



Iran Summary

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Overview

As anti-regime protests swept through Iran, the government cracked down on dissent by killing thousands of protesters, kidnapping wounded citizens from hospitals, torturing demonstrators, and cutting internet access nationwide for over 20 days. The Human Rights Activists News Agency has confirmed the deaths of at least [6,000](#) protesters, but *Iran International* has reported that an estimated [36,500](#) protesters could have been killed during a major crackdown on the nights of January 8 and 9. Regime forces have also detained at least [42,000](#) other protesters while also utilizing Iraqi proxies to violently contain demonstrations.

Iran's vile treatment of its citizens and struggle to repress dissent gained international attention as the United States repeatedly threatened military action against the government for its gross human rights violations and failure to comply with nuclear demands. U.S. warnings prompted public declarations of support for the regime from Iran's proxies, as well as China and Russia, who warned against outside forces compromising Iran's sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Israeli and Turkish authorities arrested several people for spying for Iranian agents, including individuals accused of collecting sensitive information on the [Incirlik Air Base](#).

Domestic/Human Rights

As anti-regime demonstrations surged across Iran's 31 provinces, government authorities murdered thousands of protesters and innocent bystanders, with reports suggesting that over [36,500](#) people are dead. Security forces reportedly utilized torture, deployed chemical weapons, and sexually abused detained protesters while also denying them access to medical care. Meanwhile, the government [shut down](#) the internet to suppress gatherings and conceal its massacre.

- On January 31, two blasts in the cities of Bandar Abbas and Ahvaz [killed](#) at least six people in total and injured several others.
 - » Iranian officials blamed the explosions on gas leaks, while both the United States and Israel [denied](#) any involvement in the blasts.
- On January 28, the Iranian currency [sank](#) to an all-time low of 1.6 million rials per U.S. dollar amidst the country's ongoing economic crisis.
- On January 28, Iranian authorities [executed](#) Hamidreza Sabet Esmailipour after arresting him in April 2025 for allegedly leaking classified information to Israel's Mossad.
- On January 27, *Iran International* [reported](#) that Iranian security forces have arrested medical staff for attending to injured protesters.
- On January 20, the Center for Human Rights in Iran [claimed](#) that the regime sentenced Iranian soldier Javid Kholes to death for refusing to fire his weapon at a crowd of protesters.

- On January 19, *The Guardian*, citing Kurdistan Human Rights Network, [reported](#) that two detained protesters, including a 16-year-old, were sexually assaulted by security forces while in custody.
- On January 19, the Iranian government [suspended](#) *Ham-Mihan*, a reformist Iranian newspaper, for covering anti-regime protests after it [revealed](#) in a report on January 7 that government security forces barred citizens from donating blood and kidnapped injured protesters from a hospital in Malekshahi.
- On January 17, former British parliament member Bill Rammell [claimed](#) that Iranian security forces deployed chemical weapons on protesters during the recent uprising.
 - » Following Rammell's allegations, *Iran International* published a video from January 8 in which authorities in Sabzevar wore hazmat suits and masks while operating a vehicle displaying a hazardous materials symbol on the side door.
- On January 15, *Iran International* [reported](#) that regime authorities are charging the families of murdered protesters fees for the ammunition used to kill their loved ones.
- On the nights of January 8 and 9, the Iranian government [launched](#) a major crackdown on protests, killing upwards of 36,500 people, according to *Iran International*.
 - » Video footage from those nights depicted several instances of security forces shooting live ammunition and tear gas into crowds while also beating protesters.
- On January 8, the Iranian government indefinitely [cut](#) internet access nationwide as protests expanded to all of the country's 31 provinces.
 - » Government authorities also [seized](#) satellite dishes and [blocked](#) citizens' access to Starlink internet.
- On January 7, Iranian state media [reported](#) that the regime had executed Ali Ardestani after authorities accused him of spying for Israel's Mossad in exchange for financial compensation.

Military

Iranian generals threatened military action against the United States, warning of severe consequences if it interfered in Iran's protests or targeted the regime's leadership. Meanwhile, the regime acquired [1,000 drones](#) in preparations for a potential U.S. strike.

- On January 30, U.S. Central Command [warned](#) the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps against conducting escalatory military exercises in the Strait of Hormuz after state-affiliated media outlet *Press TV* announced that the country's naval forces would conduct "live-fire exercises," in February.
- On January 30, Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani [threatened](#) to attack U.S. embassies in the Middle East if the United States struck Iran.
- On January 29, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that Iranian officials have rejected President Donald Trump's terms for a deal, threatening that "targets across the region would be fair game" if the U.S. attacked Iran.
- On January 29, Iran's semi-official *Tasnim News Agency* [reported](#) that the Iranian army acquired 1,000 drones as the regime's military prepared for a potential U.S. strike.
- On January 28, Ali Shamkhani, a senior advisor to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, [posted](#) to X writing that U.S. military action against Iran would "be considered the start of

war” and prompt an attack “targeting the heart of Tel Aviv and all supporters of the aggressor.”

