



## Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

January 4, 2010

# The Distressed Iranian Regime Intensifies the Claim that the Heads of the Reformist Camp Are Israeli Proxies



Demonstration in support of the regime, December 20, 2009. Demonstrators hold picture of three reform leaders, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi and Mohammad Khatami, on three points of a Star of David. The sign reads "Lovers of Israel" (Fars News Agency, Iran, December 29, 2009).

## Overview

1. The reinforcing and institutionalizing of the protest against the Iranian regime, as exemplified by the riots during Ashura,<sup>1</sup> **have made it necessary for the regime to assign increasing blame to foreign countries.** Tehran has accused Israel, the United States and Britain of planning the next stages of the protest and even of being responsible for the anti-revolutionary messages spread by its heads. The Israeli targets of the Iranian accusations are the **Mossad** (which Iran claims penned the last open letter written by Mir Hossein Mousavi, one of the heads of the protest movement), the **Israeli Foreign Ministry** (which the Iranian regime claims inspires the protesters), the **Israeli media** and so-called **"the Israeli-Saudi Arabian network" Al-Arabiya TV** (affiliated with Saudi Arabia).

<sup>1</sup> A Muslim holiday commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala, 680 AD.

2. To present the **“Zionist connection” to the riots**, the Iranian regime employs for the most part the media under its control, but it has also enlisted the “Iranian street” (sometimes by threats, sometimes by force). The regime has accused the Iranian leaders of the reformist camp, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi and Mohammad Khatami of **being an “Israeli fifth column” and responsible for continuing the protest**. The accusations peaked at the giant demonstration organized by the regime of December 29, 2009, which represented the heads of the reformist camp as Israeli proxies (See Appendix for pictures). The claim was made as part of the **campaign of incitement and delegitimization** waged by the regime against the protest movement, representing its members as vandals disturbing public order. In all probability, **the regime is preparing the ground for increased oppression of the protest movement and its leaders**.

### **The Iranian Regime Emphasizes the So-Called “Link” between Israel and the Heads of the Reformist Camp**

3. Since the protests on Ashura, during which at least eight protesters were killed and scores arrested, the Iranian regime has repeatedly stressed the claim that there is a [so-called] “link” between the leaders of the protest, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi and Mohammad Khatami, and “Zionism,” Israel and the Mossad. The claim results from **the regime’s increasing distress and serves Iranian propaganda, which is interested in representing foreign countries as being behind the protests, attempting to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs**, and as having tried to harm the Islamic Revolution since its inception.

4. Accusations against the reformist leaders were particularly strong during the demonstration organized by the Iranian regime on December 29, 2009. Its intention was to show that the people supported the Iranian leader and the Islamic regime. Employees of the various government ministries were recruited and demonstrators were given signs showing the three leaders of the revolution on the top three points of a Star of David. They shouted “Death to Karroubi,” “Death to Mousavi,” “Death to Khatami,” and “Death to the hypocrites” [i.e., the Mujahideen Khalq, an opposition organization]. In addition to the slogans at what the regime’s media described as an “epic” show of support of “millions,” there were the routine slogans of “Death to America,” “Death to Britain” and “Death to Israel.” There was also “Death to the three Husseins” [i.e., Saddam Hussein, Barack Hussein Obama and Hossein Mousavi] (ISNA News Agency, Iran, December 29, 2009).



Demonstrators on December 29 holding signs with praise for Khomeini and Khamenei, and others reading "Death to America, Death to Britain, Death to Israel" (ISNA, December 29, 2009).

5. **Iranian Interior Minister Mustafa Najjar** ordered the various security forces to show intolerance toward anyone who disturbed public order. He said that Britain, the United States, the **Zionist regime** and the Mujahideen Khalq had instigated the protest. He also claimed they supported the demonstrators and for 30 years had been trying "to take revenge on the Islamic establishment."<sup>2</sup>

6. **The ultra-conservative newspaper *Kayhan***, which faithfully represents the position of Iranian leader Ali Khamenei, **leads the extremist line** against the heads of the reformist camp. It also emphasizes what it claims are its connections with foreign countries, particularly Israel, foreign intelligence agencies and the Western media. According to the paper's front-page headline on January 2, the latest open letter written by Mir Hossein Mousavi was actually the work of the Mossad and the CIA.<sup>3</sup> **Kayhan's editor-in-chief, Hossein Shariatmadari**, claimed that the reformist demonstrators were "**an Israeli fifth column inside Iran.**" He said that there was no difference between the reformists and those responsible for the murder of the Imam Husayn during the Ashura (the tenth day of the Muslim month of Muharram, the day Husayn died in the battle of Karbala in 680 AD, a leading theme in the Shi'ite worldview).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=115259&sectionid=351020101>

<sup>3</sup> The open letter suggested a five-point reconciliation and called for changes in the election law, the release of all the detainees and the reopening of all the newspapers and Internet sites which had been shut down. See <http://bit.ly/6WcEdQ>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://kayhannews.ir/881008/2.htm#other200>.



Front-page headline in Kayhan: "Mousavi's latest open letter copied from the CIA and Israeli Mossad" (Kayhan, January 2, 2010).

7. *Kayhan* also vilified the slogans used by the demonstrators, claiming some of them had come from the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Farsi site. The paper also wrote that regarding the events on Ashura, it was clear that anti-revolutionary Internet sites had coordinated their efforts (the BBC site in Farsi, the Voice of America, and social networking sites like Facebook) to exaggerate the conflicts in Tehran and other cities in order to harm the Islamic Revolution.<sup>5</sup> *Kayhan* also noted that preparations for the protest on Ashura had begun weeks beforehand and had included the following:

A) The American and British broadcasting networks and Internet sites (the BBC, Voice of America, Radio Farda, the "Zionist media," Facebook and Twitter).

B) Networks and sites affiliated with anti-revolutionary elements outside Iran (Rouznet, Iran Today, Gooya, Iran Global, Jaras, Akhbar Rouz and Zamaneh Radio).

C) The Arab media (Al-Arabiya TV, Al-Jazeera TV) and the Israeli media (Al-Arabiya TV is called the "Saudi-Hebrew network.").

D) Internet sites affiliated with "local extremists" (an epithet for reformists) such as Norouz, Melli Mazhabi, Salam News, Emrouz and Kalameh.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.kayhannews.ir/881007/2.htm#other208>

## Appendix

### Pictures from the Mass Demonstration Organized by the Iranian Regime on December 29, 2009



Photo : Mohammad reza Dehdari

FARS NEWS AGENCY



Photo : Mohammad reza Dehdari

FARS NEWS AGENCY

Representing Mir Hossein Mousavi, one of the heads of the Iranian resistance movement, as being directed by Israel (Fars News Agency, Iran, December 29, 2009).



Photo : Mohammad reza Dehdari

FARS NEWS AGENCY

"Death to the American Islam" [Iranian epithet for pro-Western Sunni Islam, i.e. Saudi Arabia and Egypt] (Fars News Agency, Iran, December 29, 2009).



Photo:Hamid Reza Niko maram

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Anti-British sign (Fars News Agency, Iran, December 29, 2009).



Photo:Hadi Abyar

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Anti-American, anti-Israeli signs (Fars News Agency, Iran, December 29, 2009).



Picture of Hassan Nasrallah and a sign with pictures of senior figures of the Iranian regime held aloft to support the Iranian Supreme Leader and denounce the United States (ISNA, December 29, 2009).