

Iranian Student Protesters Clash With Police

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Thousands of student protesters gathered at universities in Tehran and other cities across [Iran](#) on Monday, chanting antigovernment slogans and fighting with security forces in what appeared to be the most violent street protests since the summer.

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European Pressphoto Agency

An injured Iranian protester received help during a demonstrations in Tehran on Monday. [More Photos »](#)

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The main entrance to Tehran University was [sealed off](#) by security forces, while [clashes broke out](#) between protesters and tens of thousands of [Basij](#) militiamen in squares around the city, witnesses and opposition Web sites reported. Protests erupted at universities throughout the country, including Kerman, [Mashhad](#), Isfahan and Hamdean. The opposition staged a street rally in Shiraz.

Witnesses said there was an anger to the protests not seen since the summer months, when protests broke out after the June 12 presidential election, which the opposition has dismissed as fraudulent. The Basij responded with ferocity, using copious amounts of tear gas, electrical truncheons and [stun guns](#) in an effort to disperse the crowds.

There were reports of gunfire, apparently warning shots fired over the protesters' heads by the security forces.

In Tehran, protesters chanted, "Death to the dictator," followed by, "This is the last warning." They carried Iranian flags missing the word "allah," which was added after the 1979 revolution, and burned posters bearing the image of Ayatollah [Ruhollah Khomeini](#), the founder of the Islamic republic.

A crowd of about 1,000 students gathered at a university in Sanandaj, in the Kurdish region of Iran, unusual for an area where security is extremely tight, the Kurdish Rawanews reported. [Students in Kerman](#), in central Iran,

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Iranian opposition supporters demonstrated at Tehran University on Monday. [More Photos >](#)

shouted, “Death to dictator,” “Azadi” — Persian for freedom — and, “My brother, the street sweeper, take Mahmoud away,” a reference to the country’s president, [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#).

[Videos](#) posted to YouTube, [Twitter](#) and opposition Web sites early on Monday showed students gathering in large crowds in Tehran and the northeastern city of Mashhad.

The police, who are barred from the universities, had gathered outside the schools and in public squares to head off the protests, and by early afternoon there were widespread reports of tear gas, beatings and arrests.

An opposition Web site, Fararu, said that the Basijis threw two students, including a young woman, out a second floor window at Boo-Ali Sina University in Hamedan, injuring both seriously.

The protests came on National Student Day, an official holiday in which the government commemorates the 1953 killings of three students by the shah of Iran, who was overthrown 30 years ago by Islamist revolutionaries. Antigovernment activists had signaled they would take advantage of the day to protest despite repeated warnings by the authorities.

Protesters from the opposition movement last thronged to the streets in early November as Iran celebrated another official holiday, the 30th anniversary of the takeover of the United States embassy in Tehran. Tens of thousands of protesters wearing green masks marched through the streets shouting anti-government slogans in those rallies, but were beaten back by police.

On Monday, witnesses in Tehran were quoted by Reuters as saying that Iranian police fired tear gas to disperse demonstrators at Vali Asr Square, and they said police officers had used batons to beat protesters at a separate demonstration.

The authorities ordered foreign news outlets not to cover the protests, and Internet service was reduced to a trickle on Saturday, so slow that it was impossible to “open e-mails or any Web pages,” a journalist in Tehran said. Several reports said that mobile-phone networks — which protesters have used to coordinate their actions and broadcast messages outside Iran — had been shut down.

The measure appeared to be aimed at preventing information about the crackdown or the protest to get outside the country and also to deprive the opposition from its primary means, the Internet and [Facebook](#), to mobilize their supporters. Videos posted online have played a critical role in showing the world what has been happening inside Iran.

[Mir Hussein Mousavi](#), one of the two opposition leaders who ran against Mr. Ahmadinejad in June, issued a statement on Sunday characterizing the movement “as alive” despite government suppression.

He warned that the authorities could not end the protests with the arrests of students because 1 in 20 Iranians were university students, several opposition sites reported.

“They are asking us to forget about the election results as though people are concerned only about the elections,” he said. “How can we make them understand that this is not the issue? It is not about who the president is or is not; the issue is that they have sold out a great nation.”

Mr. Mousavi has been issuing statements regularly since June. Despite threats of arrest, he remains free, but his movement is restricted, according to an ally outside the country.

His comments were followed by criticism of the government by Akbar [Hashemi Rafsanjani](#), an influential politician who sided with the opposition but had been silent recently.

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“Constructive criticism is not tolerated in the country,” Mr. Rafsanjani said at a meeting with students in the city of Mashhad, according to the Web site mowjcamp.com. “It was not right to put the Basij and the [Revolutionary Guards](#) to confront the people.”

A day earlier, Iran tightened security in an apparent attempt to suppress any antigovernment rallies, arresting more than 20 mothers who were mourning children killed in the unrest that has broken out since the disputed June 12 elections. The mothers had taken part in a vigil in Laleh Park in central Tehran every Saturday since the [death](#) in June of [Neda Agha-Soltan](#), 26, whose shooting became a symbol of the government’s violent repression. The rally had been attacked by the police before, but Saturday was the first time the mothers were arrested.

An opposition Web site reported that the protest was broken up by the police and that many demonstrators were taken away. The [BBC](#) Persian service quoted a witness who said 29 women were arrested, some of whom were later released. But at least 21 remained in jail, the BBC said.

It was unclear whether Ms. Agha-Soltan’s mother, who had participated in the vigils, was present on Saturday and was among those arrested.

Next Saturday, six months after Election Day, protests are planned around the world “to honor the Iranian people’s peaceful struggle for their human and civil rights,” according to the organizer, United4Iran, a network of activists supporting human rights in Iran.

Nazila Fathi reported from Toronto and Robert F. Worth reported from Beirut, Lebanon.

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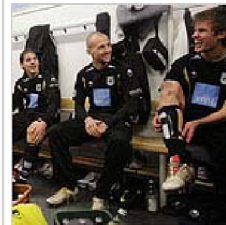
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