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Canada slaps new sanctions on Iran over death of Mahsa Amini

Canada is imposing new sanctions on Iran over the death of a young Iranian woman while in police custody, according to Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly.

In a statement shared on Twitter Monday, Joly said the measures were in response to Iran's "gross human rights violations," mentioning in particular the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman who died while in the custody of Iran's so-called morality police for reportedly wearing her hijab too loosely.

The new sanctions announced Monday target nine entities and 25 individuals, including senior Iranian officials and members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Those being sanctioned include Mohammad-Hossein Bagheri, chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, IRGC Commander-in-Chief Major General Hossein Salami, and Esmail Qaeni, commander of the Quds Force of the IRGC.

As far as entities are concerned, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security are being sanctioned by Canada.

Under the measures, Ottawa is effectively freezing any assets the listed individuals may hold in Canada and rendering them "inadmissible to Canada under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act," the government statement said.

The death of Mahsa Amini has led to widespread condemnation and



protests around the world, including in Canada. The United States government imposed sanctions on Iran's morality police last month.

Protests have also escalated in Iran since Amini's death on Sept. 16. Thousands have rallied in different Canadian cities in solidarity with Amini, who was detained by morality police on Sept. 13 outside a transit station in the capital, Tehran.

She was accused of breaking a modesty law that requires women to wear headscarves, cover their arms and legs and wear loose clothing.

Mahsa Amini: Trudeau announces sanctions on Iranian morality police - Sep 26, 2022.

Police in Iran claim Amini died of a heart attack and was not

That shouldn't come as a surprise, said McGill University genetic evolutionary biologist Jesse Shapiro. Forget, for a moment, all the alphanumeric subvariants, new and old, scientists are watching. "Even just based on waning immunity, the time since the average person had their last infection or their last booster, a wave was expected," Shapiro said.

In most provinces, immunity isn't as high as it could be, which is why Canada's public health agency is appealing to people to get "top to date" with their vaccines. New bivalent shots that target the original SARS-CoV-2 strain, as well as the original BA.1 strain of Omicron, are being rolled out, though Health Canada has yet to approve bivalent boosters targeting the BA.4 and BA.5 strains, which, along with BA.2, are currently the major circulating strains in Canada.

Infections and hospitalizations are inching up in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia, but wastewater signals are falling in Saskatchewan. Public Health Ontario reported Friday that it's seeing a gradual increase in cases and the number of tests coming back positive, when looking back over the past two weeks. Ottawa is already in a "new wave" of COVID-19, the city's public health department declared last week.

COVID-19 is persisting at a fairly high rate of infection across the country, experts said. "Here in British Columbia, it's estimated we're under-reporting cases by 100-fold," said University of B.C. evolutionary biologist Sarah Otto, who, like Shapiro, is a member of Canada's national Coronavirus Variants Rapid

The next COVID wave is already starting in Canada. Here's why this one should be different

Response Network, or CoVaRR-Net.

Based on the network's data sharing, Shapiro predicts that, one by one, the provinces will acknowledge another wave. "As usual, it's hard to say, will this be a big wave? Will it be a small wave. For sure it's a wave of some kind."

Should we worry? Science magazine dropped a piece last week warning one or more of several highly immune dodging strains of SARS-CoV-2 - BA.2, BQ.1.1, BF.7 - "may well cause big, new COVID-19 waves this fall and winter." What it means in terms of severe disease and deaths, Science said, is very much an open question.

What we're witnessing is a vast amount of convergent evolution, said Shapiro, an associate professor in McGill's department of microbiology and immunology and the Genome Centre. Many of the variants have the same mutations, or combination of mutations, on key sites of the viral genome that allow them to spread more easily in a highly immunized population.

Natural selection is favouring the same mutations, over and over again, Shapiro said. "It's increasing evidence that they are doing something, and what that something is, is probably to evade immunity. So, they're even better at evading people."

"They are basically less easily recognized by the antibodies that are



in the majority of people right now," Otto said.

"The good news is that the none of the subvariants are totally unique. If they were, that would be worrying, in a different way," Shapiro said. Omicron came out of nowhere, a deep branch of SARS-CoV-2's bio-genetic tree. The new lineages or subvariants are descendants of Omicron.

"I don't want to underplay what this virus has been putting us through - it clearly is able to evolve in all kinds of different directions and surprise us," Shapiro said.

"But it's encouraging that we are seeing the same mutations, repeatedly. Which suggests, at least for now, a limited supply of adapted mutations."

