



Spotlight on Iran



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Highlights of the week

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Initiative to summon Ahmadinejad to questioning before the Majles approved

Tensions were running high among Majles members as the initiative to summon President Ahmadinejad to a hearing before the Majles was approved earlier this week. He will be asked to discuss the crisis in the foreign currency exchange market and the government's wheat import policy. The initiative was approved when Majles members were not satisfied with the explanations provided by the president's representatives on the foreign currency crisis to the Planning and Budget Committee. According to Article 88 of the Iranian constitution, the Majles may summon the president to a hearing with the support of at least one quarter of its members. The president now has to appear before the Majles within one month. In principle, the hearing initiative could end with the president being impeached. This is the second time in less than a year that the president has been summoned for questioning by the Majles.

A number of Majles members made last-minute attempts to prevent the president's questioning. During a meeting held on the issue on Sunday, November 4, some of the opponents of the initiative said that there were not enough signatures to summon

Ahmadinejad, and 21 Majles members even walked out of the Majles session in protest. Majles member Mehdi Kouchakzadeh, one of the president's supporters, said during the meeting that the initiative, signed by 76 Majles members, was in contradiction to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's call to avoid political disagreements that may provoke tensions ahead of the presidential elections. Last week Khamenei warned the heads of the three branches of government not to discuss their differences of opinion in public, saying that those who bring these differences of opinion to the awareness of the Iranian people play with their emotions and betray the country. His remarks came in the wake of the correspondence between the president and judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani, following the president's request (which was denied by the judiciary) to let him visit Tehran's Evin prison, where his press advisor Ali-Akbar Javanfekr is currently serving a sentence. After the Supreme Leader made his remarks, the Majles speaker and the judiciary chairman sent letters to Khamenei to express their support for him and declare their obedience to his instructions on the need to maintain national unity. President Ahmadinejad, too, sent the Supreme Leader a letter expressing his commitment. He also stressed, however, that the Supreme Leader must safeguard the president's status as the elected representative of the people and prevent harm to his authority.



Majles member Kouchakzadeh said that the remarks made by the Supreme Leader last week were indicative of his opposition to the initiative to summon the president to a hearing before the Majles in the current conditions, and that if it was up to him, the initiative would not have gone through. He announced that neither he nor his colleagues have any intention of staying at a meeting that goes against the Supreme Leader's position (Fararu, November 4). In response, Majles speaker Ali Larijani said

that the Supreme Leader did not approach the Majles on the issue, and that the Majles does not have to follow Kouchakzadeh's interpretation of the Supreme Leader's stance (ISNA, November 4).

The Baztab website reported on November 4 that in recent weeks Majles members who oppose the initiative have exerted heavy pressure on those Majles members who have signed it. While the pressure led some Majles members to remove their signature from the original initiative, it was eventually joined by other members and thus gained the support required by law.

After the initiative to summon the president for questioning was approved, the Asr-e Iran website published a commentary article which criticized the Majles members who expressed their opposition to it. The website said that, even though it, too, believes that the initiative will be of no actual benefit for the people of Iran, it is the constitutional right of the Majles, and at any rate, it is better to summon the president for questioning than to remain silent over the pressure exerted on the Majles to back down from the initiative. The website rejected the claim made by those who oppose the initiative that it may intensify tensions in society, arguing that the regime is now facing conditions that are more critical even than those that prevailed in Iran when the Majles decided to impeach former president Abulhassan Banisadr in 1981.

Speaking about the claim that the president will not respect the Majles during his hearing, the article said that this concern is no reason to give up the demand that the president appear before the Majles members. On the contrary, he needs to encounter strong resistance so that no one thinks he can harm the Majles and the constitution.

The website said that those who claim that the Supreme Leader is opposed to the initiative undermine his status. If Khamenei did believe that the initiative needs to be stopped, he would say just that without anyone having to speak on his behalf. What is more, the best way to express the significant criticism against the president in the current conditions is to allow Majles members to do so transparently and constitutionally. Those interested in avoiding the intensification of tensions in society need to ask the president not to take advantage of the hearing to stir up such tensions, and require him to provide pertinent, dignified responses to the questions asked by Majles members instead of avoiding them. Instead of provoking riots, it would be better for government supporters to let the president use the opportunity to appear before the

Majles and provide convincing responses to the questions asked by its members to redeem his place in history, the website concluded (Asr-e Iran, November 4).

