



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

Spotlight on Iran

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Editor: Raz Zimmt



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In the wake of the Ashura riots, Mir Hossein Mousavi proposes a plan to solve the crisis; the conservatives' approach is still as aggressive and non-compromising as ever

Several days after the Ashura riots which broke out the week before last, the reformist opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi published a first memorandum of opinion detailing five conditions necessary in order to solve the current political crisis in Iran:

- i. Government recognition of its responsibility for the people, the Majles, and the judiciary, as well as its direct responsibility for the current crisis.
- ii. Formulation of a new election law that would ensure transparent, free, and fair elections without any intervention from the authorities.
- iii. Release of political prisoners and restoration of their dignity.
- iv. Guaranteeing the freedom of press, renewing the license of all the newspapers that have been shut down, and lifting the restrictions on filtered websites.
- v. Guaranteeing the civilians' freedom of assembly and freedom of association.

In his memorandum of opinion, Mousavi says that arresting or executing him or opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi will do nothing to alleviate the situation, and that he was not concerned about becoming a martyr in the struggle for the religious and national rights of the Iranian people. "We are not American or British", Mousavi added, "and we have no hope for assistance from them". Mousavi strongly condemned the suppression of the demonstrators by the authorities during the Ashura riots, saying that the continuing suppression of the opposition by means of arrests, violence, threats, silencing dissent, and shutting down newspapers and media will not help the government to end the current crisis (Rah-e Sabz, January 1).

The memorandum of opinion published by Mousavi sparked heated reactions among Iran's politicians and media. One of the issues was whether the memorandum of opinion could be seen as Mousavi's recognition of the legitimacy of Ahmadinejad's government, seeing as it was the first time since the presidential elections that Mousavi did not bring up an explicit demand to annul the elections or question the government's legitimacy. While those affiliated with the reformist bloc (and even the pragmatic conservative bloc) claimed that the memorandum of opinion reflected Mousavi's good will and should be seen as an important first step towards a solution to the political crisis, pro-government elements rejected Mousavi's proposal to resolve the crisis.

Expediency Discernment Council secretary and former Revolutionary Guards chief Mohsen Reza'i, affiliated with the pragmatic conservative bloc, reacted positively to the memorandum of opinion published by Mousavi. In a letter he sent to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei the weekend before last, Reza'i, who was one of the candidates in the last presidential election, said that the memorandum of opinion was a departure from Mousavi's previous stance of rejecting the legitimacy of Ahmadinejad's government, and that it may even mark the beginning of a process that would eventually result in a solution to the political crisis. Reza'i called on Khamenei to issue a message on his behalf to kick-start a new process for achieving unity and brotherhood in Iranian society, increase cooperation between the various political factions, and curb the activity of the extremist elements in the society (Tabnak, January 1).

In contrast, the conservative daily Keyhan issued a scathing reaction to Mousavi's memorandum of opinion, accusing him of instigating and supporting those responsible for disrupting public order and offending the sanctity of Ashura. Instead of addressing the millions of Iranians who took part in the traditional mourning processions, Keyhan says, Mousavi preferred to address several dozens of incited delinquents who disrupted public order during Ashura. Keyhan further claimed that Mousavi did not have the courage to explain why he had the support of President Obama and of the opposition organization Mojahedin-e Khalq (Keyhan, January 2).

Conservative Majles member Ruhollah Hosseinian also had a dismissive reaction to the memorandum of opinion issued by Mousavi, claiming it reflected no departure from the opposition leader's stance. In an interview granted to Fars news agency, Hosseinian also strongly condemned Mohsen Reza'i's letter to the Supreme Leader, saying that bringing up a demand for national unity with the "leaders of incitement" was tantamount to betraying the Iranian people. Reza'i's letter, the pro-government Majles member said, will encourage the enemies of Iran and the opposition leaders to carry on with their crimes (Fars, January 2).

Ali Akbar Velayati, the Supreme Leader's advisor on international affairs, also rejected the possibility of unity with those responsible for order violations during the Ashura riots. In a conversation with Fars news agency, Velayati said that while the nation's unity was vital, unity with those who tarnished the sanctity of Islam during Ashura was meaningless. Unity is only possible within the context of the Islamic regime in Iran, not with those who do not recognize the principle of the rule of the religious jurist, he said (Fars, January 3).

