

Iran

November 2019 Protests



Ministry of Immigration
and Integration

The Danish
Immigration Service

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Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
CCTV	Closed-circuit Cameras
CHRI	Center for Human Rights in Iran
COI	Country of Origin Information
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
DMRF	Demokrati och Mänskliga Rättigheters Förbund
HRANA	Human Rights Activists News Agency
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
MEK IRAN/MKO	People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran/Mujahedin-e-Khalq
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDKI	Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan
PJAK	Kurdistan Free Life Party
SoMe	Social Media
VPN	Virtual Private Networks
USDOS	US Department of State

Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology.¹ It is not, and does not purport to be a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed in the report and should be weighed against other available country of origin information about the November 2019 protests in Iran.

The report does not include any policy recommendations or analysis. The information in the report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service. Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The outline of incidents in the following cities of Kermanshah Province: Kermanshah City, Sarpol-e-Zahab, Eslamabad-e Gharb and Javanrud, does not purport to be a complete history of events in these places during the November 2019 protests. Instead, the aim is to shed light on the nature of government reprisals against protesters as well as the nature of protester behaviour by use of examples.

¹ EASO, *Country of Origin Information (COI), Report Methodology*, June 2019, [url](#)

1. Introduction and Methodology

The aim of this report is to provide updated information on issues related to participation in the November 2019 protests in Iran.

The report is divided into three parts. The first part provides a general outline of the character of the protests, while the second part is a case study specifically providing accounts of events in Kermanshah Province gathered by use of open source intelligence tools and techniques. The third part focuses on repercussions of protesting with regard to identification, arrest, registration, accusations, sentencing, travel bans, and consequences for relatives of identified protesters.

The first and third part of the report are primarily based on a variety of written sources such as fact finding reports, reports by human rights organisations, UN agencies and articles published by media outlets, along with approved minutes of a Skype meeting with an Iranian journalist who followed the protests closely.

The source consulted was informed about the purpose of the report and that his statement would be included in a public report. The notes from the meeting with the source were forwarded to him for approval, giving him a chance to amend, comment, or correct his statements. The source approved his statements which are found in their full extent in appendix 1.

Access to information is limited in Iran, the Kermanshah Province case, however, stands as an example of how social media (SoMe) posts can be utilised as primary sources. After the initial reports of first protests in November 2019, Iran faced a complete internet shut down for 12 hours.² Although access to internet was sporadically available, the national connectivity levels hit as low as 5 percent of ordinary levels on 15 November and peaked at merely 22 percent on 23 November 2019.³ Despite the nationwide internet blackout, Iranian activists inside and outside the country took to the SoMe platforms to share videos and updates from the demonstrations.⁴ In this regard, activists outside Iran played an active role in spreading footage and news about the protests,⁵ and even with the Iranian government's blocking of Twitter,⁶ the hashtag *#IranProtests* slowly made it to the top trends in mid-November 2019 with more than five tweets being sent out every one second.⁷

Likewise, the government also reported information about November 2019 protests on more traditional platforms, such as television and radio.⁸

² Al Arabiya English, *Iran in 'near-total national internet shutdown' amid ongoing protests*, 16 November 2019 [url](#)

³ Netblocks, Mapping Net Freedom, *Internet disrupted in Iran amid fuel protests in multiple cities*, 15 November 2019 [url](#)

⁴ Al Arabiya English, *Social Media joins protests on the ground in Iran despite internet blackout*, 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁵ Netblocks, Mapping Net Freedom, *Internet disrupted in Iran amid fuel protests in multiple cities*, 15 November 2019 [url](#); Wired, *The dark web, Iran style*, 29 November 2019 [url](#)

⁶ NBC news, *Tech-savvy Iranians stay connected on social media despite government restrictions*, 21 August 2019, [url](#); Express UK, *Iran Blackout: Is Twitter banned in Iran? How rebels publicise their plight*, 2 January 2020, [url](#)

⁷ Al Arabiya English, *'Death to the dictator': Iran protests intensify after petrol price hike*, 16 November 2019, [url](#)

⁸ Ehsan Mehrabi: 18

Farsi	English translation
#بنزین	#Petrol
#گرانی_بنزین	#Expensive_petrol
#ننزین_۳۰۰۰_تومانی	#3000_toman_Petrol
#اعتراضات_سراسری	#Protests_cross-country
#تظاهرات_سراسری	#Cross-country_protests
#کرمانشاه	#Kermanshah
#چوانرود	#Javanrud
#اسلام_آباد_غرب	<i>#eslam_abad_gharb</i>

Table 1: Hashtags featured on Twitter during the November 2019 Protests

The popular hashtags which trended on Twitter during 15 - 18 November 2019 were used to find and narrow down search results for source material included in this report (see Table 1). All social media content was cross referenced using open source tools for geolocation such as Google Earth Pro and/or narratives presented in written source material such as news articles and reports by NGOs, UN agencies and think tanks. When citing some posts in the report, preference was given to posts shared by verified Twitter accounts or posts cited by other reliable sources such as newspaper articles and studies from different NGOs. In case the post cited is shared by an unverified user, the social media history of the user was checked for discrepancies, for instance whether or not the profile was created recently, the content of other posts shared by the user, and who the user follows and is followed by. Preference was also given to posts by social media users who used the trending hashtags and attached their own localities, thereby sharing local eye witness accounts such as #Kermanshah⁹ #Javanrud¹⁰ both situated in the Kurdish part of Iran and part of the case study in part two.

The research and editing of this report was finalised on 30 June 2020.

The report can be accessed from the website of DIS, www.newtodenmark.dk, and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the general public.

⁹ Soran, [Twitter], posted on: 29 November 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰ Soran, [Twitter], posted on: 29 November 2019, [url](#)

2. Mapping the protests

The nationwide unrest during November 2019 in Iran was triggered on 15 November 2019 when the government announced a 50 percent hike in oil prices.¹¹ As depicted in Figure 1, soon after the announcement, the protests erupted in Mashhad, the capital city of Iran’s Khorasan-e Razavi province, and several cities in the Khuzestan province in southwest Iran, namely in Ahvaz, Behbahan, Mahshahr, and Omidiyeh.¹² The following day protests spilled over to other major cities such as Sirjan, Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Zahedan, Tabriz, Bandar Abbas, Birjand, and Rasht.¹³

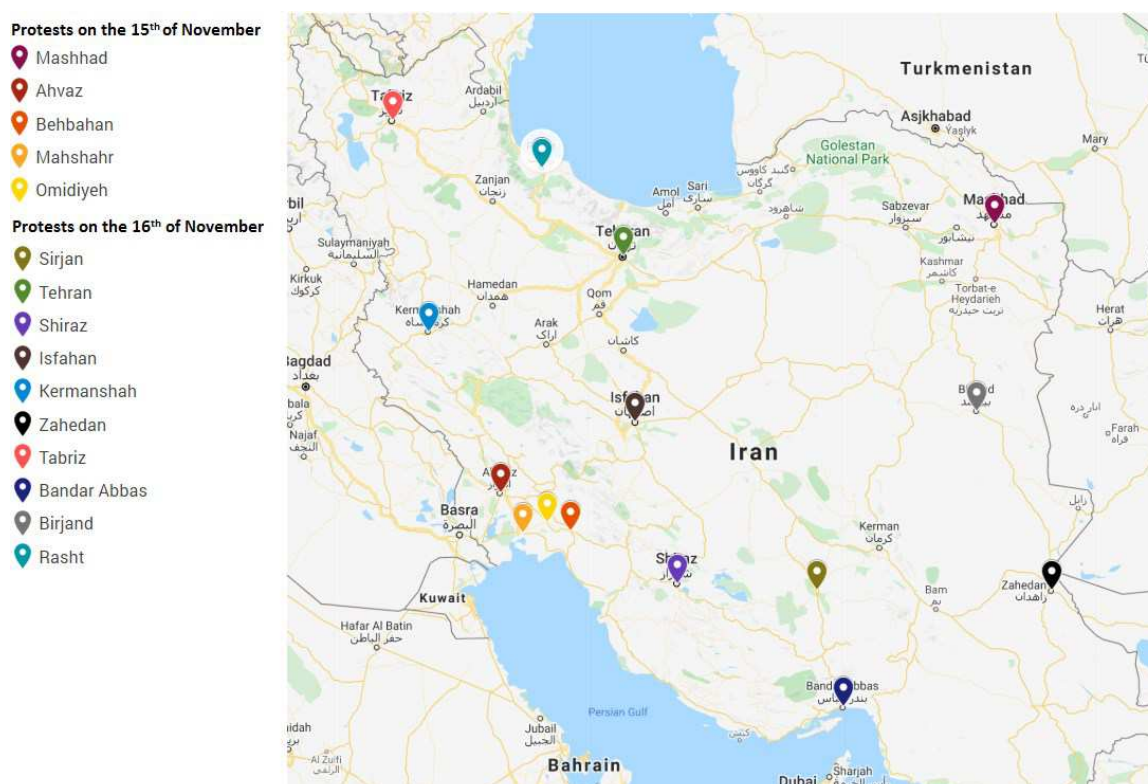


Figure 1: The start and spread of the protests in Iran during 15 – 16 November 2019