"It's kind of saying that the virus is constrained. It's hobbled a little bit," Otto said.

Another positive, according to Otto, is that, even if antibodies

None of the new variants are circulating at high levels in Canada. Some worry that BQ.1.1, which Otto said has a striking constellation of changes that increase the ability to evade antibodies, could sweep through populations, as if nobody has any immunity. "I don't think that's going to be the case, based on what I've seen so far," Otto said. "It's just helping the virus spread a little bit, not game-changers."

"But it's too early to know for sure."

Ontario and B.C. have begun moving people out of hospital in the event of a surge in COVID, in B.C. or both, a sign the provinces are worried enough about hospital capacity to make room, Otto said. Ontario's new law, Bill 7, allows hospitals to move patients awaiting long-term care to nursing homes not of their choosing, and as far away as 150 kilometres away.

Shapiro knows the perils of trying to forecast the future with a virus as wily as SARS-CoV-2. "My crystal ball is my fantastic other colleagues with CoVaRR-Net. All credit to these people who are sharing data and analyzing it."

But, "if you are a few months from your past infection or past vaccine, go get your booster," he said. "The more immunity we can get in the population, the less bad this wave will be in terms of overall transmission and hospitalizations, and bad outcomes we want to avoid."

Canada's panel of immunization advisers recommends people aged 12 and older get a fall booster dose, regardless of how many they have already received, three to six months after their last vaccine infection.

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Thousands still without power as classes set to resume in many P.E.I. schools

About 22,000 Maritime Electric customers were still without power Sunday evening - the day before many schools on P.E.I. are set to reopen - according to the utility's outage map.

Post-tropical storm Fiona slammed the island with a vengeance in the early hours of Sept. 24, leaving widespread damage across the province.

Decades-old trees snapped in half, beaches and sand dunes were decimated and many properties were damaged beyond repair. About 82,000 Maritime Electric customers without power immediately following the storm.

All schools were closed last week and some will remain closed on Monday.

They are:

- Donagh Regional
- Parkdale Elementary
- Prince Street Elementary
- Queen Charlotte Intermediate
- St. Joan Elementary
- West Kent Elementary
- West Kent Consolidated (Students)

will resume classes Oct. 5 in a temporary location within Montague Regional High School.

Montague Regional High School (Classes will resume Oct. 4)

Ecole Evangélique (Classes are being relocated to L'Exposition Agricole et le Festival Académien grounds, start date yet to be announced)

While many streets have been cleared and aid packages have been announced, the recovery from Fiona is far from over.

In an interview with CBC News Sunday afternoon, Maritime Electric spokesperson Kim Griffin said crews worked diligently through the weekend, but some communities were hit harder by the storm and it's taking longer to get power restored.

"It's still slow going but our crew remains very optimistic... very resilient and they're just doing it fast and as safely as they can to get on as soon as possible," she said Saturday.

"We really appreciate that people are helping each other. We're hearing

so many stories of people and their kindness to help out their neighbours and especially people who may be alone... and we know it's not ideal but we really appreciate that people are really trying to help us, too."

Griffin asked residents to stay away from power lines and make sure they're visible when going out after dark by wearing reflective clothing or carrying a flashlight as Maritime Electric crews are on the road at all hours.

Public safety concerns

Griffin made an appeal for people to be careful while power lines are being re-energized.

"We have a lot of crews out working around the clock and it's really important for people to wear clothing that we can see, but also that they can be seen by the general public as well."

Homeowners who need help cutting down trees on their property or moving large debris curbside because it is a safety hazard can call 1-833-734-1873 or email

fiorenacomp@gov.pe.ca to have their name put on a list for assistance.

"A phenomenal thing to see" - Montserrat in Charlottetown - the province's capital city - many still don't have power.

Scott Adams, manager of public works for the city, says crews are working from airports and down to the trees blocking roads ways and sidewalks.

While it's been a tiring week, Adams says the outpouring of support from the community has been wonderful.

"The community here has been such a huge supporter of our staff from the early days," he said.

"A lot of our staff themselves that, you know, had to leave their homes, didn't have power and they'd be working in the street and you'd have people come out offer them pots of coffee, offer them meals, hot meals. It was just a phenomenal thing to see how this community came together after such a devastation."

According to a release from the city, almost all municipal roads have been cleared but thirteen parks and playgrounds remain closed due to damage.

Payments for eligible Island households

The P.E.I. government is offering payments of up to \$250 per household to help cover the cost of food, gas and other basic needs.

