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Middle East

## Mahsa Amini death anniversary sees heavy security in Iran

Reuters

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[1/2] A police motorcycle burns during a protest over the death of Mahsa Amini, a woman who died after being arrested by the Islamic republic's "morality police", in Tehran, Iran September 19, 2022. WANA [Acquire Lice...](#) [Read more](#)



DUBAI, Sept 15 (Reuters) - Iranian security forces deployed in the hometown of Mahsa Amini in anticipation of a flare-up in unrest marking this weekend's first anniversary of her death in morality police custody, witnesses, social media posts and rights groups said on Friday.

The death on Sept. 16 of Amini, a 22-year-old Kurd arrested for allegedly flouting the Islamic Republic's mandatory dress code, sparked months of anti-government protests that spiralled into the biggest show of opposition to the authorities in years.

Many, with [women and young people](#) often at the forefront, called for an end to more than four decades of Shi'ite clerical rule. Over 500 people including 71 minors were killed in the protests, hundreds injured and thousands arrested in unrest that was eventually crushed by security forces, rights groups said.

In Amini's birthplace in Iran's western province of Kurdistan, a rights activist said there was a "heavy presence of security forces".

Another activist said a small gathering of protesters chanted anti-government slogans before quickly dispersing.

Feedback

The activists spoke on condition of anonymity, citing a fear of government reprisals amid a growing clampdown on dissent as the anniversary approached.

Social media posts spoke of security force deployments in several cities, mainly within Kurdistan. The reports could not be immediately verified.

In a statement, the Norway-based human rights group Hengaw said several Kurdish cities in western Iran "have experienced an atmosphere of intimidation and the declaration of a state of war in recent days". It said numerous citizens had been detained.

Hengaw added that military personnel were positioned on top of Tapeh Qawkh, a hill overlooking Saqez, while residents had witnessed a surge in helicopter activity over the city.

Social media posts quoted Saqez residents as saying that authorities had installed new surveillance cameras around the city, apparently to monitor and identify protesters.

Reuters could not verify any of these accounts.

## BIDEN SAYS U.S. STANDS WITH PROTESTERS

On Friday, web monitor Netblocks reported "significant disruption to internet connectivity in the (southeastern city of) Zahedan ... targeting anti-government protests ... on the eve of the anniversary of Mahsa Amini's death".

Social media postings said weekly protests were held in Zahedan on Friday with slogans including "Death or freedom".

Authorities have accused the United States and Israel and their local agents of fomenting the unrest to destabilise Iran.

In a statement on Friday, U.S. President Joe Biden said: "Mahsa's story did not end with her brutal death. She inspired a historic movement — Woman, Life, Freedom — that has impacted Iran and influenced people across the globe."

"We reaffirm our commitment to the courageous people of Iran ... And together with our allies and partners, we stand with them," Biden added.

Without naming Biden, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani rejected as "double standards and lies" Western expressions of support for women's rights in Iran. His posting on the X platform was accompanied by videos apparently showing mistreatment of women by Western and Israeli police.

Britain on Friday [imposed sanctions](#) on four Iranian officials and the [United States said it was sanctioning](#) more than two dozen individuals and entities connected to Iran's "violent suppression" of protests.

In a report last month, Amnesty International said Iranian authorities "have been subjecting victims' families to arbitrary arrest and detention, imposing cruel restrictions on peaceful gatherings at grave sites, and destroying victims' gravestones".

Security forces [detained](#) Amini's uncle Safa Aeli on Sept. 5, relatives told Reuters.

Many journalists, lawyers, activists, students, academics, artists, public figures and members of ethnic minorities accused of links with the protest wave, as well as relatives of protesters killed in the unrest, have been arrested, summoned, threatened or fired from jobs in the past few weeks, according to Iranian and Western human rights groups.

Iran's Etemad daily reported in August that the lawyer for Amini's family also faced charges of "propaganda against the system". If convicted, Saleh Nikbakht faces a jail sentence of between one and three years.

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