Source: Google Maps

The protests seemed concentrated mostly in neighbourhoods and cities populated by low-income, working- and middle-class families.¹⁴ According to reports, the protesters comprised largely of unemployed or low-

¹¹ CNN, *Iran’s ‘largest internet shutdown ever’ is happening now. Here’s what you need to know*, November 2019, [url](#); Al Jazeera, *Petrol rationing and price hikes take Iranians by surprise*, 19 November 2019, [url](#); BBC News, *Iran protests: UN fears dozens of people have been killed*, 19 November 2019, [url](#)

¹² Radio Farda, *Protests Over Fuel Prices In Iran Spread To Multiple Cities*, 15 November 2019, [url](#); United States Institute of Peace, *The Iran Primer – Protests: Overview and Timeline*, 18 December 2019, [url](#); Iran Wire, *Iranians Protest After “Sad but Necessary” Decision to Raise Gas Prices*, 15 November 2019, [url](#)

¹³ United States Institute of Peace, *The Iran Primer – Protests: Overview and Timeline*, 18 December 2019, [url](#); Al Arabiya, *‘Death to the dictator’: Iran protests intensify after petrol price hike*, 16 November 2019, [url](#)

¹⁴ Atlantic Council, *Iran protests: A quest for reform turns into widespread discontent*, 18 November 2019, [url](#); MEE, *Iran protests: The US is in for a big disappointment*, 25 November 2019, [url](#); Radio Farda, *Iran Protests: Uprising Of The Poor And Underprivileged?*, 21 November 2019, [url](#); The New York Times, *Iran Declares Protests Are Over, but the Evidence Suggests Otherwise*, 21 November 2019, [url](#); The New York Times, *With Brutal Crackdown, Iran Is Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years*, 1 December 2019, [url](#)

income young men.¹⁵ However, women and minors were present at the protests as well.¹⁶ Ehsan Mehrabi noted that one of the distinct features of the November 2019 protests was the high number of young protesters below the age 18,¹⁷ as well as a large presence and activity of Kurds and Ahwahzi Arabs, both of whom are generally poor ethnic minority groups.¹⁸

It is difficult to assert how the protests were organised; the Atlantic Council reported that the protests were not organised gatherings, as it had been the case in previous years.¹⁹ Furthermore, according to Ehsan Mehrabi, no systematic study has been done in terms of use of social media (SoMe) in organising the November 2019 protests. Thus, there is no systematic information about this. However, it is commonly known that smaller groups on Telegram and other SoMe platforms with roots in local communities have been used to call for participation among inhabitants of smaller towns.²⁰

Sources describe the November 2019 protesters as largely peaceful²¹ and unarmed demonstrators posing no imminent threat of death or serious injury.²² However, sources note that some protesters resorted to violence, e.g. by throwing rocks at the security forces.²³ Protesters reportedly vandalised government buildings such as governor's offices, bases belonging to and chain stores owned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), police stations and offices of the heads of Friday prayers.²⁴ In addition, reports suggest that the protesters torched banks, petrol stations, and looted shops.²⁵

The Iranian government, reportedly used firearms, water cannons, tear gas, and snipers against the protesters.²⁶ Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) stated that the lethal use of force by state security

¹⁵ The New York Times, *With Brutal Crackdown, Iran Is Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years*, 1 December 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶ Al, *'They shot our children': Killings of minors in Iran's November 2019 protests*, March 2020, [url](#), p. 8; BBC News, *Iran protests: Videos reveal crackdown government tried to hide from world*, 27 November 2019, [url](#); OHCHR, *Bachelet calls on Iran to address multiple human rights violations in context of recent protests*, 6 December 2019, [url](#)

¹⁷ Ehsan Mehrabi: 16

¹⁸ Ehsan Mehrabi: 17

¹⁹ Atlantic Council, *Iran protests: A quest for reform turns into widespread discontent*, 18 November 2019, [url](#)

²⁰ Ehsan Mehrabi: 15

²¹ Al, *Iran: More than 100 protesters believed to be killed as top officials give green light to crush protests*, 19 November 2019, [url](#); CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 11; USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

²² OHCHR, *Bachelet calls on Iran to address multiple human rights violations in context of recent protests*, 6 December 2019, [url](#)

²³ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 17

²⁴ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 11; INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#)

²⁵ ACLED, *Regional overview: Middle East 17 – 23 November 2019*, 26 November 2019, [url](#); CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 11; DW, *France expresses strong concern over the death toll from Iran's recent unrest*, 20 November 2019, [url](#); INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#)

²⁶ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 12; OHCHR, *Bachelet calls on Iran to address multiple human rights violations in context of recent protests*, 6 December 2019, [url](#); INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#); USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 - Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

forces included the firing of live ammunition indiscriminately into crowds of unarmed protesters.²⁷ In some instances, security forces shot people who were fleeing the scene of protests.²⁸

The government not only deployed uniformed security forces to quell the dissent but also plainclothes agents, among them agents of the pro-government Basij militia,²⁹ which has been confirmed by international media.³⁰

The government has acknowledged that some people were killed during the November 2019 protests, though it is extremely difficult to verify the overall number.³¹ Estimates of the death toll ranged from verified reports of 304 to unconfirmed reports of up to 1,500 deaths,³² which include women and children.³³ The number of those injured by security forces range from 2,000 to 4,800.³⁴ At least 7,000 were reportedly arrested,³⁵ many on an arbitrary basis.³⁶

²⁷ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 9

²⁸ AI, *Iran: World must strongly condemn use of lethal force against protesters as death toll rises to 143*, 25 November 2019, [url](#); CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 12; HRW, *Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

²⁹ AI, *Iran: World must strongly condemn use of lethal force against protesters as death toll rises to 143*, 25 November 2019, [url](#); INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#); The Telegraph, *Iran crackdown on protesters revealed in new videos after internet blackout lifted*, 25 November 2019, [url](#); The New York Times, *Iran Declares Protests Are Over, but the Evidence Suggests Otherwise*, 21 November 2019, [url](#); Vice News, *Grisly Footage Reveals What Iran's Government Did to Protesters When the Internet Was Shut Down*, 26 November 2019, [url](#)

³⁰ PBS News, *Iran supreme leader claims protests are a U.S.-backed 'conspiracy'*, 27 November 2019, [url](#); The Telegraph, *Iran crackdown on protesters revealed in new videos after internet blackout lifted*, 25 November 2019, [url](#)

³¹ OHCHR, *Press briefing on Iran*, 19 November 2019, [url](#)

³² AI, *Iran: Thousands arbitrarily detained and at risk of torture in chilling post-protest crackdown*, 16 December 2019, [url](#); ARTICLE 19, *Freedom of Expression in Iran; Priorities for the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council*, February 2020, [url](#); INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#); USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

³³ AI, *'They shot our children': Killings of minors in Iran's November 2019 protests*, March 2020, [url](#), p. 8; BBC News, *Iran protests: Videos reveal crackdown government tried to hide from world*, 27 November 2019, [url](#); Iran True, *Timeline of brutal & bloody crackdown of Iran protests*, n.d., [url](#); CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 12, 24; OHCHR, *Bachelet calls on Iran to address multiple human rights violations in context of recent protests*, 6 December 2019, [url](#)

³⁴ ARTICLE 19, *Freedom of Expression in Iran; Priorities for the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council*, February 2020, [url](#); CSIS, *Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement*, 24 January 2020, [url](#), p. 3; Iran True, *Timeline of brutal & bloody crackdown of Iran protests*, n.d., [url](#); The New York Times, *With Brutal Crackdown, Iran Is Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years*, 1 December 2019, [url](#)

³⁵ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 13; CSIS, *Signposts of Struggle: Iran's Enduring Protest Movement*, 24 January 2020, [url](#), p. 3; HRW, *Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown*, 25 February 2020, [url](#); MEMO, *Iran arrests 7,000 fuel protesters in one week*, 27 November 2019, [url](#); Radio Farda, *Iran Jails At Least 8,000 Following November Protests*, 5 December 2019, [url](#); USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

³⁶ ARTICLE 19, *Freedom of Expression in Iran; Priorities for the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council*, February 2020, [url](#)

3. Case: Kermanshah province, 15 – 18 November 2019

The western province of Kermanshah saw protests erupting across its cities during 15 to 18 November 2019. Twitter, a social media medium which has previously been used by Iranians to broadcast dismay over the result of the general election in 2009 and mobilising protests,³⁷ was also extensively used during these protests. Twitter search results³⁸ for the hashtag³⁹ #IranProtests shows hundreds of Tweets⁴⁰ from protesters documenting the protests and the violence which ensued. Based on Twitter activity from Kermanshah province, Kermanshah City, Sarpol-e-Zahab, Eslamabad-e Gharb, and Javanrud are among the places where protests took place.



