

Rights and freedom

Iran: Three people killed in Iran protests over death of Mahsa Amini

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Kurdistan governor blames deaths on ‘plot by the enemy’ on fourth day of protests over 22-year-old’s death in custody

Protests across Iran after 22-year-old woman dies in police detention - video

Iranian government officials have denounced a fourth day of protests after the death of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman in police custody, claiming the demonstrators have fallen victim to a conspiracy by its enemies.

Mahsa Amini [died on Friday](#) after she was arrested by the morality police for not wearing the hijab and her trousers correctly, a tragic episode that has unleashed fury in the streets against the unaccountable and sometimes brutal treatment handed out to women by this branch of the police.

Women and men took to the streets in cities and towns across the country for the fourth evening in a row Tuesday, despite the deaths of at least three people in the protests on Monday, shouting slogans against Iran’s clerical leadership, images posted on social media showed.

Local petitions have been started calling for the disbandment of the morality police, saying their actions enforcing the hijab are counterproductive and discriminatory.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mohsen Mansouri, the governor of Tehran, tweeted: “The main elements of the initial core of the gatherings in Tehran tonight were fully organised, trained and planned to create disturbances in Tehran.

“Burning the flag, pouring diesel on the roads, throwing stones, attacking the police, setting fire to the engine and garbage cans, destroying public property, etc ... are not the work of ordinary people.”

Some Iranian lawmakers claimed outsiders, including news organisations backed by Iran’s enemies in Saudi Arabia, were exploiting her death. They nevertheless continued to promise an inquiry.

The scale of the violence and the number of arrests on Monday night are hard to assess independently. However, videos of beatings and protests were posted on social media, including footage with the sound of gunfire.

The Kurdish human rights group Hengaw, which is based in Norway, said it had confirmed three deaths at rallies in Kurdistan province – one in each of the towns of Divandareh, Saqqez and Dehglan.

It added that 221 people had been wounded and another 250 arrested in the Kurdistan region, where there had also been a general strike on Monday.

A 10-year-old girl – blood-spattered images of whom have gone viral on social media – was wounded in the town of Bukan but was alive, it added.

On Tuesday, the governor of Iran's Kurdistan region, Ismail Zarei Koosha, confirmed three people had been killed but blamed the deaths on "a plot by the enemy", according to the state-affiliated Fars news agency

"One of the citizens of the city of Divandarreh was killed with a type of military weapon that none of the ranks of the armed forces use," he was quoted as saying.

Many protests were peaceful, including the placing of a banner depicting Amini on a bridge across one of Tehran's main highways.

The controversy is sensitive for the Iranian president, [Ebrahim Raisi](#), who is currently in New York to address the UN general assembly for the first time. Human rights groups in New York are protesting against his presence and launching legal actions against him.

Although Raisi has ordered an investigation and expressed his personal sympathy, his critics say his earlier support for a more interventionist morality police has exposed a cultural division inside Iran.

In a sign that authorities were concerned the anger could spiral out of their control, an aide to the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, paid a two-hour visit to Amini's family home on Monday.

The semi-official Tasnim news agency said Abdolreza Pourzahabi told Amini's family "all institutions will take action to defend the rights that were violated" and that he was sure Khamenei was "also affected and pained" by her death.

The controversy has overshadowed talks due on Tuesday between Ali Bagheri, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, and the EU chief negotiator, Enrique Mora.

The regime is determined to argue that she died in police custody not due to any beating but as a result of a pre-existing brain condition, and an operation conducted when she was five. CT scans of her brain released by the hospital have become the subject of medical dispute, with government supporters citing neurologists claiming they show the psychological stress was caused by the previous brain operation, and its critics claiming they show signs of a physical beating and trauma. The official government news site said it could take three weeks for the inquiry to reach a conclusion.

Regardless of the outcome, sections of Iranian society have clearly lost patience with the morality police, arguing that many women have suffered long-term post-traumatic stress disorder after the police's efforts to "re-educate" them.

In Geneva, the UN Human Rights Office said Iran's morality police had been expanding their patrols in recent months, targeting women for not properly wearing the Islamic headscarf, known as hijab. It said verified videos showed women being slapped in the face, struck with batons and thrown into police vans for wearing the hijab too loosely.

Nada Al-Nashif, the acting UN high commissioner for human rights, said: "Mahsa Amini's tragic death and allegations of torture and ill-treatment must be promptly, impartially and effectively

investigated by an independent competent authority.”

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P.S.

- The Guardian. Wed 21 Sep 2022 05.49 BST:
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