- » His announcement came two days after the U.S. Air Forces Central Command [announced](#) its troops had launched a multi-day military exercise in the region “to demonstrate the ability to deploy, disperse, and sustain combat airpower.”
- On January 22, Khatam-al Anbiya Central Headquarters Commander Major General Ali Abdollahi Aliabadi [warned](#) that “aggression” against Iran’s interests would “transform all American interests, bases, and centers of influence into legitimate, definitive, and accessible targets” for Iran’s military.
- On January 21, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi directly [threatened](#) the United States, warning that the regime would be “firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack.”
- On January 1, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) that Iran’s military looks to sell missiles abroad in exchange for cryptocurrency.

Nuclear

As Iran’s government cracked down on protests, the United States demanded that the regime abandon its nuclear ambitions, threatening military action. Iranian leaders stood defiant against Trump’s threats despite Khamenei reportedly going into subterranean [hiding](#). Meanwhile, new [satellite imagery](#) depicted new construction activity at three Iranian nuclear facilities.

- On January 30, the Associated Press [published](#) satellite images revealing that Iran has built roofs over buildings at the Natanz and Isfahan nuclear facilities targeted during the 12-Day War.
 - » The Associated Press’s report came after the Institute for Science and International Security [published](#) satellite images taken earlier in the day depicting buried tunnel entrances and vehicles present at the Isfahan Nuclear Complex, suggesting Iran could be transferring “recovered assets from other sites into the tunnel.”
- On January 30, Trump [announced](#) that he had provided Iranian leaders with a deadline to accept a nuclear deal.
- On January 28, following Trump’s announcement that the United States would surge additional naval assets to the Middle East, he [demanded](#) that Iran immediately negotiate a nuclear deal to avoid an attack “far worse” than the June 2025 U.S. strikes.
 - » Araghchi [responded](#) to Trump’s warning, stating that “Iran has always welcomed a mutually beneficial, fair and equitable nuclear deal,” the regime’s “rights to peaceful nuclear technology, and guarantees no nuclear weapons.”
- On January 26, Trump [stated](#) that Iranian officials have contacted him on “numerous occasions” in an effort to “make a deal” on Iran’s nuclear program with the United States as the USS *Abraham Lincoln* entered U.S. Central Command’s Area of Responsibility in the Indian Ocean.
- On January 24, Khamenei reportedly [entered](#) underground hiding in Tehran, fearing a potential U.S. strike on Iran after President Donald Trump issued repeated warnings to the regime.
- On January 22, the Institute for Science and International Security [published](#) updated satellite imagery depicting nearly completed construction of a concrete sarcophagus at Iran’s Taleghani 2 nuclear facility.

Malign Activities Abroad

Israeli authorities announced they had arrested two men, including an Israeli soldier, for spying at the behest of Iranian agents, while Turkish authorities also detained six individuals for collecting intelligence for Iranian officers, including information on the [Incirlik Air Base](#).

- On January 28, Turkish authorities [arrested](#) six individuals accused of collecting intelligence for Iranian officers, including information related to the Incirlik Air Base.
 - » One suspect allegedly [sought](#) to transport military drones from Turkey to northern Cyprus, while another suspect was recruited to assassinate Iranian dissidents for financial compensation.
- On January 15, Israeli police [announced](#) they had arrested an Israeli Givati Brigade soldier in September, charging him with photographing military sites for Iranian agents following the 12-Day War.
- On January 6, Israeli military sources reportedly [warned](#) Syrian authorities that Iran is plotting an attack on interim Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa.
- On January 5, Israeli authorities [announced](#) they had detained a man from Rishon Lezion, accusing him of collaborating with Iranian intelligence to spy on former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

Proxy Aggression

In a desperate attempt to quell protests, the regime recruited [Kataib Hezbollah](#) and other Iraqi proxies to help suppress dissent while its other regional militias, including the Houthis, threatened to violently retaliate if the United States attacked Iran or its leadership.

- On January 27, Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem [declared](#) that Trump's threats to Khamenei also target Hezbollah and that his fighters will "confront this threat by any means."
- On January 26, *SANA News Agency*, Syria's state media outlet, [reported](#) that Syrian government forces intercepted an alleged weapons smuggling attempt to Hezbollah.
- On January 26, Yemen's Houthi rebels [posted](#) footage depicting a ship engulfed in flames with a caption that read "soon"—potentially threatening to restart attacks in the Red Sea as tensions mounted between the United States, Israel, and Iran.
 - » That same day, Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq [released](#) a statement threatening Israel that if Iran is attacked, "the war on the Islamic Republic will leave nothing of you in our region."
- On January 15, *The Media Line* [reported](#) that Kataib Hezbollah allegedly hired fighters in Iraq to suppress Iranian protesters.
 - » The report came after sources alleged that hundreds of Hezbollah and Iran-backed Iraqi fighters [entered](#) Iran to violently combat anti-regime demonstrations.

Russia/China Ties

As Iranian authorities killed thousands of protesters, Chinese and Russian officials expressed public support for Iran's sovereignty and warned against foreign intervention to back Iran's

protests. The regime also reportedly utilized [Russian technology](#) to block its citizens from accessing Starlink internet.