Figure 2: Protests in Kermanshah Province During 15 – 18 November 2019

Source: Google Maps and Twitter search result for #IranProtests

The riots turned into direct confrontations between protesters and security forces resulting in casualties on both sides.⁴¹ Hundreds of protesters were detained during the protests and in the aftermath of the uprising.⁴² In late December, more than a month after the protests began, security forces in Kermanshah

³⁷ RAND – National Security Research Division, *Using Social Media to Gauge Iranian Public Opinion and Mood After the 2009 Election*, 2012, [url](#)

³⁸ Search result: (Kermanshah) (#IranProtests) until:2019-11-18 since:2019-11-15, [Twitter], [url](#)

³⁹ [Twitter describes a hashtag as follows](#): “People use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in their Tweet to categorize those Tweets and help them show more easily in Twitter search.” Twitter, *How to use hashtags*, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁰ Collins Dictionary describes Tweet as follows: “A tweet is a short message from someone on the Twitter website.”

Collins Dictionary, *Definition of ‘tweet’*, n.d., [url](#)

⁴¹ HOHR, *45 Kurdish protesters killed and the identity of 20 has been verified*, 20 November 2019, [url](#); The Times of Israel, *Policeman killed, 40 arrested in Iran over gas price hike protests*, 17 November 2019, [url](#); The Telegraph, *Iranian police officer dies in clash with oil price protesters as supreme leader hints at crackdown*, 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁴² Radio Farda, *Iran Jails At Least 8,000 Following November Protests*, 5 December 2019, [url](#)

were still arresting people.⁴³ Protesters were accused by the authorities of carrying out vandalism, and news agencies quoted Iranian authorities for labelling the protesters as ‘thugs’ and ‘foreign agents’.⁴⁴

On 19 November 2019, Amnesty International reported that 31 civilians had so far been killed by security forces in Kermanshah province, making it the worst-hit province in terms of death toll among protesters.⁴⁵ The Iranian government rejected the death toll figures as “speculative”.⁴⁶ As of 15 December 2019, the National Council of Resistance of Iran⁴⁷ provided 76 names of protesters allegedly killed by security forces in Kermanshah province.⁴⁸

3.1. Kermanshah City

A person who observed protests on the morning of 16 November close to Azadi Square in Kermanshah City told HRW that a fire department truck, without warning, sprayed water toward protesters clapping and chanting slogans. According to the observer, within minutes clashes broke out with police special forces shooting tear gas and bullets, and people starting fires.⁴⁹ Amnesty International recorded two minors killed under fire from Iranian security forces during protests in the city of Kermanshah on 16 November 2019.⁵⁰ The use of water cannons and gunshots to disperse the protestors in Kermanshah is corroborated by several sources.⁵¹

On 16 November, BBC Persian correspondent Hadi Nili posted a BBC verified video from a protest in Kermanshah City on Twitter. The video shows security forces firing water cannons on protestors.⁵²

⁴³ INW, *More than 200 dead in 3 days of Iran protests*, 18 November 2019, [url](#); Radio Farda, *Iran Continues Crackdown A Month After Protests With 650 New Arrests*, 18 December 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁴ Radio Farda, *Iran Jails At Least 8,000 Following November Protests*, 5 December 2019, [url](#); Reuters, *Iran warns regional states of consequences if they stoked unrest*, 23 November 2019, [url](#); The Telegraph, *Iranian police officer dies in clash with oil price protesters as supreme leader hints at crackdown*, 17 November 2019, [url](#); The Times of Israel, *Policeman killed, 40 arrested in Iran over gas price hike protests*, 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁵ AI, *Iran: More than 100 protesters believed to be killed as top officials give green light to crush protests*, 19 November 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Reuters, *Iran warns regional states of consequences if they stoked unrest*, 23 November 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁷ A coalition of exiled Iranian opposition organisations and personalities.

⁴⁸ NCRI-US, *Uprising Shakes Iran Government's Foundations – A Significant Step Toward Eventual Downfall*, 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁹ HRW, *Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

⁵⁰ AI, *'They shot our children': Killings of minors in Iran's November 2019 protests*, March 2020, [url](#), pp. 15, 29-30

⁵¹ AI, *Iran: More than 100 protesters believed to be killed as top officials give green light to crush protests*, 19 November 2019, [url](#); BBC Farsi on Youtube, *تیراندازی مستقیم در کرمانشاه* [Direct shooting in Kermanshah], 19 November 2019, [url](#); HOHR, *45 Kurdish protesters killed and the identity of 20 has been verified*, 20 November 2019, [url](#); Iran True, *Timeline of brutal & bloody crackdown of Iran protests*, n.d., [url](#)

⁵² Hadi Nili, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#)



Figure 3: A BBC verified video from a protest in Kermanshah City shows how a water cannon is being used against protesters
Source: BBC

Two different amateur videos allegedly shot at Azadi Square were posted on Twitter and YouTube respectively; one video was posted by Kurdistan Human Rights Network on Twitter on 16 November 2019,⁵³ and the other, a compilation containing footage from various places, including Azadi Square, was published on YouTube by People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran – MEK IRAN on 6 December 2019.⁵⁴ Judging from buildings at the scene,⁵⁵ street lights, signs, and appearance of the pavement, the two videos have been shot at the same location. In both videos, puddles appear on the pavement. It did not rain in Kermanshah during 15 to 18 November 2019,⁵⁶ and stains around some of the puddles could indicate that the water struck the ground in a high-velocity stream,⁵⁷ e.g. stemming from a water cannon. The video posted on Twitter by Kurdistan Human Rights Network was, according to SunCalc.org, shot around the same hour of day that it was posted.⁵⁸ Direction of shadows in the footage posted by People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran – MEK IRAN seem to assemble the direction of shadows in the video posted by Kurdistan Human Rights Network.

⁵³ Kurdistan Human Rights Network, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁴ People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran – MEK IRAN, [YouTube], *Iranian security forces in Javanrud directly at protesters—new footage from Iran protests 2019*, posted on: 6 December 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁵ Marked with coloured shapes in the below pictures.

⁵⁶ Timeanddate.com, *Past Weather in Kermanshah, Iran – november 2019*, n.d., [url](#); Weather Underground, *Kermanshah, Kermanshah Province, Iran Weather History*, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁷ See from minute 5:51 in People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran – MEK IRAN, [YouTube], *Iranian security forces in Javanrud directly at protesters—new footage from Iran protests 2019*, posted on: 6 December 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁸ See solar data for Azadi Square in Kermanshah on 16 November 2019 at 08:37 UTC+3.5, [url](#)

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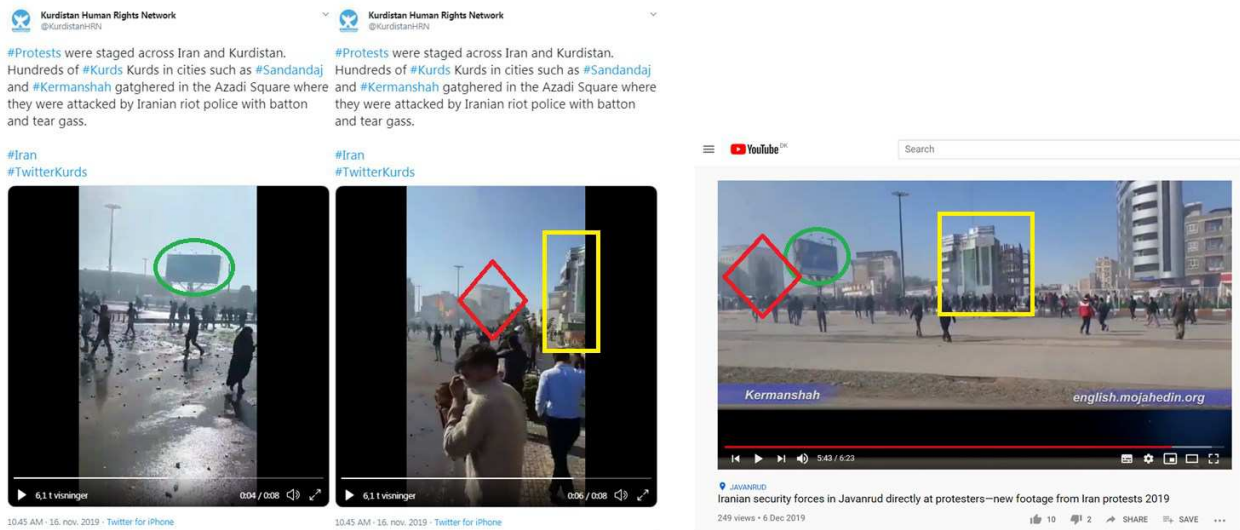


Figure 4: Two amateur videos shot from different angles, at Azadi Square in Kermanshah
Sources: *Kurdistan Human Rights Network* on Twitter (two stills to the left) and *People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran – MEK IRAN* on YouTube (still to the right)

The scenery in the videos from Azadi Square corresponds to satellite imagery of Azadi Square and a user generated picture retrieved by use of *Google Earth* (see: Figure 5 below).