The daily Keyhan, on the other hand, had reservations about the initiative. An editorial written by Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the daily, said that the initiative to summon the president for questioning is the right and even legal duty of Majles representatives, one which they must not be denied. The Majles took the initiative after government ministers had failed to appear before the Majles members to clarify the government's policy and answer their questions on the foreign currency crisis. The Majles members fulfilled their mission for the people of Iran in light of the escalating economic situation, which deserves praise and indicates that they share the concerns of the public.

Shariatmadari said, however, that there are two sides to every coin, the other side being that Iran's domestic and external enemies are taking advantage of the current situation to create a stir in public opinion. The question is whether there was no other option for the Majles to exercise its responsibility in a way that would not be exploited by the enemies of Iran for propaganda against the regime. Keyhan's editor-in-chief believes that a meeting could have been arranged between government and Majles representatives to discuss the developments in the foreign currency market and reach an understanding on the issue. He said that it is highly doubtful that summoning the president for questioning will solve the problems that concern the government, the Majles, and the people, claiming that a likelier possibility is that the questioning will be used by both sides to defend their respective policies (Keyhan, November 5).

After the initiative was approved, Majles member Ahmad Tavakoli, one of the president's strongest critics in the conservative camp, said that Ahmadinejad should act in a dignified manner and show respect to the Majles when appearing before its members, and take into consideration the sensitivity that currently exists in the foreign currency market. Speaking at a press conference, Tavakoli said that if the president does not provide adequate replies to the questions asked by the Majles members, the fluctuations in the foreign currency market will become more pronounced.

Speaking about the possibility of the president not appearing before the Majles, Tavakoli said that it would be another violation of the law by Ahmadinejad and that he does not believe the president would do it. When asked whether the initiative was not in contradiction to the Supreme Leader's call to avoid aggravating the political

differences of opinion, the Majles member said that the Supreme Leader meant that the public must not be dragged into these differences of opinion, and that his remarks were not intended to prevent the Majles from exercising its legal powers (Alef, November 4).

Restrictions imposed on exporting goods and products from Iran amidst shortage concerns

The Iranian authorities' decision to ban the export of 52 products and goods to other countries has added to speculations that Iran is facing a shortage of goods as a result of the escalating sanctions. At the same time, the decision is drawing sharp criticism from exporters and traders, who are warning about a decline in Iran's foreign currency revenues from exports.

Last week the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Mines issued a list of 52 products and goods that can no longer be exported from Iran without the approval of the Organization for Protecting Exporters and Consumers. The list includes several food products, such as wheat, flour, sugar, vegetable oil, red meat, a number of dairy products, rice, imported tea, soybeans, baby food, eggs, and animal feed; as well as metals and industrial and petrochemical products, including tires, equipment for machines, imported vehicle parts, steel and iron products, aluminum, polymer products, sodium carbonate, sulfuric acid, benzene, PVC, polystyrene, melamine, and coal.

Mohammad-Reza Naderi, deputy head of Iranian customs, said at a conference of customs directors held last week that restricting the export of goods from Iran stems from concerns over a shortage of various goods in the market. He noted that while exporting goods to other countries is highly important for economic development, the recent fluctuations in the foreign currency market have increased concerns that, if no restrictions are imposed on exporting some of the goods, Iranians will find themselves facing a shortage. He stressed the need for complete coordination between Iran's customs authorities to implement the government's instructions, adding that the export of gold and coins without the approval of the Central Bank has been banned as well (Mehr, October 31). Speaking about the new restrictions, Economy Minister Seyyed Shamsoldin Hosseini said that the export restrictions have been imposed on goods imported to Iran at the official exchange rate (1,226 tomans per dollar) (ISNA, November 1).



A number of top exporters and traders had reservations about the decision to impose restrictions on the export of goods. Mohammad Nahavandian, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, expressed his hope that the decision is temporary and short-term, because it can hurt exporters if it remains in effect for too long. He noted that the use of cheap foreign currency for importing goods and exporting them at the higher exchange rate made the decision necessary despite its negative consequences, and that it was an emergency measure taken in light of the extraordinary conditions prevailing in the foreign currency market. He warned, however, that a prolonged ban on exporting goods will make it impossible for exporters to meet their obligations, which will negatively impact the trust of their customers. According to Nahavandian, these restrictions will also likely hit state revenues from exporting goods that do not depend on oil just when the need for foreign currency is on the rise. He said that the government would have done better to address the main factors that led to the crisis in the foreign currency market instead of getting to a point where it has to make a decision to ban the export of goods (ISNA, November 1).

