Rights group says scores killed in Iran protests as crackdown intensifies

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<https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20220927-rights-group-says-scores-killed-in-iran-protests-as-crackdown-intensifies>

More than 75 people have died in Iran's crackdown on 11 nights of unrest sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, a rights group said, as Western nations pile pressure on the Islamic republic to end the violence.

The semi-official Fars news agency reported Tuesday that "around 60" people have been killed, up from the official death toll of 41 authorities reported on Saturday.

[Demonstrators](https://www.france24.com/en/tag/protest/) took to the streets again on Monday night, as they have every night since [Amini](https://www.france24.com/en/tag/mahsa-amini/" \t "_self)'s death on September 16 following her arrest for allegedly breaching the country's strict rules on hijab headscarves and modest clothing, witnesses told AFP.

In Sanandaj, the capital of Amini's western home province of [Kurdistan](https://www.france24.com/en/tag/kurds/), women climbed onto the roofs of cars to tear off their headscarves in front of cheering crowds, images published by Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR) showed, with police nowhere to be seen.

Tehran crowds have shouted "death to the dictator", calling for the end of the more than three-decade rule of supreme leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](https://www.france24.com/en/tag/ayatollah-ali-khamenei/), 83.

Video shot from several floors above street level, purportedly in the city of Tabriz, showed people protesting to the sound of tear gas canisters being fired by security forces.

IHR said at least 76 people have been killed in the crackdown that has seen sweeping restrictions imposed on the internet, including blocks on Instagram and WhatsApp.

Officials said Monday they had made more than 1,200 arrests. Those taken into custody have included activists, lawyers and journalists as well as protesters.

In Semnan province, east of Tehran, 26 women were among 155 people arrested, Iran's Fars news agency reported.

In Gilan province, a hotspot of protests on the Caspian Sea coast, the intelligence arm of the Revolutionary Guards detained 12 people, the Tasnim news agency said Tuesday.

Health Minister Bahram Einollahi, quoted by the official news agency IRNA, accused the protesters of destroying 72 ambulances.

Activists based abroad say the authorities have been using ambulances to transport security forces.

IRNA said on Tuesday that 10 law enforcement officers have been killed by "rioters" in recent days.

The crackdown on the women-led protests has drawn condemnation from around the world.

On Tuesday, US think-tank Freedom House joined the chorus and called on "other governments to stand with these courageous protesters and hold Iranian officials to account for their abuses".

Tensions with West

Tensions with Western powers grew as France on Monday issued its "strongest condemnation" over the "violent repression" by security forces, Germany summoned the Iranian ambassador and Canada announced sanctions.

A day earlier, the European Union had deplored the crackdown and Tehran said it had called in the British and Norwegian envoys.

"We call on the international community to decisively and unitedly take practical steps to stop the killing and torture of protesters," said IHR's director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam.

Video footage and death certificates obtained by IHR showed that "live ammunition is being directly fired at protesters", he charged.

Riot police in black body armour have beaten protesters with truncheons in running street battles, and students have torn down large pictures of the supreme leader and his late predecessor [Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini,](https://www.france24.com/en/tag/ayatollah-khomenei/) in recent video footage published by AFP.

 At least 20 journalists have been arrested, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

'Demands of the people'

The Iranian judiciary chief, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, has stressed "the need for decisive action without leniency" against the protest instigators.

But a powerful Shiite cleric long aligned with the country's ultra-conservative establishment has urged authorities to take a softer line.

"The leaders must listen to the demands of the people, resolve their problems and show sensitivity to their rights," said Grand Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani.

Western condemnation of the bloody crackdown has clouded diplomatic efforts to revive a nuclear deal between Iran and major powers that was abandoned by then US president Donald Trump in 2018.

The EU's foreign policy chief [Josep Borrell](https://www.france24.com/en/tag/josep-borrell/" \t "_self), who has led those efforts, on Sunday slammed Iran for its "widespread and disproportionate use of force against non-violent protesters".

 The United States last week imposed sanctions against the Iranian morality police, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday his own country would follow suit with a sanctions package "on dozens of individuals and entities".