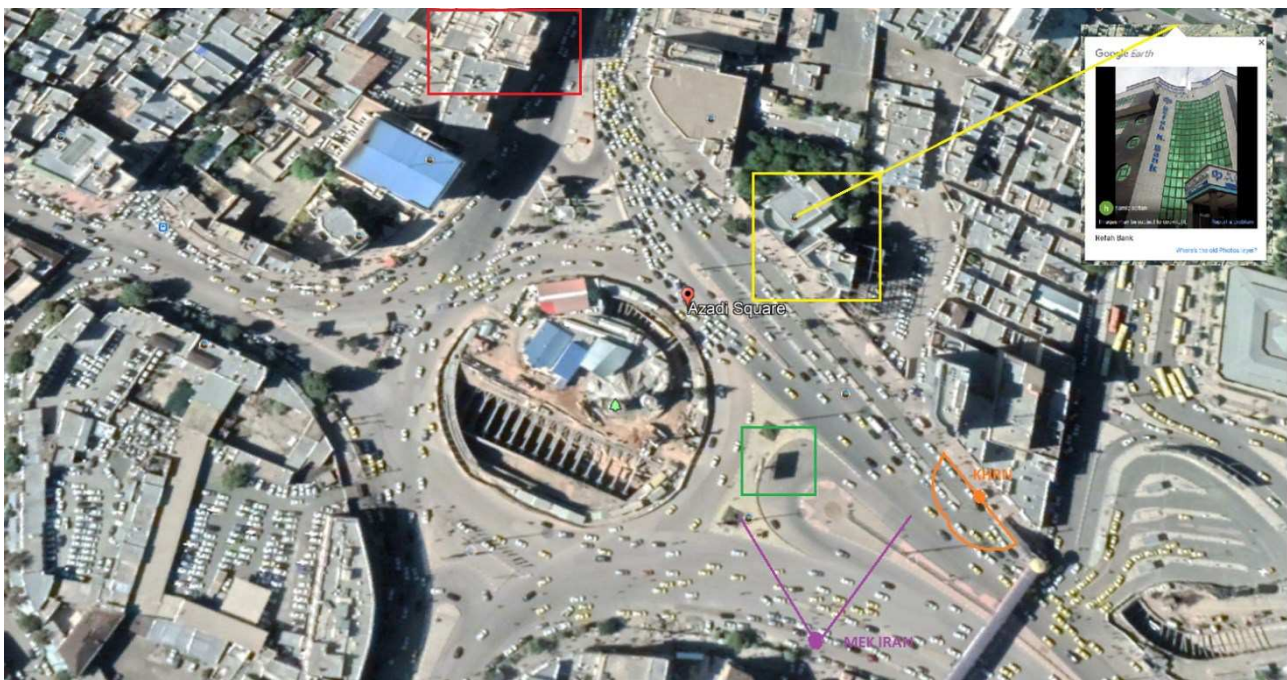


Figure 5: Satellite imagery of Azadi Square in Kermanshah City and a user generated picture of Refah Bank
Buildings and billboard are marked with the same colours as in the above stills from the videos posted by *Kurdistan Human Rights Network* and *People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran – MEK IRAN* on Twitter and YouTube respectively. The camera angles and user names of the two videos are marked in purple and orange respectively. Source: *Google Earth*

The building marked with the yellow square in the above stills from the videos appears to be Refah Bank with its characteristic green windows and arched facade. In another amateur video posted by Aleph X on Twitter just before noon on 16 November, protesters are filmed in front of a building that highly resembles the building marked with the red square in the below stills, when tear gas and water cannons are used

against them.⁵⁹ In one of the below stills from this video, the building is marked with a red square similar to the one used above.



Figure 6: Stills from Azadi Square
 Left: Tear gas is fired against protesters, right: Water cannons are fired against the protesters.
 Source: Aleph X, [on Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019

The scenery in the video from Azadi Square posted by Aleph X corresponds to satellite imagery of Azadi Square and a user generated picture retrieved through Google Earth (see: Figure 7 below). Furthermore, the video was shot around the same hour of day that it was posted, according to SunCalc.org.⁶⁰



Figure 7: Satellite imagery of Azadi Square in Kermanshah City and a user generated picture of Tejarat Bank
 A user generated picture at Google Earth reveals that the building marked in red is Tejarat Bank at Azadi Square as seen in the footage posted on Twitter by Aleph X. The camera angle of the video posted by Aleph X is marked in green in this figure. Source: Google Earth

According to a news article published by Iran News Wire, protesters in Kermanshah created roadblocks with burning tires preventing transportation on 17 November 2019. Security forces opened fire on

⁵⁹ Aleph X, [on Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁰ See solar data for Azadi Square in Kermanshah on 16 November 2019 at 11:22 UTC+3.5, [url](#)

protesters killing a number of them.⁶¹ Protests continued in Kermanshah City well into the evening of 17 November. In an amateur video allegedly shot in Kermanshah that night and posted on Twitter, the sound of what appears to be gunshots can be heard.⁶²

Several news media sources use the same wording referring to a video from protests in Kermanshah allegedly showing plainclothes security forces, some wielding nightsticks, dragging one man off by the hair of his head.⁶³ In an amateur video purportedly shot in Kermanshah and posted by a human rights lawyer on Twitter on 18 November,⁶⁴ plainclothes government forces with white batons appear to be chasing protesters. Some of the agents ride red motorbikes. Judging from the watermark, the video was originally posted by a user on Telegram.

Below is a screenshot of a tweet from the UK-based Iranian news agency, *Manoto News*. The video shows protests, and the person recording the footage starts by saying that he is currently at Azadi Square,⁶⁵ in Kermanshah. Protesters can be heard chanting “Don’t be afraid; don’t be afraid; we stand in this together” and the video is shared with the same information, and by using locality hashtag for Kermanshah, along with *#petrol*, *#3000toman_petrol* and *#expensive_petrol*.



Figure 8: Video posted by Manoto News
Source: Manoto News [Twitter] Posted 19 November 2019

According to HRW, at least three people were shot by security forces on the evening of 16 November in Dowlatabad, Kermanshah City while they were fleeing attacks on protesters. Two died in the street, and one later died in Taleghani Hospital. According to HRW, at least eight people died of gunshot wounds in

⁶¹ INW, *More than 200 dead in 3 days of Iran protests*, 18 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶² Mina Bai, [Twitter], posted on: 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶³ Asharq al-Awsat, *As Internet Restored, Online Iran Protest Videos Show Chaos*, 24 November 2019, [url](#); The Telegraph, *Iran crackdown on protesters revealed in new videos after internet blackout lifted*, 25 November 2019, [url](#); The Times of Israel, *As internet restored, online Iran protest videos show chaos*, 24 November 2019, [url](#); VOA News, *As Internet Restored, Online Iran Protest Videos Show Chaos*, 24 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Ehsan Hosseinzadeh, [Twitter], posted on: 18 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Manoto News, [Twitter], posted on: 19 November 2019, [url](#)

Taleghani Hospital on the night of 16 November.⁶⁶ In a video seemingly filmed after nightfall, allegedly in Dowlatabad, Kermanshah, and posted on Twitter by Center for Supporters of Human Rights on 17 November 2019, shots are heard.⁶⁷ The video was also posted on Twitter by Iran News Wire on the same date and tagged “Kermanshah West”, where the Dowlatabad neighbourhood is situated.⁶⁸

A witness account provided by HRW states that protesters were climbing up the walls of police station number 25. While people had assumed that the guards had left their posts, the police opened fire toward the first row of people climbing up the wall. When the police started shooting, protesters fled in the opposite direction, but the special forces of Kermanshah had apparently gathered behind the protesters with anti-riot vehicles. Some of the protesters apparently turned around and began running back toward the police station when security forces shot them.⁶⁹

3.2. Eslamabad-e Gharb

Another Twitter user shares an eyewitness account from Eslamabad-e Gharb, Kermanshah province, and here protestors can be heard chanting “Death to Rouhani.”⁷⁰ Again the same hashstags are used as well as those hashtags marking the exact geographical position of the protest. In the screenshot below, the user writes “Right now on the streets #taleghani #eslam_abad _gharb #Kermanshah” hereby giving the exact location of the protest.

⁶⁶ HRW, *Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁷ CHSR, [Twitter], posted on: 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁸ Iran News Wire, [Twitter], posted on: 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁶⁹ HRW, *Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Bahar, [Twitter], posted on: 15 November 2019, [url](#)

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Figure 9: Tweet by @Bahar_Azadi showing different hashtags that marks the location of the video as Eslamabad-e Gharb
Sources: Bahar Azadi on Twitter and Google Earth Pro

The location of the protestors can be further narrowed down to be near a bank, Bank-e Melli, which is captured in the video footage. Screenshots from the video and the location of the Bank-e Melli are illustrated below.



