

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	814
Land:	Iran
Kilde:	Article 19
Titel:	Iran: Protests met with violent crackdown and online censorship
Udgivet:	19. november 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	8. januar 2020

We have launched the Global Expression Report for 2018/19, with updated analysis and data [Take a closer look \(/xpa-2019\)](#)



<https://www.article19.org>

English

Iran: Protests met with violent crackdown and online censorship

ARTICLE 19 is monitoring the events currently unfolding in Iran with great concern, where widespread protests which erupted on 15 November 2019 have led to the reported deaths of at least 106 people and over 1,000 arrests. Global internet connections in the country have been nearly totally shutdown as part of efforts to repress dissent. ARTICLE 19 calls on the Iranian government to uphold the constitutional right of Iranians to protest and end its repressive actions, and immediately halt the use of lethal force against protesters. Additionally, the government must resume global internet and satellite connections in Iran so that citizens can voice their concerns and stay informed in these critical times.

Iran has erupted into widespread protest over economic grievances for the second time in [two years](#) (<https://www.article19.org/resources/iran-authorities-must-investigate-deaths-custody-respect-right-protest/>). On Friday 15 November 2019, protests started in reaction to the sudden announcement of a 300 per cent increase in petrol prices. The prices rise has acted as a catalyst for protestors voicing a range of grievances against the government and the ruling

establishment regarding political and economic concerns.

ARTICLE 19 is deeply worried about the rights of protesters, as we witness the government's violent reaction, with reports of at least 106 deaths and — according to state media — over 1,000 protesters arrested. The highest levels of repression are reported in cities outside of the capital such as Shiraz, which have reportedly seen clashes between armed police and protesters.

Concerningly, reports

(<https://twitter.com/bahmankalbasi/status/1196550847414652929?s=21>) suggest that the city of Behbahan — one of the first cities to ignite into protest — has been placed under military curfew and is in a state of public mourning.

As part of the crackdown on protests, authorities have ordered the near total shutdown of access to the global internet and satellite TV in Iran since Saturday 16 November, one of the most severe communication blackouts in the nation's history. With this information blockade in place to keep Iranians in the dark about protests and casualties, many fear the number of casualties at the hands of authorities may exceed initial reports. The near total shutdown is an indicator of the government's intense efforts to stifle freedom of expression and silence the protests. The speed with which the government was able to take nearly the entire country offline demonstrates a frightening preparedness to stifle and censor any form of dissent. ARTICLE 19 is concerned that the Rouhani government's development of the national information network (<https://www.article19.org/resources/tightening-the-net-irans-national-internet-project/>) has contributed to the government's ability to proceed with such a long shutdown, part of ongoing government efforts to strengthen its online censorship apparatus.

International human rights standards require the Iranian government to enable people in Iran to exercise their right to protest without fear of physical violence or other human rights violations. Instead, both Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani have sought to violently quell the

protests and refused to accept the legitimate grievances being raised by the people. While Supreme Leader has labelled the protests as “manifestations of foreign sabotage plans”, President Hassan Rouhani acknowledged the right to protest, but claimed that the protests being repressed were instead “riots” and not legitimate protests. These sentiments appear to have emboldened Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, the Iranian military branch that has become notorious for human rights abuses including arbitrary arrests, surveillance, and deaths in custody. On 18 November, the IRGC threatened a “decisive” crackdown on protestors, saying *“We cannot let insecurity in the country through riots...If necessary we will take decisive and revolutionary action against any continued moves to disturb the people’s peace and security”*. Further, on 19 November, Keyhan, a hard-line newspaper in Iran reported that the judiciary will consider “execution by hanging for the riot leaders a definite punishment.” (<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hard-line-newspaper-violent-iran-protesters-face-execution-67125908>)

These threats and comments from authorities are deeply disturbing, and show a total disregard for the government’s constitutional and international human rights obligations to protect the rights of its people. The Iranian state has a duty to ensure that everyone in their jurisdiction can exercise their right to protest, and that human rights protections are in place as well as restrictions on the use of force, even where there is violence taking place alongside protests.

“The Iranian government must urgently put a stop to its violent repression of protests, in order to prevent the further loss of life, and release those imprisoned for exercising their rights. Authorities should be listening to protesters instead of arresting them, and should seek to act on their concerns instead of continually pursuing more complex or violent means to silence them” said ARTICLE 19’s Executive Director, Thomas Hughes.

"Internet and satellite connections provide a vital means for people in Iran to find out about events in their country and contact loved ones. The Iranian government's efforts to shut down these connections are a cynical attempt to keep Iranians in the dark, and must be reversed," he added.