Why Torontonians are facing a 'staggering' spike in auto thefts - and what police are doing about it

Patricia Li's year began with the theft of a Lexus NX 300 from her Toronto home - but that was just the beginning of her troubles.

Five months later, thieves returned in the middle of the night for her other vehicle, a Lexus RX 450, but this time they weren't lucky.

After the first theft in February, Li installed a video camera that captured footage of three people attempting to break into the car.

"It really scared because they were so close," Li told CBC News. "Who knows what could have happened... if I had woken in the middle of the night and saw them and then I approached them?"

The footage appears to show one person trying to break open the door handle while two others place some sort of towel over the front headlights. Within minutes, Li says, the vehicle's alarm connected to the engine immobilizer went off. The video shows the three running off as the lights on the car begin to flash.

"I'm personally fed that nothing has been done about it because so many cars are being stolen," Li said.

Li is one of thousands of Torontonians who have been impacted by a dramatic increase in auto thefts this year. As of Sept. 20, there have been 6,497 thefts reported to Toronto police. When compared with all of 2021, which saw 4,498 reports, that's nearly a 45 per cent increase with three months of the year remaining.

Carjackings, which are counted separately and investigated by a different team, are up 209 per cent, rising from 58 to 179.

CBC News is investigating why an increasing number of Torontonians are falling victim to thefts and what community groups, politicians and police are trying to do to stem the rising wave of crimes.

Supply and demand

Toronto isn't alone - data collected by CBC News shows that as of Aug. 31, auto thefts in neighbouring Peel Region are up 54 per cent compared with the same period last year. In Ottawa, thefts are already up nearly 27 per cent this year compared with last, while Montreal is on track to surpass the number of thefts from 2021.

"It is staggering. It's a very, very large number," Det. Sgt. Peter Webby said about Toronto's spike.



He's with the newly formed Organized Crime Investigative Support Team, which tackles what it calls complex investigations by liaising with different police divisions and with teams in other regions, cities and even countries.

"I don't think anything has changed with respect to the demand for the vehicles. I think what has changed is the supply," he said.

In 2020 and 2021, Webby said, there were far fewer newer vehicles available due to supply-chain issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of those orders came in this year, flooding the market with more vehicles.

"From what I understand, hundreds and hundreds of orders had come in that were unable to be delivered. So it's simply a case of a higher supply, which makes it more available for these things to take," Webby said.

He said that while some cars are stolen for the purpose of committing another crime and others for domestic resale, that's not what's behind the majority of thefts.

"Where the cars are stolen for exportation, that's where I think there's the biggest profit," he said.

"If your car is stolen... if it's one of the desired vehicles that is stolen, there's a very good chance these criminals are going to try to get it out of the country and resell as quickly as possible."

Based on the police data in Toronto alone, on average a car has been stolen every hour of each day so far this year. The total value of those cars is in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Desired vehicles

It's not just luxury vehicles that are being targeted in cities like Toronto. That's a lesson Sarah learned the hard way after her vehicle was recently stolen. She asked CBC News not to use her last name because she's

so pervasive that some neighbourhood groups have been working to collect and share data themselves and spread awareness within their communities to help protect each other.

"We do the neighbourhood watch program... to try and communicate prevention techniques, but there's just only so much people can do - and that's really the problem," said Pam Main, of the Upper Avenue Community Association in Toronto's North York neighbourhood.

Main said members of the group have watched auto thefts creep up significantly since 2019, and alongside the neighbouring group - the South Armour Heights Residents' Association - they've been pushing for more police resources to be allocated to address the issue.

Prior to the inception of the Organized Crime Investigative Support Team, some police divisions - including 32 Division, which covers the area of both neighbourhood groups - had their own teams dedicated to tackling auto theft in those areas. However, those personnel have since been reallocated to support the Organized Crime Investigative Support Team, which now handles all the auto theft investigations across the police service.

Main said they hope the new team, which is also responsible for other crimes such as kidnapping and abductions, will prioritize auto theft.

"Hopefully with this new team, we will see some results," she said.

Det. Sgt. Webby said the team is prioritizing auto thefts, adding that a dedicated group of investigators tasked with addressing this.

"Around the clock, we have investigators aggressively working to stop this problem," he said.

Government support

Given how multi-jurisdictional the problem is, some local politicians say more support is needed from both the province and the federal government.