Yahya Al-e Eshaq, the chairman of Tehran's Chamber of Commerce, said in an interview to ISNA News Agency that the government had not consulted with the private sector about the items featured on the list, and that the traders were so far unsuccessful in persuading the government to introduce changes in it. He also warned that the restrictions on the export of some of the goods may be problematic for Iran's foreign currency revenues. Hamid Safdel, chairman of the Organization for Commerce Development, also expressed his concerns about the impact of the new export restrictions. He said that the restrictions on the export of petrochemical products, for

example, may cause severe economic damage. He expressed his hope that the list will be reviewed soon and changed according to the interests of exporters and traders (ISNA, October 31).

Mohammad Lahouti, deputy chairman of the Exporters Association, also warned that the government's decision could have serious consequences. He said that the exporters agree with the government's position that the export of goods imported to Iran at the official exchange rate should not be permitted. There is no reason, however, to impose restrictions on the export of goods produced in Iran, even if producing them involves the use of raw materials imported at the official foreign currency exchange rate.

He further added that exporters will have a hard time finding alternative goods for export in the near future, which may lead to a decline in foreign currency revenues from products that are not based on oil. Lahouti criticized the lack of coordination in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, as a result of which one of its departments signed an agreement to encourage exports by the private sector while another released the announcement banning the export of 52 goods. The list was drawn up without any input from exporters, he said (ISNA, October 31).

Some in the petrochemical industry also criticized the government's decision and warned about its consequences. Fars News Agency argued that the inclusion of various petrochemical products in the list was unprofessional, and that the national petrochemical company had not been consulted at all. A top official in the company said in an interview given to the news agency that, among other things, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce banned the export of petrochemical products that are abundant in Iran, and that there was no reason to impose restrictions on exporting them. Fars warned that the new restrictions could lead some petrochemical plants to halt production or even shut down (Fars, October 30).

Last weekend the daily Tehran Emrooz discussed the government's decision to ban the export of 52 products and goods. An editorial written by Ebrahim Neku, member of the Majles Economy Committee, said that the decision could have both positive and negative consequences. While the government believes that, in order to avoid causing damage to the reserves of strategic goods, there is no choice but to ban the export of some goods and products, exporters and manufacturers are concerned that the

decision could prove detrimental for them and for the country's foreign currency revenues.

The author of the article said that the decision can prevent shortages in some of the products and make it easier for Iranians to obtain these products, but that efforts should be made to prevent its possible negative effects, mainly increased smuggling and damage to exporters. In order to prevent the smuggling of goods whose export has been banned, there needs to be increased border security and improvement in the economic situation so that traders have no motivation to smuggle the goods to foreign countries. In addition, the government needs to allow exporters to increase the export of goods that are not on the list to prevent damage to manufacturers and exporters (Tehran Emrooz, November 1).

The reformist daily E'temad also discussed the government's decision. An editorial written by former Majles member and economist Mohammad Khoshchehreh said that the decision is the only way to keep prices from rising in light of the shortage of goods and products in Iran. Khoshchehreh argued, however, that the government needs to put an end to the situation where hundreds of tons of food are imported to Iran at the official exchange rate, and rather than being sold in domestic markets, they are exported to other countries at a high exchange rate so that a few exporters can put the profits into their own pockets (E'temad, November 1).

Could Iran's society be facing an increased prevalence of social pathologies?

Last week the Khabar Online website released up-to-date figures on the rising trend of smoking and alcohol consumption among high school students in Iran. According to the data, 64 percent of boys and 43 percent of girls have tried smoking a qalyan, 24.4 percent of boys have tried alcohol, and over 35 percent of boys have smoked cigarettes. The website said that the information, based on studies conducted in 2009-2011 by Tehran's University of Medical Sciences and the Teachers Training College, contradicts claims made by top Ministry of Education officials, who in recent years have denied that cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption are common in school students.