Figure 10: Aerial still showing Taleghani street, Eslamabad-e Gharb and Bank-e Melli
Sources: Bahar Azadii on Twitter and Google Maps

3.3. Sarpol-e-Zahab

Twitter posts show protests taking place in Sarpole-e-Zahab on 16 November.⁷¹ While one of the videos shared on Twitter by a user named Maryam Nayeb Yazdi show hundreds of protesters peacefully protesting, another video posted on Twitter by a user named Raman Ghamavi shows smoke coming from a burning motorbike near a police roadside booth. Ghamavi writes that the motorbike in question belongs to the security forces and is set on fire by the protesters. The protesters are also seen attacking the police roadside booth. A comparison of the video footage and satellite imagery confirms that both the videos were indeed shot in Sarpol-e-Zahab (see: Figure 11 below).

⁷¹ Maryam Nayeb Yazdi, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#); Raman Ghamavi, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#)



Figure 11: Aerial still of Sarpol-e-Zahab showing landmarks from the videos posted on Twitter
Source: Google Maps, Maryam Nayeb Yazdi and Raman Ghavami on Twitter

3.4. Javanrud

The Swedish NGO *Demokrati och Mänskliga Rättigheters Förbund* (DMRF) wrote that international media reports indicated that some of the most violent attacks on demonstrators were witnessed in Javanrud. According to DMRF, several reports and individuals phoning in on foreign-based satellite radio and TV stations said that IRGC and Basij militia had been shooting directly at the demonstrators with live ammunition aiming at their heads.⁷²

On 16 November, Ahmad Batebi, a US based journalist, posted a video showing a Bank-e Melli branch in flames on Twitter. The bank was purportedly located in Javanrud, and the sign above the entrance of the burning building in the video reads “Bank-e Melli”. Batebi wrote that the protestors were behind this act of arson.⁷³ The video was also cited by Sputnik News in their reporting of the protests.⁷⁴



Figure 12: An amateur video posted on Twitter shows a bank in flames. The sign marked with the red square reads “Bank Melli”. Source: Ahmad Batebi on Twitter

On 18 November, Batebi posted another video filmed in Javanrud on 17 November. This time three snipers are seen firing gunshots from the top of a building. According to Batebi, the building in question is the

⁷² DMRF, *Crackdown on Iran protests*, 26 November 2019, [url](#)

⁷³ Ahmad Batebi, [Twitter], posted on: 17 November 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Sputnik News, *Des manifestants incendient des banques en Iran – vidéos*, 17 November 2019, [url](#)

courthouse in Javanrud. The snipers are described by Batebi as “Islamic Republic oppressive forces”.⁷⁵ A comparison of the video footage and satellite imagery confirms that the building in question is indeed the courthouse in Javanrud. Furthermore, the sign on the building reads “Courthouse [unreadable] Javanrud”.



Figure 13: Satellite imagery of the court house in Javanrud
The entrance to the left, marked green, and the building to the right, marked red, can be seen in Google Earth. Source: Google Earth Pro, Ahmad Batebi on Twitter

HRW reported that security forces in Javanrud appear to have shot down from the roof of a courthouse at a square where protesters had gathered on 18 November 2019.⁷⁶ In broader terms, AI reported that protesters had been shot at by snipers from rooftops.⁷⁷

Two amateur videos posted on YouTube⁷⁸ and one published at the Iranian blog⁷⁹ from 22 to 24 November 2019 show clashes allegedly taking place between protesters and security forces in Basij Square in

⁷⁵ Ahmad Batebi, [Twitter], posted on: 18 November 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁶ HRW, *Iran: No Justice for Bloody Crackdown*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

⁷⁷ AI, *Iran: More than 100 protesters believed to be killed as top officials give green light to crush protests*, 19 November 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Freedom Messenger, [YouTube], *ویدیوهایی از دفاع قهرمانانه مردم جوانرود مقابل نیروهای خامنه‌ای* [Videos of brave/heroic defence by people of Javanrud against Khamenei’s forces], posted on: 22 November 2019, [url](#); Masoud Dalvand, [YouTube], *#Iran, #Javanrud, #Kermanshah province- November 2019 #IranProtests*, posted on: 24 November 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Khabargar, *دفاع جانانه و قهرمانانه مردم در برابر وحوش خامنه‌ای - جوانرود - کرمانشاه - قیام ایران* [Brave and heroic defence by the people against Khamenei’s “savages” – Javanrud – Kermanshah – Iran Uprising], 22 November 2019, [url](#)

Javanrud. The camera angle and actions filmed differ slightly between the videos, but the setting of all three videos appears to be the same town square. Almost identical shadows on buildings indicate that the videos were likely shot around the same hour of the day. The purple line in the stills below indicates how the edge of a shadow on one of the buildings seems to be levelled with the same vertical line in all the videos.



Figure 14: Comparison of shadows in footage from Basij Square in Javanrud
Sources: Freedom Messenger on YouTube, Masoud Dalvand on YouTube and khabargar.net

The videos show burning fires in the street, running protesters and security forces dressed in green and black, wearing helmets with visor and clear shields with a black and white rectangular tag on the middle, matching Iranian riot police uniforms (marked in green in Figure 15 below).⁸⁰ At one point in one of the videos posted on YouTube, objects are thrown at the security forces, coming from the direction of the protesters (marked in red in Figure 15 below).

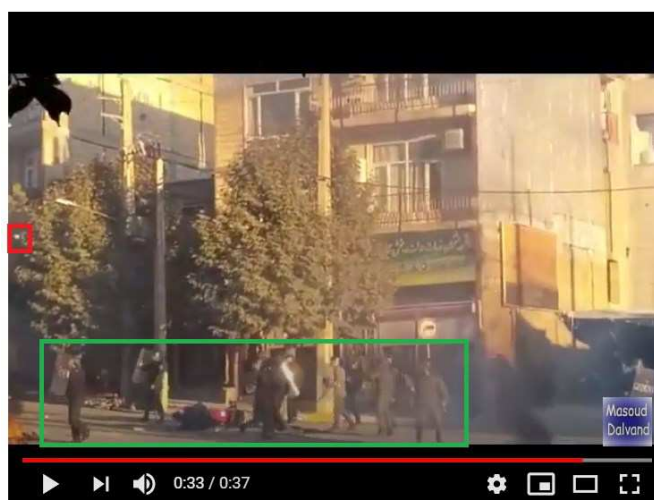


Figure 15: An object thrown at security forces by protesters
Sources: Masoud Dalvand on YouTube

Khabargar.net is an internet based news sharing platform. The blog mainly consists of anti-regime articles. The platform is available on Facebook, YouTube, Telegram and Twitter.

⁸⁰ See pictures of Iranian riot police forces: BBC News Farsi, [مانور ضدشورش در بیمارستانی در مشهد](#) [Anti-riot drill at a hospital in Mashhad], 28 November 2014, [url](#)



Figure 16: Aerial still of Basij Square in Javanrud

Sources: Google maps and Masoud Davland on YouTube

Once again Twitter users were active with sharing videos from the protests, this time with the hashtag *#Javanrud*.⁸¹ One video in particular has been shared by multiple users; the footage is from November 16th 2019 and shows people running on the street. Gun shots can be heard in the distance and people scattering in all directions. Twitter users Samira Ghaderi and Farzad Madadzade both share the same footage and write “Islamic Republic’s riot police open fire on crowd of protestors in Kurdish city”.⁸²

Another hashtag that has been frequently used both before and after the protests is *#Aban* referring to Iranian calendar month of Aban (November) and year 1398 (2019).⁸³ The hashtag has been persistently used along with *#Javanrud*⁸⁴ and *#country-wide_protests* which appears from the Twitter search to string together the local protests into the wider conversation. The image below highlights some of the hashtags utilised.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Twitter search result for hashtag *#جوانرود*, until:2019-11-30 since:2019-11-15, [url](#)

⁸² Samira Ghaderi, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#); Farzad Madadzade, [Twitter], posted on: 16 November 2019, [url](#)

⁸³ Twitter search results for hashtag for hashtag *#آبان۹۸#*, until:2019-11-30 since:2019-11-14, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Twitter search result for hashtag *#جوانرود*, until:2019-11-30 since:2019-11-14, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Twitter search result for hashtag *#آبان۹۸#*, until:2019-11-30 since:2019-11-14, [url](#)



Figure 17: Screenshot of a tweet by Tavaana⁸⁶
Source: Tavaana on Twitter

⁸⁶ Tavaana [Twitter], posted on: 18 November 2019, [url](#)

