of Iranians for their “supreme leader” Ayatollah Khamenei.

U.S. Responses

- On January 16, the U.S. State Department [said](#) Iran’s nationwide internet shutdown had entered its second week, accusing Tehran of deliberately cutting off access to “hide the violent actions of the Islamic Republic regime” against protesters.
- On January 15, the United States [criticized](#) Iran’s participation in naval exercises off South Africa’s coast, calling it unacceptable amid Tehran’s crackdown on protests, as Chinese-, Russian-, Iranian-, and Emirati-led drills proceed under the BRICS+ framework.

International Responses

- On January 16, the Kremlin [said](#) that Putin spoke via telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu regarding Iran, telling the Israeli leader he was in favor of “intensifying political and diplomatic efforts” to ensure regional stability.
- On January 16, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar [urged](#) the European Union (EU) to designate Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organization during talks with EU officials, citing the group’s leading role in the violent crackdown on protests in Iran.
- On January 15, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that Netanyahu advised Trump to postpone taking any military action against Iran.
- On January 15, Reuters [reported](#) that Saudi, Qatari, Omani, and Egyptian officials allegedly convinced the United States not to strike Iran.
- On January 15, Axios [reported](#) that Israeli Mossad Director David Barnea arrived in the United States, where he is supposed to meet with U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff to discuss the Iran protests.