STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

Iranians are facing Intensified Crackdown : How?

International Relations

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Iranians are facing Intensified Crackdown : How?

Iranian authorities have intensified their crackdown on widespread unrest that began in late December 2025, using lethal force, mass arrests, and a nationwide internet blackout to suppress a rapidly growing protest movement. The demonstrations, initially sparked by a collapsing economy and soaring inflation, have evolved into a significant challenge to the Islamic Republic, with protesters demanding the overthrow of the current regime. Signals of an intensified crackdown include:

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Supreme Leader's Stance

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has vowed that authorities will not back down, describing protesters as "vandals," "saboteurs," and later "terrorists," indicating an uncompromising approach.

Internet Blackout

A near-total internet and telecommunications shutdown was imposed on January 8, 2026, which human rights organizations like Amnesty International state is a deliberate tactic to conceal the extent of human rights violations and stifle dissent.

Use of Lethal Force

Security forces have been accused of unlawfully using live ammunition, rifles, and shotguns loaded with metal pellets against demonstrators, resulting in numerous deaths. Reports from human rights groups indicate varying death tolls, with some exceeding 100 and a Tehran doctor reporting over 200 deaths in the capital alone.

Mass Arrests and Threats

Thousands of people have been arbitrarily arrested. Iran's attorney general has warned that participants in the protests could be charged as "enemies of God," a capital offense. The judiciary chief has also vowed "decisive, maximum and without any legal leniency" punishment for protesters.

Attacks on Hospitals

There have been credible reports of security forces storming hospitals to detain injured protesters and remove bodies, actions that human rights organizations deem grave violations of international law.

Military Involvement

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the country's army have indicated their involvement in quelling the unrest, with the IRGC-affiliated media describing protesters as "terrorists" and comparing them to ISIS fighters. The unrest, which began on December 28, 2025, has spread nationwide across all 31 provinces, posing one of the biggest challenges to the theocratic authorities in over three years. Protesters have chanted anti-government slogans, including "death to Khamenei," and some demonstrations have seen crowds of thousands. The current wave of protests follows significant movements in 2019 and the 2022-2023 "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests, which were sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini.

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