Meanwhile, last week pro-government conservative circles continued with their aggressive and non-compromising approach to the reformist opposition. The weekend before last, Guardian Council chairman and Friday prayer leader Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati strongly condemned those responsible for public order violations during Ashura, referring to the demonstrators as "corrupt on Earth" (*Mofsid fil-Arz*), a charge which in Islam carries the

death penalty. Jannati accused the demonstrators of receiving financial support from Western countries, claiming that they must die from sorrow and be ashamed of the support they were getting from the leaders of the US, Israel, and Britain. He added that the slogans carried by the demonstrators were proof that they sought to offend Islam and undermine the stability of the regime, and called on the judiciary and the security forces to treat the demonstrators with an iron fist, just like in the beginning of the Islamic revolution. He said that public order violators should be arrested, put to trial, and kept in detention so that they cannot carry on with their incitement. Jannati also addressed the calls made by various political elements for national unity, saying that unity could not be achieved with those involved in the riots (various news agencies, January 1).

Last Friday, Majles speaker Ali Larijani also condemned the Ashura rioters, saying they should be severely punished. During a visit to the city of Mashhad, Larijani said that the people expected that those who offended Imam Hossein and the sanctity of Islam would be severely punished. He claimed that several politicians had sparked the fire of political confrontation following the presidential elections, and that it encouraged the enemies of Iran to undermine the values of Islam and the principle of the rule of the religious jurist. The Iranian people, however, have once again proven their loyalty to the rule of the religious jurist. Politicians must distance themselves from those who seek to cause chaos in society, Larijani said (IRNA, January 1).

Secrets from the private life of the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei: likes caviar and dirty jokes

The week before last, the Iranian film director Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who is considered one of the closest associates and advisors of reformist opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, published a comprehensive article on the life of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (<http://www.makhmalbaf.com/articles.php?a=496>, December 28). According to Makhmalbaf, the article is based on information he had been given by former employees at the leader's office and in the Ministry of Intelligence who had recently escaped from Iran. The article reveals a great deal of personal information about the personal life of Khamenei, his hobbies, activities, relations, family, and property.

According to the information published on the website, Khamenei wakes up at 4 AM every morning for prayer. Between 6 and 7 AM he meets with senior officials from his office, and three times a week between 7 and 8 AM he meets with his influential son, Mojtaba. The rest of the leader's day includes reading materials pertaining to security, politics, and economy, an afternoon rest, prayers, various meetings, and attending to his personal affairs. Khamenei goes to bed at 9 PM. Once a week the leader holds meetings with the president, with army

and Revolutionary Guards commanders, and with members of the Guardian Council. Once a month the leader meets with the Majles speaker and with the judiciary chief.

The Supreme Leader's interests include eating caviar (shipped especially for him by the Friday prayer leader in the city of Rasht in northern Iran), physical exercise (mountain climbing and horseback riding), and social meetings with the cleric Rashed-Yazdi, known for his habit of telling dirty jokes. In addition, Khamenei is highly interested in poetry, composing his own poems from time to time.

Khamenei has several impressive collections, including a pipe collection (about 200 pipes worth 2 million dollars), a ring collection (about 300 rings, the most expensive of which is worth about 500 thousand dollars), and a collection of robes (about 120 robes with a total worth of about 400 thousand dollars).

The Supreme Leader is married to 67-year old Khojasteh. One of her brothers was a member of the Mojahedin-e Khalq opposition organization who fled to Sweden; her other brother, Hassan, holds a monopoly on purchasing Sony cameras and television sets in Iran.

Khamenei's personal guard includes 200 people, while his extended security team has about 10,000 (about 1,000 of them women). Out of his security guards, 500 are in charge of securing the leader's close family, which includes about 40 people.

Khamenei's personal physician is Ali-Reza Marandi, Iran's former minister of health, who is in charge of a team of physicians who provide the leader with medical services as required. Khamenei's basement houses a private hospital staffed at all times by four on-call physicians. During his trips, the leader is always accompanied by a mobile hospital. Khamenei has undergone surgery three times during the past 30 years: a hand surgery after he was injured in a terrorist attack carried out by the Mojahedin-e Khalq in the Islamic Republican Party headquarters in June 1981, a duodenum surgery, and a prostate surgery. Khamenei has been suffering from clinical depression for years. He often receives a massage from a physiotherapist.