4. Repercussions of protesting

The November 2019 protests were mass demonstrations⁸⁷ which is why the below overview of repercussions of protesting faced by the protestors is a general account. However, it is important to note that historically in Iran, any political or civic engagement conducted in the Kurdish region is seen through a security lens; to the extent that even civil and cultural activities are often interpreted as political. As a result of this, individuals conducting such activities are subjected to prosecution by the authorities.⁸⁸ According to Ehsan Mehrabi, areas inhabited by Kurds have generally seen more protests, and the reprisals against protesters by authorities have been more violent.⁸⁹

Ehsan Mehrabi states that the November 2019 protesters were not singled out and targeted during the protests as it had been the case during previous demonstrations. Due to the violent nature of the November 2019 protests, the Iranian security forces did not approach the protesters in the same way and did not come as close to the demonstrations as previously. However, if the security forces caught people on the streets returning from the protests, they arrested them in groups and took them to the police station.⁹⁰ Ehsan Mehrabi explained that compared to previous protests, the number of people killed was higher, and the number of arrests was lower during the November 2019 protests. Since the demonstrations took place in smaller towns, the present security forces were less trained and less equipped than security forces typically used for riot control. Thus, the first thing the security forces resorted to during the protests was shooting at people.⁹¹

4.1. Identification and arrest of protesters

According to CHRI, there is little information on the actual number of arrests, the number of people who remain in detention, their condition and the state of their case.⁹² However, it is reported by several sources that arrests took place during the November 2019 protests as well as in the aftermath.⁹³

During the protests, authorities not only went after protesters in the streets; security forces also conducted arrests at universities.⁹⁴ According to The New York Times, Iran's student union said that plainclothes agents of the Basij militia, hiding inside ambulances to evade restrictions on entering campuses, had seized more than 50 students at Tehran University after protests there.⁹⁵ Moreover, there are accounts of security forces transferring wounded and injured protesters from hospitals and clinics to unknown locations.⁹⁶

⁸⁷ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 8; Ehsan Mehrabi: 1

⁸⁸ Denmark, DIS, *Iranian Kurds: Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI*, February 2020, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Ehsan Mehrabi: 17

⁹⁰ Ehsan Mehrabi: 1, 2

⁹¹ Ehsan Mehrabi: 4

⁹² CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 9

⁹³ Radio Farda, *Iran Continues Crackdown A Month After Protests With 650 New Arrests*, 18 December 2019, [url](#); Ehsan Mehrabi: 7; INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#)

⁹⁴ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 33

⁹⁵ The New York Times, *Iran Declares Protests Are Over, but the Evidence Suggests Otherwise*, 21 November 2019, [url](#)

⁹⁶ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 37; INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#)

The Iranian authorities used footage from closed-circuit cameras (CCTV) and videos on social media platforms to identify protesters, and a number of people were arrested in their homes and workplaces.⁹⁷ Ehsan Mehrabi explained that since the November 2019 demonstrations took place in relatively small towns, it was easier for the authorities to identify people by use of local networks, because people in smaller towns typically know more of each other's activities.⁹⁸

On 11 January 2020, the head of State Prisons Organization, Ali Asghar Jahangir, said that a significant portion of the detainees had been released and that the remainder would soon appear in court. However, he did not provide further details.⁹⁹

4.1.1. Profile of arrested protesters

Various sources refer to mass arrests of November 2019 protesters.¹⁰⁰ Women, men, and juveniles were detained.¹⁰¹ Reportedly, dozens of female activists were among the arrestees.¹⁰²

In a report published in May 2020, CHRI quotes an attorney in Tehran for saying that there are three groups of detained November 2019 protesters. The first group are people arrested on the streets during the protests; some of these were released on bail. The second group are people arrested during or after the protests by security agents, who identified them on footage from CCTV; these are represented by the attorney and his colleague. The third group are people, who have been accused by the authorities of being leaders of the unrest, but the attorney has no information about these people.¹⁰³

Ehsan Mehrabi said that due to the excessive use of force by the Iranian security forces, many of the leading figures during the November 2019 protests were killed. Consequently, many of the arrestees were lower profile protesters.¹⁰⁴

According to a human rights activist cited by CHRI, detainees who had shared news or videos of the protests were being treated more harshly, especially if they had any history of activism.¹⁰⁵

4.1.2. Registration of arrested protesters

According to Ehsan Mehrabi, not everyone who got arrested during the November 2019 protests was registered by the authorities. Ehsan Mehrabi explained that if an official body such as the Intelligence Organization or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps arrested people, these people would be registered with them. However, there were also cases where militia groups - like the Basij - caught people, detained, and beat them without registering them.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁷ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 35; INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#); HRANA, *Three arrestees of November protests were sentenced to death*, 22 February 2020, [url](#)

⁹⁸ Ehsan Mehrabi: 3

⁹⁹ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁰⁰ BBC Monitoring, *Iran protests monthly report: November 2019*, 2 December 2019, [url](#); CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 33; Ehsan Mehrabi: 2

¹⁰¹ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 35, 37

¹⁰² VOA News, *Iran Focusing on Minorities Following Protests, Experts Say*, 23 November 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰³ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 35

¹⁰⁴ Ehsan Mehrabi: 7

¹⁰⁵ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 37

¹⁰⁶ Ehsan Mehrabi: 5

Ehsan Mehrabi said that, usually, the various official bodies do not share lists of detainees with each other. However, information about high-profile government opponents will be shared. Information might also be shared if one body sends a request for information about a particular person to another. According to Ehsan Mehrabi, information sharing between government agencies about protesters is highly dependent on what happens during the interrogation and which type of case it turns out to be.¹⁰⁷

4.2. Accusations against protesters

Iran is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides for the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Article 27 in the Iranian constitution guarantees the freedom of peaceful protesting provided that no violation of the foundations of Islam is involved.¹⁰⁹ Iran News Wire states that the only time a permit is formally needed in advance of unarmed assemblies and marches in Iran is when political parties intend to organize demonstrations in public. Apart from that, there is no legal basis for arresting demonstrators who have not destroyed property or committed a crime. However, the Iranian judiciary routinely tries people who have been arrested solely on the background of participation in demonstrations.¹¹⁰

In February 2020, the British human rights organisation ARTICLE 19 stated that trials of arrested November protesters were ongoing and resulting in sentences.¹¹¹ In its annual report for 2019, Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that Iran's judiciary and security agencies used vaguely defined provisions in the penal code to arrest and prosecute activists for peaceful assembly and free expression;¹¹² yet, some of the November 2019 protesters acted violently and applied malicious damage to public property.

Accusations against November 2019 protesters for instance included 'membership in an opposition group', 'propaganda against the system', 'insulting the president', 'rallying and collusion (against national and international security)', 'disturbance of public peace and order', and 'vandalism and arson against public property'.¹¹³ Some protesters were accused of working as agents for enemies of the Iranian state.¹¹⁴

4.3. Sentencing of protesters

Information about verdicts against November 2019 protesters is scarce; yet there are reports about issued sentences, including death sentences, and more sentences will likely be issued.¹¹⁵ However, according to

¹⁰⁷ Ehsan Mehrabi: 6

¹⁰⁸ OHCHR, *STATUS OF RATIFICATION INTERACTIVE DASHBOARD*, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 39; Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#)

¹¹¹ ARTICLE 19, *Freedom of Expression in Iran; Priorities for the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council*, February 2020, [url](#), p. 1

¹¹² HRW, *Iran – Events of 2019*, 14 January 2020, [url](#)

¹¹³ Al Arabiya English, *Iran sentences three protesters to death: Report*, 23 February 2020, [url](#); ARTICLE 19, *Freedom of Expression in Iran; Priorities for the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council*, February 2020, [url](#), p. 1; CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 36; Iran International, *Three protesters sentenced to flogging, prison, and death*, 22 February 2020, [url](#); Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#); Radio Farda, *Iran Courts Sentence Five November Protesters To Total Thirty Years Prison*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ ACLED, *Regional overview: Middle East 17 – 23 November 2019*, 26 November 2019, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 39; Ehsan Mehrabi:

CHRI, the majority of the arrested protesters appear to have been ultimately released on bail after their detentions.¹¹⁶

In February 2020, the British human rights organisation ARTICLE 19 stated that trials of arrested November 2019 protesters were ongoing and had already resulted in excessively harsh prison sentences on vague grounds. A protester from the city of Kermanshah was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for 'membership in an opposition group' and five years of imprisonment for the charge of 'assembly and collusion'. According to Radio Farda, five of the November 2019 protesters were sentenced to thirty years of prison in total on charges of 'destroying public property', 'disturbance of public peace and order', 'rallying and collusion against national and international security', 'propaganda against the system', 'collusion through presence in illegal rallies', 'rallying and collusion against the system', and 'insulting the President'.¹¹⁷