"This is not just local crime; this is international organized crime worth billions of dollars where criminals are going to ports in Montreal, Halifax," said Mike Colle, a Toronto councillor who introduced a motion last December - which passed - calling on the Ontario government to create a task force to combat the rise in auto theft.

No provincial task force has been set up, but in a statement to CBC News, Ontario's Minister of the Solicitor General said it's already working with the federal government on the issue, investing \$200 million to combat gun and gang crime, which it claims is linked to many auto thefts. It also touted money allocated for police services to purchase technology to help identify stolen vehicles.

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RCMP seeing 'significant increase' in fraudulent activity in Canada since 2020

Citing a "significant increase" in fraudulent activity in Canada in the last two years - the majority of which in the last year has been happening online - the RCMP is calling on Canadians to be aware of scammers' tactics.

Speaking to MPs on the House of Commons Industry and Technology Committee on Monday, during a hearing on the prevalence of fraudulent calls in Canada, RCMP Director General for National Cybercrime Coordination Unit Chris Lynam said that since 2020, officials have seen this marked increase in scams, including through email and social media.

"Part of the challenge... is that you're dealing with very highly adaptive people, and they're criminals. So they can very easily pivot to adopt the newest technique... For example, they will watch what's happening in terms of an incident or a



government-type rebate, and very quickly they'll be able to figure out how to go and put that scam pitch out to Canadians," Lynam said. "We now think over 70 per cent of the activity is cyber-enabled."

According to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAC) so far this year, there have been 61,305 reports of fraud, 38,812 victims of fraud, and

\$332.7 million lost to fraud in Canada, as of the end of August. These figures include online scams as well as fraudulent calls. In all of 2021 the CAC received 107,139 reports of fraud, targeting 68,061 victims, and resulting in \$383 million lost. Lynam said that the 2021 figures were a 130 per cent increase from 2020.

Facing foreign conflicts, domestic disasters, Canada's top soldier worries about readiness

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre says he's worried about the Canadian Armed Forces' readiness as it faces pressure both from the conflict in Ukraine and the need to respond to natural disasters at home.

In an interview on Rosemary Barton Live on Sunday, Eyre said the two issues represented "strong demands on both sides" and, given issues with equipment and personnel shortages, he was "concerned about our overall readiness."

"Our national prosperity is undermined by our ability to defend the rules-based international order. But our national prosperity is also undermined by our ability to fight those disasters at home," he said.

"I'm concerned about our ability to respond at scale and [the] speed required. And so we're working on addressing elements of our readiness, whether it's people, whether it's training, whether it's equipment... everything else that makes us able to respond with the right size and the right speed."

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, Canada has sent substantial quantities of military equipment to help the Ukrainian armed forces, much of it coming from stockpiles meant for the Canadian military. Additionally, the military has raised concerns about its ability to recruit new members - influenced by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and sexual misconduct scandals - and is facing personnel shortages.

Defence Minister Anita Anand said in an interview on Rosemary Barton Live last week that all NATO countries need to strike a balance between shipping weapons to the front lines in Ukraine and making sure Canada's own forces are well-enough equipped to be able to respond.

"This is front and centre on my mind," she said. Asked whether he was concerned about the replenishment of defence equipment, Eyre replied on Sunday: "I would say we need to replace our existing

stocks with a sense of urgency, and we need to continue to support Ukraine with that same sense of urgency," he said. Ukraine has reportedly said it needs all the weapons it can get to fight off the Russian attack, as Ukrainian forces recapture some territory in the country's east and south. In an interview on Rosemary Barton Live siring Sunday, Yuriy Sakh, an adviser to Ukraine's defence minister, reiterated the need for equipment.

"Regardless of how much we receive, we need more. But we understand that our allies at the moment understand our needs very well. And this is why the domestic defence industry, enterprises and plants, they are now beginning to be geared toward the future needs of the Ukrainian army."

A dedicated disaster relief force? Eyre also responded on Sunday to the question of whether Canada should create a dedicated disaster relief force, a key question in the wake of

post-tropical storm Fiona. About 700 CAF members are currently on the ground helping with cleanup in several Atlantic provinces, Eyre confirmed. He said the CAF would always be the "ultimate insurance policy" in case of disaster, but he noted that "with the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters, there's more capacity that's required."

Canada significantly undercounts maternal deaths, and doctors are sounding the alarm

At five months pregnant, Claudia Wong knew it was normal to be uncomfortable some of the time. But she couldn't shake the feeling something was wrong.

The Pickering, Ont., woman had already gained about 14 pounds, significant on her small frame. She'd become so swollen her legs were "like sausages" when she tried to put on pants. Her vision sometimes blurred.