The Supreme Leader travels across Iran for about 100 days per year. He spends his vacations (one month in the summer, one week during the Iranian New Year break, and one more week in the winter) in the palace of Vakilabad in the city of Mashhad, on the Dezful air force base in Khuzestan (south-western Iran), or by the Caspian Sea in northern Iran.



KHAMENEI.IR

پهنگاه اطلاع رسانی دفتر حفظ و نشر آثار حضرت آیت‌الله العظمی خامنه‌ای

The Supreme Leader "mountain climbing" in Khuzestan Province, May 2009

Khamenei and his family have at their disposal one Airbus, two Boeing-707 airplanes, five Falcon airplanes, five helicopters, 17 armored limousines, and 1200 other vehicles.

Khamenei is also involved in various private business enterprises, which include exporting sugar, rice, and BMWs, manufacturing sugar and sugarcane, as well as investments in Dubai, Germany, Iraq, South Africa, Venezuela, Lebanon, and China. His main business activities, however, have to do with oil and natural gas, and the acquisition of arms from Russia and China. His personal fortune is estimated at 30 billion dollars, and that of his family is estimated at another 6 billion. Following the political crisis which broke out after the last presidential elections in Iran, the leader attempted to smuggle a considerable portion of his funds to Syria; however, the money was confiscated in Turkey and the government of Iran is attempting to get it back. Most of the money is kept in Iran, with large sums also held in banks in Russia, Syria, China, Venezuela, South Africa, Britain, and other countries.

Khamenei has four sons and two daughters. His second son, the one who is most involved in and has the greatest influence on politics, is Mojtaba (41). Khamenei's other children are Mostafa (his eldest son), Mas'ud, Meysam, and his daughters Beshri and Hoda.

Conflict escalates between government and Majles over subsidy policy reform

Last week, the Majles rejected by a majority of 120 to 111 the government's request to pull the bill on subsidy policy reform, which is now being considered by the Majles. The government requested to pull the bill saying that the changes introduced to it by the Majles made it impossible to implement the bill according to the government's goals. In addition, the

Majles approved the establishment of an organization that will be in charge of implementing the reform.

Mohammad Reza Mir-Tajeddini, the vice president for parliamentary affairs who explained to the Majles the government's request to pull the bill, claimed that the government was still determined to implement the subsidy policy reform. He noted, however, that the changes introduced to the government bill by the special Majles committee established to formulate the bill for its final approval did not reflect the government's stance on the proposed reform: a more just division of the country's revenues, achieving economic stability, and protecting the weaker sections of society as well as the productive sector. The vice president noted that there was no justification for considering the bill alongside the annual budget proposal which should be brought to debate in the coming weeks, and that the government couldn't count on its ability to implement the reform within the framework of the annual budget yet to be approved by the Majles. He further added that it should be left to the government to decide how to use the expected revenues from cutting the subsidies, expressing his concern that the difficulties in the implementation of the reform as it currently stood could lead to undesirable consequences, including a considerable increase in inflation which could hit the weaker sections of society.

President Ahmadinejad also criticized last week the reform bill as it was approved by the Majles. In a meeting with Majles members, the president said that implementing the subsidy policy reform according to the present bill would lead to an increase in inflation and escalation of poverty in the weaker sections of society. The president also noted that linking the reform to the annual budget would compromise the government's financial planning ability.

The Majles is currently about to complete the subsidy policy reform bill, after the bill draft has been returned to the Majles to introduce changes according to the reservations brought up by the Guardian Council, which is responsible for approving all the bills passed by the Majles.

Ever since the government submitted the bill to the approval of the Majles about one year ago, disagreements emerged between the two authorities over the implementation of the bill. The government demands from the Majles the authority to make its own decisions regarding the use of the revenues it would get from cutting the subsidies. The Majles, on the other hand, demands that the implementation of the reform be integrated into the annual budget bill and that the government be required to transfer the revenues to a special fund whose expenses would be monitored by the Majles, similarly to the other clauses of Iran's budget.

After the government's request to pull the bill was rejected, the chairman of the special Majles committee on the proposed reform, Gholam Reza Mesbahi Moqaddam, said that the Majles would continue debating the reservations brought up by the Guardian Council about the reform bill. He also noted that the proposed bill reflected the agreements achieved between the Majles and the government during the committee discussions (various news agencies, January 3-5).