In February 2020, it emerged that three November 2019 protesters had been sentenced to death by Tehran's Revolutionary Court;¹¹⁸ along with sentences to prison and lashes for other felonies. According to Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), they were each sentenced to death on the charge of 'cooperating in vandalism and arson with the intent to act against the Islamic Republic of Iran'.¹¹⁹ Ehsan Mehrabi said that there were no broader official statistics about how many protesters that had been sentenced to death; moreover, the basis for the known instances of death sentences was not clear from the verdicts. According to Ehsan Mehrabi, those condemned to death have in broad terms officially been accused of being in contact with and engaged in armed fighting for Mujahedin-e Khalq¹²⁰ (the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, MKO).¹²¹

4.3.1. Access to due process

Sources point to various factors in the Iranian legal system that constitutes a lack of fair trials when it comes to cases of national security and political cases.¹²² Among these factors is the lack of access to impartial lawyers and judges.¹²³

Political cases are handled by the Iranian Revolutionary Courts,¹²⁴ and sources refer to sentencing of November 2019 protesters by these courts.¹²⁵ Various sources note the absence of procedural safeguards in trials at the Revolutionary Courts.¹²⁶ According to US Department of State (USDOS), human rights groups

¹¹⁶ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 39

¹¹⁷ Radio Farda: *Iran Courts Sentence Five November Protesters To Total Thirty Years Prison*, 25 February 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ AI, *Iran: Three Prisoners At Risk of Execution*, 28 February 2020, [url](#); Ehsan Mehrabi: 9; HRANA, *Three arrestees of November protests were sentenced to death*, 22 February 2020, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ HRANA, *Three arrestees of November protests were sentenced to death*, 22 February 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁰ The exiled Iranian opposition group People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, MKO, also known as Mujahedin-e Khalq, is the main organisation within the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which claims to be a parliament-in-exile. CRS, *Iran: Internal Politics and U.S. Policy and Options*, 20 May 2020, [url](#)

¹²¹ Ehsan Mehrabi: 9

¹²² Denmark, DIS, *Iranian Kurds – Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI*, February 2020, [url](#), p. 25

¹²³ Denmark, DIS, *Iranian Kurds – Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI*, February 2020, [url](#), p. 26; Ehsan Mehrabi: 11

¹²⁴ DIS, Denmark and DRC, *Iran: Judicial Issues*, February 2018, [url](#), p. 7

¹²⁵ Al Arabiya, *Fate of jailed Iran protesters remains unknown, families fear death: Report*, 8 February 2020, [url](#); Iran HRM, *Iran sentences another November protester to death*, 21 March 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Denmark, DIS, *Iranian Kurds – Consequences of political activities in Iran and KRI*, February 2020, [url](#), pp. 23-25; Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#); United Nations General Assembly,

and international observers in 2019 often identified the Iranian Revolutionary Courts as routinely employing grossly unfair trials without due process, handing down predetermined verdicts and rubberstamping executions for political purposes. In addition, lawyers are often refused access to information by the Revolutionary Courts, and many trials reportedly last only a few minutes.¹²⁷

In the Iranian legal system, legal representation is denied during the investigation phase, when an individual is accused of crimes against the internal and external security or of any form of organized crime punishable by harsh sentences such as the death penalty, life imprisonment, and the amputation of limbs.¹²⁸ According to Amnesty International, this was also the case for the three November 2019 protesters sentenced to death in the beginning of 2020 (see: 4.3. *Sentencing of protesters*).

CHRI quoted an Iranian attorney for saying that many detained November 2019 protesters had the right to be released before trial but were deliberately kept in prison by exorbitant bail amounts.¹²⁹ In addition, two Revolutionary Court judges have reportedly been extorting arrested protesters, demanding large bribes in exchange for freedom.¹³⁰

In its annual country report on human rights practices for 2019, USDOS noted that Iranian courts generally admitted confessions made under duress or torture as evidence in criminal trials.¹³¹ CHRI refers to numerous first-hand accounts indicating that detained November 2019 protesters were held under inhumane conditions, beaten in detention and forced to make self-incriminating statements and confessions; some of these alleged confessions were aired on Iranian state TV.¹³² According to Amnesty International, the three November 2019 protesters sentenced to death had been tortured, and one of them had been coerced into giving a confession that was broadcast on state TV and used as evidence to convict them.¹³³

4.3.2. *Alleys of complaint and possibility of redress*

According to Iran News Wire, if the warrant against a protester is temporary detention, the person in question must be officially informed, in which case he or she can object to it.¹³⁴

The Iranian Code of Criminal Procedure provides for the right to appeal to a higher tribunal. However, those convicted of crimes punishable by irreversible punishments, including the death penalty and amputation, have access to just one level of appeal conducted in writing. If the Supreme Court overturns

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 14 August 2017, [url](#); USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

¹²⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 14 August 2017, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁸ Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#); United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 14 August 2017, [url](#), p. 12

¹²⁹ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 36

¹³⁰ Iran Focus, *Iran's Judges Demand Bribes for Protesters' Release*, 31 January 2020, [url](#); Iran HRM, *Revolutionary Court judges extort protesters to set them free*, 30 January 2020, [url](#)

¹³¹ USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

¹³² CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 35

¹³³ AI, *Iran: Three Prisoners At Risk of Execution*, 28 February 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#)

the sentence, the case is then sent back to a court of first instance that could insist on reissuing the same verdict.¹³⁵

According to USDOS, Iranian judges may impose the death penalty on appeal, which generally speaking deter appeals in criminal cases.¹³⁶ However, Ehsan Mehrabi said that the court of appeal generally functioned as a play to the gallery, and although the prosecutor can plead for an increased penalty, the penalty is usually not increased upon appeal. In recent years, Mehrabi had not heard of any cases of appeal where the penalty had been increased. Ehsan Mehrabi added that to him, it seemed inconceivable that Iranian judges would impose the death penalty on appeal, since it is the chief interrogator who passes such sentence, and it is unlikely that the chief interrogator acts too gently or fails to perform his duties. If a person was to receive a death sentence, such sentence would have been handed to him or her at the first sentencing.¹³⁷

CHRI states that there have been a few instances of judicial pushback against convictions for the November 2019 protesters. For example, a judge acquitted two truck drivers stating that they had a right to peacefully protest the sudden increase in gasoline prices; the judge referred to Article 27 in the constitution providing for freedom of peaceful protesting (see: 4.2. *Accusations against protesters*).¹³⁸

HRANA reported that, according to the verdict, the three November 2019 protesters sentenced to death in the beginning of 2020 (see: 4.3. *Sentencing of protesters*) would have another trial in March 2020, but according to their attorneys, their verdicts were already finalized.¹³⁹ On 24 June 2020, Iran Human Rights News Agency (HRANA) reported that the Supreme Court of Iran has upheld the death sentences of the three protesters.¹⁴⁰

4.4. Travel bans against protesters

Within the research period for this report, no corroborative information on travel bans against protesters has been found. General information about travel bans might be of relevance since cases related to national security, as well as political cases, are among the cases where a travel ban will be issued.¹⁴¹ However, the travel ban is a complicated matter;¹⁴² it is not automatically applied, except upon sentencing in serious criminal cases, where the judgement is ruled in absentia.¹⁴³ In early stages of the investigation, the travel ban is issued by the prosecutor; in later states, it is issued by the judge.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵ AI, *Flawed Reforms: Iran's New Code of Criminal Procedure*, 11 February 2016, [url](#); Iran Wire, *Iran Ignores its Own Laws to Stifle Legal Protests*, 9 December 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁶ USDOS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2019 – Iran*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Ehsan Mehrabi: 12

¹³⁸ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 39

¹³⁹ HRANA, *Three arrestees of November protests were sentenced to death*, 22 February 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Radio Farda, *Iran Supreme Court Upholds Death Sentence For Three Young Protesters*, 24 June 2020, [url](#);

AI Arabiya, *Iran supreme court upholds death sentence for three protesters: Human rights agency*, 26 June 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Denmark, DIS and DRC, *Iran: Judicial Issues*, February 2018, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁴² Ehsan Mehrabi: 10

¹⁴³ Denmark, DIS and DRC, *Iran: Judicial Issues*, February 2018, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁴⁴ EASO, *Release on temporary bail, court documents, exit from Iran; 1. Temporary release on bail for persons charged with national security or political crimes 2. Bail payment via third persons instead of direct payment 3. Regulations regarding the exit from Iran for persons released on a temporary bail 4. Characteristics of authentic court documents 5. Way of delivery of court documents to defendants / legal representatives 6. Consequences of justice absconding in case of return from abroad [Q6-2020]*, 21 April 2020, [url](#), p. 3

According to Ehsan Mehrabi, the passport of arrestees, especially political prisoners, will always be confiscated so that they cannot leave the country before the trial. However, after a person has been convicted, this person might be bailed out.¹⁴⁵ Several sources note that if there is no travel ban against the person in question, he or she might leave the country while released on bail.¹⁴⁶