Figures on cigarette smoking in school students (in percent)

Gender	Tried smoking cigarettes	Smoked cigarettes	Frequently smoke cigarettes
Girls	33.6	8.4	1.4
Boys	37.6	13.1	4.6

The study, conducted by the University of Medical Sciences among more than 4,500 students, indicates that 36.6 percent of the boys smoke in public places, such as parks and streets, and that 51.6 percent of the girls smoke in their homes.

The study, conducted by the Teachers Training College among 447 students, indicates that 57 percent of them have on at least one occasion tried some kind of addictive substance: cigarettes, qalyan, alcohol, or others. The study shows an increase in smoking qalyan among girls and in drinking alcohol among boys (Khabar Online, October 31).

Consumption of addictive substances in students

Substance type	Gender	Percentage	Average percentage
Qalyan	Girls	43.1	53.2
	Boys	64	
Alcohol	Girls	4.2	13.8
	Boys	24.4	
Hashish	Girls	0	1.1
	Boys	2.5	
Pills	Girls	0.4	2.0
	Boys	3.9	
Opium	Girls	2.1	2.1

	Boys	2.1	
Methamphetamine	Girls	0	0.4
	Boys	1.1	
Crack	Girls	0.4	0.4
	Boys	0.5	

This report joins other reports published by Iranian media in recent years, indicating that negative social phenomena are on the rise among Iran's young people. Last week the reformist website Jaras published an article written by journalist and sociologist Hamid-Reza Jalaeipour, which analyzes the social situation in Iran this past year while examining the connection between the escalation of social pathologies to the escalation of the economic situation, as well as their influence on political stability.

In his article, the author argues that in recent years the Iranian society has undergone an escalation of social pathologies. He indicates that the extent of the phenomenon is difficult to assess because the authorities try to conceal it. Jalaeipour mentions a number of negative phenomena considered to be social pathologies:

1. Growing social anomie (the lack of social or moral standards), whose manifestations include tax evasion, immoral conduct in commerce and economy, lack of adherence to moral values among family members, neighbors, and friends, and increasing mistrust in the society, which stems, among other things, from the weakening of religious values and the lack of alternative values.
2. Increasing poverty: 10 to 15 million Iranians are considered poor. While the poverty rate in society dropped after the Islamic revolution, the number of poor people significantly increased due to the overall increase in population size.
3. Growing addiction: according to official data, there are at least 3.7 million addicts in Iran. Their addiction also affects their family and surroundings, thus contributing to the escalation of social ailments.
4. Unemployment: this is not just an economic but also a social problem, which often leads to social deviation, addiction, depression, and suicide.
5. Homelessness in urban Iran: the number of homeless is estimated at 5 to 20 million.
6. Rising violence, murder, robbery, and crime. In 2005 the judiciary opened 12 million criminal cases, which increased to 16 million last year. These are mostly

cases that involve addiction, bounced checks, and acts of violence. Domestic violence, too, is on the rise.

7. Increasing ethnic, religious, and gender discrimination. Such discrimination leads to growing social pathologies among ethnic and religious minorities and among women.

8. Other social pathologies, such as increasing mental disorders, growing divorce rates, drug and alcohol use, children wandering the streets, and prostitution among women.



The author of the article says that, in light of the increasing social ailments, some researchers and commentators believe that the Iranian society is on the brink of collapse. He says that a distinction should be made between three kinds of collapse:

1. Chaos and lack of social organization. Most societies in the world are currently facing increasing chaos, but chaos in Iran has escalated in recent years. This is not just the fault of the government but also of social organizations, including civil, professional, and religious organizations.
2. Damage to Iran's national cohesion, which jeopardizes its territorial integrity.
3. Political collapse, meaning the loss of the government's legitimacy, the destabilization of government control, and decreasing civil participation in public affairs. This collapse may lead to another revolution.

One of the main problems is that the government, the institution which holds the greatest executive power, is unwilling to recognize the increase of social pathologies, which is why they are not properly addressed. Mismanagement, coupled with the

economic crisis, further exacerbates the social ailments. What is more, since the government does not encourage the people to take part in political and civil affairs, the public does not assist in dealing with the growing negative social phenomena.