Wong, who works in health care, mentioned everything to her obstetrician, but she was told to "wait and see."

One night in October 2019, Wong had painful, fiery heartburn that no amount of antacid would dispel. She considered going to the hospital, but "it just felt like another thing that people would have brushed off," she explained.

Instead, she and her husband, Denis Desluis, checked into a foot spa to relax. When Wong took a long time in the change room, the attendant unlocked the door and Desluis found his wife passed out in the shower.

They went to a Durham-region hospital and waited several hours. Suddenly, as Desluis watched in horror, his wife's arm shot out violently. Then she began convulsing and foaming at the mouth.

Wong had eclampsia, one of the most common severe complications women experience during pregnancy. It's a blood-pressure condition that ranges in severity and sometimes leads to death. Wong had many typical symptoms that had gone unnoticed for weeks.

"For someone else, my weight gain may not have been significant. For someone else, my blood pressure may not have been significant," she recalled. "But for me, I almost died."

Most maternal deaths preventable, experts say. Near misses like Wong's happen in Canada every day, but maternal health experts say they don't have it. Deaths of mothers are less common, but doctors are sounding the alarm that there are no consistent or reliable systems here to collect and share information on maternal deaths and close calls. It's particularly tragic, they say, because most deaths and adverse outcomes are preventable. It also means mothers in Canada die from conditions like pre-eclampsia



that no longer kill women in countries with better maternal health monitoring systems.

Dr. Jon Barrett, chair of McMaster University's obstetrics department, has been advocating for such a system for weeks.

"It's like having a near-miss aircraft crash at Pearson Airport or one of the other major airports and not... trying to find out: What have we learned from it to avoid the next time?"

It's like having a near-miss aircraft crash at Pearson Airport and not... trying to find out: What have we learned from it to avoid the next time? Jon Barrett, chair of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at McMaster University, has been advocating for such a system for weeks.

When Farnan looks back on it, she wishes she'd been more forceful in her demands that Kayla receive closer medical attention. "Be vigilant for your daughters," she said. "This needs to be taken seriously. Somebody died. And I'm sure she's not the only one."

Some women's deaths aren't counted, doctors say. Kayla Farnan isn't the only one. According to Statistics Canada, 523 women died from complications of pregnancy or childbirth between 2000 and 2020.

But Canada's count of maternal deaths is so incomplete that Dr. Jocelyn Cook, the chief scientific officer of the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC), says no one really knows how many mothers die during pregnancy or in the months after.

She says the true number is probably closer to 800, possibly higher. She's not alone in her suspicion that Canada undercounts the deaths of mothers. This country's data is so incomplete that an international report by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and others estimates Canada's maternal mortality rate to be as much as 60 per cent higher than what it reported by

StatCan. If those estimates are correct, Canada's maternal mortality rate, while still low by global standards, was in the top third of countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2017 - and was double the rate of other high-income countries such as the Netherlands, Ireland and Japan.

The holes in Canada's system. There are a number of reasons the death of a mother might slip through the cracks, Cook explains. Canada's national maternal death count is calculated from death certificates. A death is considered maternal if it has been flagged as either a death of a pregnant woman or a woman in postpartum. But experts told CBC that these forms are routinely filled in incorrectly.

Even what counts as a maternal death is different depending on the province or territory where it happens.

Some provinces use WHO's definition of up to 42 days after the end of pregnancy. Others count up to a year postpartum. Others may not count the postpartum period at all.

Only six provinces have mandated maternal death reviews, which means that if a woman dies in the other seven Canadian provinces or territories, her death will not be independently investigated.

"If we don't capture information the same way across systems, if we don't ask the same questions, if we don't take the time to really understand what's happening," said Cook.

She has created a checklist to help provinces record consistent information when maternal deaths happen.

"We do know from the data from other countries that... a significant proportion of those cases are preventable," Cook said. "And nobody wants anybody to die."

U.K. systems global model. In the U.K., maternal deaths have been tracked and investigated by the country's MBRACE monitoring program since 1952. Whenever a woman dies in her childbearing years, the team checks to see if she gave birth in the last year, says Dr. Marian Knight, a professor of maternal and child population health at the University of Oxford, and leader of the program.

"If we didn't do that, we would potentially miss up to half of the maternal deaths that occur in the U.K. because... if you die by suicide, the fact that you had a six-month old baby wouldn't necessarily be written... on that death certificate."

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