4.5. Consequences for relatives of identified protesters

There are reports of relatives of killed November 2019 protesters having been harassed, threatened, and summoned for questioning to make them call off commemoration ceremonies of the killed protester and to prevent them from talking to the media or pressure them to make false statements on state TV. In addition, sources provide examples of relatives who were arrested after making statements on social media.¹⁴⁷ However, Ehsan Mehrabi said that, usually, participation in protests against the Iranian government does not have any consequences in terms of arrest of protesters' relatives. According to Ehsan Mehrabi, it is only in cases where it emerges that family members have had an active role in a person's participation in the protests that reprisals will be used against the relatives. However, participation in protests might create problems for relatives employed in the public sector, including threats and psychological pressure.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ehsan Mehrabi: 10

¹⁴⁶ EASO, *Release on temporary bail, court documents, exit from Iran*; 1. Temporary release on bail for persons charged with national security or political crimes 2. Bail payment via third persons instead of direct payment 3. Regulations regarding the exit from Iran for persons released on a temporary bail 4. Characteristics of authentic court documents 5. Way of delivery of court documents to defendants / legal representatives 6. Consequences of justice absconding in case of return from abroad [Q6-2020], 21 April 2020, [url](#), p. 3; Denmark, DIS and DRC, *Iran: Judicial Issues*, February 2018, [url](#), p. 9; Ehsan Mehrabi: 10

¹⁴⁷ CHRI, *Report: Gunning Them Down – State Violence against Protesters in Iran*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 13; Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2020 – Iran*, n.d., [url](#); Iran International, *Persecution and harassment of families of the victims of November protests*, 26 December 2020, [url](#); INW, *3,530 recorded Iran protests in 2019 – report*, 10 January 2020, [url](#); Reuters, *Family members of man killed during Iran protests arrested: news agency*, 24 December 2019, [url](#)

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Appendix 1: Meeting minutes

Skype meeting with Iranian freelance Journalist Ehsan Mehrabi

Skype, 19 May 2020

Ehsan Mehrabi is an Iranian journalist currently based in Germany working freelance for Persian language media outside Iran, including BBC Persian, Iran International, and Radio Farda. The meeting with Ehsan Mehrabi was held on Skype by use of a Farsi-speaking analyst employed at the Danish Immigration Service as interpreter. The minutes were written in English and approved by Ehsan Mehrabi by use of his own interpreter.

Prosecution

Identification of protesters by the Iranian authorities

1. The protests during November 2019 were more violent than previous demonstrations. They were mass demonstrations, and there were fewer arrests. Protesters were not singled out and targeted during the protests as they have been during previous demonstrations.
2. During previous demonstrations, Iranian authorities have singled out protest leaders and arrested them. Due to the violent nature of the November 2019 protests, the Iranian security forces did not approach the protesters in the same way and did not come as close to the demonstrations as previously. However, if the security forces caught people on the streets returning from the protests, they arrested them in groups and took them to the police station. Then, the authorities had to conduct an investigation in order to decide what was going to happen with the detainees.
3. Since the November 2019 demonstrations took place in relatively small towns, it was easier for the authorities to identify people by use of local networks because people in smaller towns typically know more of each other's activities.
4. Relatively speaking when compared to previous protests, the number of people killed was higher, and the number of arrests was lower. Because the demonstrations took place in smaller towns, the present security forces were less trained and less equipped than other security forces typically used for riot control. Thus, the first thing they resorted to was shooting at people.

Registration of identified protesters

5. If it is an official body such as the Intelligence Organization or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that arrests people, those arrested will be registered with them. However, there are also cases where militia groups like the Basij catch people, detain and beat them without registering them.
6. Usually, the various official bodies do not share lists of detainees with each other. However, information about high-profile regime opponents will be shared. Information might also be shared if one body sends a request for information about a particular person to another. Information sharing between government agencies about protesters is highly dependent on what happens during the interrogation and which type of case it turns out to be.

Legal implications for identified protesters

7. Due to the excessive use of force by the Iranian security forces in November 2019 where they, among others, fired live ammunition at protesters, many of the leading figures during the protests were killed. Consequently, many of the arrestees were lower profile protesters. According to recent estimates 8,600 were arrested due to their participation in the November 2019 protests.
8. If a detained protester has not done anything of particular interest to the authorities, they might release him. Otherwise, they will make a case against him, and then, there will be coordination between the security agencies and the judges in the legal system. Depending on how a defendant is dealt with by the judiciary, the person in question can be released, be bailed out, or be sentenced directly and punished. Depending on the verdict and sentencing, the person in question might be released on bail upon the sentencing.
9. Information about verdicts against protesters is scarce. Some protesters have been sentenced to jail; some have been sentenced to death and some to punishment by lashing - typically three to eleven lashes. The basis for the death sentences has not been clear from the verdict. Officially, those condemned to death have been accused, in broad terms, of being in contact with and engaged in armed fighting for Mujahedin-e Khalq (the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran, MKO). In February 2020, it was officially announced that three people, who participated in the November 2019 protests, had been sentenced to death but not executed. There are however no broader official statistics about how many protesters have been sentenced to death.

Travel bans against protesters

10. Depending on the outcome of a case against a protester, a travel ban might be issued against the person. However, travel bans are a complicated matter. It is not automatically applied against convicts, and from an outside perspective, the application seems arbitrary. In some cases, it is issued, and in other cases, it is not. Yet, the passport of arrestees, especially political prisoners, will always be confiscated so that they cannot leave the country before the trial. However, after a person has been convicted and sent to jail, this person might be bailed out. If there is no travel ban against the person, he or she might leave the country while released on bail.

Access to due process and fair trial

11. Due process is not guaranteed in Iran. There is no access to impartial judges and lawyers. Either the lawyers are appointed by the regime or they do not dare to argue against the prosecutor and the judges. During recent years, a list of lawyers approved by the judiciary has been issued. The accused can only choose their lawyers from this list. Most of the lawyers on the list are former judges.
12. Verdicts can be appealed. However, there is only one court of appeal. Moreover, this court in general functions as a play to the gallery. Usually, the punishment is not increased upon appeal. In some cases, the prosecutor, however, argues that the punishment should be increased during the case of appeal. In recent years, Ehsan Mehrabi has not heard of any cases of appeal where the punishment has been increased. Ehsan Mehrabi added that to him, it seemed inconceivable that Iranian judges would impose the death penalty on appeal, since it is the chief interrogator who passes such sentence, and it is unlikely that the chief interrogator acts too gently or fails to perform his duties. If a person was to receive a death sentence, such sentence would have been handed to him or her at the first sentencing.

Consequences for relatives of identified protesters

13. Usually, participation in protests against the Iranian regime does not have any consequences in terms of arrest of protesters' relatives. However, the families receive threats, and participation in protests might create problems for relatives employed in the public sector. Problems for publicly employed relatives of protesters are limited to threats and psychological pressure. It is only in cases where it emerges that family members have had an active role in a person's participation in the protests that reprisals will be used against the relatives. This might emerge during an interrogation of a protester, e.g. if a protester informs that a family member has provided him or her with material or in other ways participated in the activities that the protester performed against the regime.
14. There have been cases where family members of protesters killed during the protests have made statements in the media, and in turn, the authorities have put these family members under pressure and in some cases arrested them.

Social media

Use of social media in organising the protests

15. According to Ehsan Mehrabi, no systematic study has been done in terms of use of social media in organising the November 2019 protests. Thus, there is no systematic information about this. However, it is commonly known that smaller groups on Telegram and other social media with roots in local communities have been used to call for participation among inhabitants of smaller towns. However, there is not much information available on this subject.

General information about mobilisation

16. Unlike protests in the past, the triggering factor behind the November 2019 protest was clear as a bell; it was the increase in fuel prices. During the protest in previous years, a general dissatisfaction with economic conditions was uttered, but the triggering factor behind these protests was not crystal clear. The dissatisfaction with increased fuel prices created a fertile soil for fast mobilisation of protesters in smaller towns where information spreads quickly. In these towns, there are typically only two to three main streets, so, when people enter the street and see that there is a protest going on, they join. It is also characteristic for these towns that there are many young, unemployed people hanging out in the streets at around 9 – 10 o'clock in the morning, so, only a tiny spark is needed to ignite protests. One of the distinct features of the November 2019 protests was the high number of young protesters below the age of 18.

Existing networks used for mobilisation

17. There are, generally speaking, some areas where there have been more protests and the reprisals against protesters by authorities have been more violent. Among these areas are areas inhabited by the three ethnic minority groups: the Arab Ahvaz population, the Kurds, and the Lurs. These groups are very poor and very affected by the increased fuel prices and have therefore been particularly active during the November 2019 protests and the following rounds of protests.

Use of social media by the Iranian regime to spread false information about the protests and protestors

18. The type of information outlined above is uncomplicated for the Iranian regime and not typically a type of information that the regime would spend efforts on manipulating. The regime also shares information about protests and protestors, including reprisals against these, through their regular news channels. Social media is commonly used for more complicated misinformation to twist and manipulate the perception of more sophisticated issues, not protests. The regime did not seem to hold back information when reporting about the November 2019 protests on the radio and in the television.