The Majles debates the subsidy policy reform bill (January 3)

On Sunday, the chiefs of Iran's three authorities (the president, the Majles speaker, and the judiciary chief) convened for a special discussion on the subsidy policy reform (Fars, January 3).

According to the reform plan, the government subsidies on fuel, natural gas, electricity, water, and bread, currently provided to the entire population of Iran, will be canceled and replaced by social security payments for those in need according to the data sent by Iranians to the authorities during the past year. Iran's subsidy policy has for many years been criticized by Iranian politicians and economists and by international economic organizations. Iran is considered one of the countries devoting the highest share of their GDP to subsidies. Various studies indicate that it is Iran's wealthy sections that are most benefited by the subsidies currently given by the government. The current subsidy policy has resulted in such negative effects as over-consumption and waste of energy sources, as well as inefficiency in economic manufacturing processes.

Despite the broad-based agreement on the need for reforms in the subsidy policy, over the past year Iranian politicians and economists have expressed their concern that a hasty implementation of the reforms would lead to a sharp increase in Iran's already considerable inflation rate and would have an even greater adverse effect on the vulnerable sections of society.

Iran outraged over Israeli media reports about a New Year card sent by the Iranian Football Federation to the Israel Football Association

As could be expected, a report published the week before last on Israeli media about a New Year card sent by the Iranian Football Federation (IFF) to the Israeli soccer association sparked an outrage in Iran, which even led to the resignation of a senior IFF official. Last weekend, Iranian Football Federation president Ali Kafashian categorically denied that such a card had been sent, accusing the foreign media of spreading groundless rumors. In a conversation with Fars news agency, Kafashian said that the IFF did e-mail New Year cards to most football associations in the world, stressing, however, that no such card had been sent to the "Zionist regime". He said that Israel's name had been taken off all the mailing lists used by the IFF (Fars, January 1).

Mohammad Mansour Azimzadeh Ardebili, chairman of the International Committee of the IFF, also noted that the IFF mailing list did not include Israel, and that it was therefore impossible that a card on behalf of the Iranian federation had been sent to its Israeli counterpart. He admitted, however, that the Iranian card had been sent to a FIFA member with an Israeli citizenship, apologized to the Iranian people for the incident, and even announced his resignation from the IFF. Azimzadeh stressed that the IFF was committed to the official views of the Iranian regime and to the values of the Islamic revolution about Israel, and avoided any encounter with Israeli teams (ISNA, January 2).

Despite the explanations provided by senior IFF officials, Seyyed Jalal Yahyazadeh, head of the Majles Sports Committee, asked the IFF for further clarifications. In a conversation with Fars news agency, Yahyazadeh said that if such an incident had, indeed, taken place, then it was inexcusable. According to Yahyazadeh, the Majles Sports Committee intends to investigate the matter and ask the IFF leaders for explanations of the mistake which, as he says, serves the Zionist regime. He added that there was no reason for the IFF to send a New Year card using a mailing list which also includes football associations in Muslim countries (Fars, January 1). Ali Saidlu, the vice president and head of the Physical Education Organization, also addressed the incident, saying that if it had taken place, strong measures would be taken against those members of the IFF responsible for it (IRNA, January 1).

It should be noted that it is not the first time that Israel has been the focus of public scandals in Iran. In September 2009, Iran was outraged when a conservative Iranian website published photographs showing the former minister of science in Ahmadinejad's government sitting alongside Israel's former science, culture and sports minister, Ghaleb Majadla, during a scientific convention in Jordan. In April 2009, controversy was sparked in Iran after Mehr news agency revealed that several fruit stores in Tehran offered Israeli-made oranges that

were even marked with the well-known "Jaffa" sticker. In July 2008, Rahim Masha'i, the head of Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization, caused a nationwide scandal by declaring that Iran was friendly with everyone, even "the people in Israel". Several months ago, that statement cost Masha'i an appointment as Ahmadinejad's first vice president.

Pictures of the week: President Ahmadinejad on an official visit to Tajikistan



"Hack of the week": the homepage of President Ahmadinejad's official website after being hacked

Dear God, In 2009 you took my favorite singer - Michael Jackson, my favorite actress - Farrah Fawcett, my favorite actor - Patrick Swayze, my favorite voice - Neda.
Please, please, don't forget my favorite politician - Ahmadinejad and my favorite dictator - Khamenei in the year 2010. Thank you.

(January 5 ,www.ahmadinejad.ir)