- On January 22, *Forbes*, citing a source that helps Iranians access Starlink internet and additional war monitoring sources, [reported](#) that Iran likely deployed Russia's Kalinka jamming system to block its citizens from utilizing Starlink.
- On January 13, Russia's Foreign Ministry [condemned](#) any potential foreign interference in Iran's domestic crisis, warning that the United States "must be aware of the disastrous consequences of such actions" on regional and global security if it pursued military action against the Iranian government.
- On January 12, China's Foreign Ministry [expressed](#) solidarity with Iran's government, stating that all countries' "sovereignty and security" must be "fully protected by international law," following Trump's numerous threats to the regime for its violent crackdown on protests.
- On January 9, Iranian, Chinese, and Russian warships [arrived](#) in South Africa's Simon's Town Harbor for a Chinese-led, BRICS naval drill.
 - » Despite South African President Cyril Ramaphosa ordering that Iran's participation in the drill be "downgraded to observer status," the Iranian Navy still reportedly [engaged](#) in "live-fire exercises."

Recent JINSA Products on Iran

Op-eds & Insights

- January 30: "[U.S. Interceptors Are Depleted, Making Iran Decision Difficult](#)," *RealClearDefense*, Maj Gen Charles Corcoran, USAF (ret.) and Ari Cicurel
- January 24: "[The U.S. Can Assist in Disarming Hezbollah](#)," *RealClearWorld*, MajGen Austin Renforth, USMC (ret.) and Sarah Havdala
- January 20: "[What Happens Next for the US and Iran?](#)" *Algemeiner*, Jonathan Ruhe
- January 18: "[Focus on Regime Collapse](#)," Michael Makovsky, PhD and Blaise Misztal
- January 16: "[Infographic: U.S. 'Red Line' on Iran Protests](#)"
- January 14: "[Credibility and Collapse: U.S. Policy Options Toward Iranian Protests](#)," Michael Makovsky, PhD, Blaise Misztal, Ari Cicurel, and Yoni Tobin
- January 11: "[Quarantine Iran's Oil to Collapse Regime](#)," Michael Makovsky, PhD, and VADM John M. Bird, USN (ret.)
- January 10: "[Trump Has Historic Chance to Help Topple Iran's America-hating Regime](#)," *Fox News*, VADM Robert Harward, USN (ret.) and Sarah Havdala
- January 9: "[Why Iran's Protest Movement Cannot Succeed Without the Kurds](#)," Giran Ozcan

Webinars & TV Appearances

- January 27: "[New U.S. Regional Force Posture is a 'Credible Threat' to the Iranian Regime](#)," JINSA Fellow Jonathan Ruhe on *NewsNation*
- January 21: "['Nothing But Strategic Upside' for America if Iranian Regime Collapses](#)," JINSA President & CEO Michael Makovsky and VP for Policy Blaise Misztal on *Iran International*

- January 19: “[Iran Felt ‘They Could Do Anything’ Under Past U.S. Appeasement Policies](#),” JINSA’s VADM (ret.) Robert Harward on *Fox News Radio*
- January 19: “[The U.S. Can Help the Iranian People Collapse the Regime](#),” JINSA Fellow Jonathan Ruhe on *NewsNation*
- January 17: “[Iranian Regime Has ‘Lost All Credibility and Legitimacy’ Domestically](#),” JINSA Senior Fellow John Hannah on *NewsNation*
- January 16: “[U.S. Carrier Deployment Sends ‘Unmistakable Signal’ to Iran](#),” JINSA Fellow Jonathan Ruhe on *LiveNOW from Fox*
- January 15: “[Webinar – How Should the U.S. Respond to Iranian Protests?](#)” IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, VADM Robert Harward, USN (ret.), Lt Gen Charles Moore, USAF (ret.), and Blaise Misztal.
- January 14: “[Iranian Regime Collapse is ‘Long Overdue’](#),” JINSA’s VADM Robert Harward (ret.) on the *Ben Shapiro Show*
- January 14: “[It’s ‘Very Clear’ Iranian Regime Defied Trump’s Red Line](#),” JINSA VP for Policy Blaise Misztal on *LiveNOW from Fox*
- January 13: “[U.S. Can Use ‘A Lot of Tools’ Against the Iranian Regime](#),” JINSA’s VADM Robert Harward (ret.) on *NewsNation*
- January 6: “[Webinar – Protests Sweep Iran](#),” Dr. Ray Takeyh, Mariam Memarsadeghi, and Michael Makovsky, PhD.

Protest Updates

- [Iran Protests Update 1/21/26 – 1/27/26](#)
- [Iran Protests Update 1/17/26 – 1/20/26](#)
- [Iran Protests Update 1/16/26](#)
- [Iran Protests Update 1/15/26](#)
- [Iran Protests Update 1/14/26](#)
- [Iran Protests Update 1/13/26](#)
- [Iran Protests Update 1/12/26](#)