The author goes on to examine the social and political consequences of the worsening economic crisis that is directly related to the growth of social pathologies, particularly the growing poverty. Some experts, particularly economists, argue that the economic crisis may lead to an outbreak of violent protests in the cities, which could recently be seen in the clashes that broke out in the city of Nishapur following the increase in the price of chicken. Jalaeipour does not put much faith in these assessments. He notes that, since “hidden economy” (economic activity carried out outside of the state’s official economic activity and beyond its control) is a significant part of Iranian economy, it is not unreasonable to assume that the people can withstand the economic pressure this coming year, in which case there will be no economically motivated public protest. What is more, if such a protest does break out, the security apparatuses can contain it in the short term while putting the responsibility on external enemies. The consequences of the economic crisis and the escalating social pathologies will not necessarily become apparent in the short term, but it is impossible to say how they will affect the society and the government in the medium term (after one or two years).

The Iranian sociologist also argues that the suppression of the “civil society” and its institutions by the government in recent years has further compromised the ability to effectively handle social ailments. Civil society still exists in Iran and has the potential to do a lot for the improvement of the social situation. In practice, however, its institutions (women, youth, and environment organizations, for example) have no real presence in the streets. The researcher indicates a growing gap between expectations and reality among Iran’s young people, making them increasingly dissatisfied. This, he says, has an effect on the political destabilization, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the existing social institutions will gradually become political movements that will spark a popular protest. The government cannot eliminate the potential inherent in civil society institutions, which employ the new media for their activity.

The researcher concludes by stating that the way to reduce social ailments is through correct planning by the government, which also needs to be willing to cooperate with civil institutions. In the current conditions, however, the government does not even recognize these ailments, the economic crisis is making them even more severe, and the government suppresses the civil institutions and is unwilling to help them use their

influence to control the ailments. Even if, in the short term, the government is able to control manifestations of dissatisfaction among the public and the resulting political destabilization, in the medium term social pathologies coupled with the deepening economic crisis may exacerbate these manifestations (Jaras, October 24).

From U.S. embassy takeover to possible talks with the U.S.: TV debate between Shariatmadari and Asgharzadeh

On the occasion of the anniversary of the U.S. embassy takeover (November 4, 1979), *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, a show aired on Iran's official TV, held a debate last Thursday, November 1, between the daily Kayhan's editor-in-chief Hossein Shariatmadari and the reformist politician and journalist Ebrahim Asgharzadeh. In the 1990s, Asgharzadeh, one of the leaders of the students who took over the U.S. embassy, became a major reformist activist in Iran, like many of those who had led the takeover. The debate, which drew considerable interest from the Iranian media, revolved around the embassy takeover, the reformist opposition-led riots that broke out in 2009, and the possibility of direct talks between Iran and the United States.

At the beginning of the debate, Shariatmadari argued that the reason for the animosity between Iran and the United States is Iran's being a country that implements the principles of Islam in practice. Since Islam is a revolutionary religion that opposes oppression and exploitation and has the potential to spread wherever there are Muslims, it threatens the West ("the world arrogance"), which considers it its duty to fight against it.

Shariatmadari discussed the ongoing efforts made by the United States to destabilize the Iranian regime, and reiterated the well-known argument made by top regime officials that the riots of 2009 had been planned by the United States, Israel, and Britain, which had used the reformist opposition to advance their interests. He stated that it is impossible to say that there was no American conspiracy against Iran and that it was just an illusion. It also cannot be denied that the reformist leaders, mainly former president Mohammad Khatami, have contacts with top U.S. officials who strive to change Iran's regime, such as the Jewish American political activist George Soros.

He talked about initiatives made by Iranian advisors who operated since the 1990s in service of the Iranian regime to promote direct negotiations between the United States and Iran in contradiction to the Supreme Leader's stance, and said that during both the

Rafsanjani administration (1989-1997) and the Khatami administration (1997-2005), some of their closest advisors attempted to establish relations with the United States. He strongly criticized the two former presidents, saying that even if they had no intention of “selling Iran”, they were involved in the 2009 riots, whose organizers did have such an intention. He also condemned the reformists for not reacting when Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama express their support for the reformist opposition.

Shariatmadari stressed that there is no difference between the democrats and the republicans, particularly when it comes to Iran. The Americans are only interested in holding talks for the sake of holding talks, not for solving the problems between the two countries. The Americans strive to realize two objectives: changing Iran’s policy and changing the structure of Iran’s regime. What they are interested in is negotiations with predetermined results.

Asgharzadeh began by mentioning the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979, saying that it was carried out only after increasing concerns had emerged in Iran about a U.S. plan to topple the new regime. He noted that after the revolution there was no plan to take over the embassy, and that the revolutionary forces even foiled an attempt to take over the embassy carried out three days prior to the revolution by activists from a revolutionary organization. Within several months it became clear the expectations that the United States would recognize the Islamic republic were not going to be realized and concerns increased that it was planning to topple the new regime. As a result, the Iranian students came up with the plan to take over the embassy and take several hostages. He said that the students were concerned that the initiative would be opposed by Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, but that eventually he expressed his support for the plan.



Speaking about the possibility of establishing ties with the United States, Asgharzadeh said that it is incorrect to deal with this issue on the basis of slogans. He noted that throughout history Iran had held talks with its enemies to realize its interests. For example, it held talks with the U.S.S.R. in the second half of the 1940s to free Iranian Azerbaijan from Soviet occupation after World War II. Former Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, too, held negotiations with Western countries in the early 1950s in an attempt to realize his country's rights with regard to the oil industry. He noted that even the Supreme Leader had once stated that severing the ties with the United States was not forever.

He strongly criticized Shariatmadari and said that it is wrong to treat all Iran's enemies as a single bloc, as Kayhan's editor-in-chief does. The approach where Netanyahu, George Bush, Clinton, Obama, Khatami, Rafsanjani, and anyone else who does not agree with your views belong in the same boat is a dangerous one. Asgharzadeh referred to it as the "My Uncle Napoleon"¹ philosophy. He also criticized Shariatmadari's stance towards President Ahmadinejad, and mentioned that the editor-in-chief of Kayhan had supported the president early on while the reformists were warning about him and his policy.

My Uncle Napoleon is a novel by author Iraj Pezeshkzad published in 1970. It is a poignant satire on ¹ deep cultural and social processes that took place in Iran in the first half of the 20th century. The novel depicts the Iranian society of the 1930s and 1940s—a society that dwells on its glorious past and tends to blame the English for all its problems.

The reformist journalist said that, while the conflict with Israel is fundamental and essential, dealing with the United States needs to be different. The United States cannot be stopped with missiles alone, and it will take all the potential that exists in Iran to promote the Iranian interests vis-à-vis the United States through negotiations. This is possible if the regime makes its people satisfied and guarantees their rights, their freedom of expression, and their political liberty.

He said that it is natural for the United States to want Iran's government to be one that will guarantee U.S. interests and one that the U.S. will accept. However, republicans and democrats cannot be treated the same way, and it is not difficult to understand that Obama is better for Iran than Romney. During his speeches in Egypt and Turkey, Obama declared that he has no interest in a "crusade", and Iran needs to take advantage of the internal differences of opinion in the United States to guarantee its own interests, influence the election campaign in the United States as it did by taking over the U.S. embassy in 1979, and weaken the influence of the Israeli lobby. The United States is Iran's enemy, but threats have to be turned into opportunities instead of turning all opportunities into threats. In both countries there are groups working to establish ties between the two countries, but while the Americans understand that they need to take advantage of Iran's weakness to promote their interests vis-à-vis Iran, the latter does not take advantage of the opportunities it is presented with to promote its objectives. He once again stressed that there is nothing wrong with holding talks with Iran's enemies if such talks serve the interests of the Iranian people, and mentioned that Iran had even held negotiations with Iraq after eight years of war.

Speaking about the threats of war heard from the United States, Asgharzadeh said that there is no military option against Iran and that it is just a slogan. The Americans are saying that all options are on the table just to please the Zionists. It is clear that the Iranian people will not agree to negotiations with preconditions, but Iran is a regional power that can negotiate as a balancing factor against Israel and the United States and make achievements. Iran will not achieve anything with the "My Uncle Napoleon" philosophy, saying that everything has to do with the English. He called for negotiations with the United States to improve the living conditions of the people of Iran, and said that the severe economic situation cannot be ignored.

Asgharzadeh also had reservations about Shariatmadari's view on the developments in the Arab world, which allegedly strengthen Iran's status. He noted that the Arab nations rose up because they had been offended and humiliated by the tyrant rulers of

their countries, and that the popular protest in the Arab world does not indicate that it is an “Islamic revolution” (E'temad, November 4).

Pictures of the week: demonstrations on anniversary of U.S. embassy takeover in Tehran



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