



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

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**In a speech given to the Revolutionary
Guards, Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi,
Ahmadinejad's spiritual mentor, accused the
Jews and the Zionist of corruption and
fanning resistance against the regime as part
of their effort to "take over the world and
destroy Islam"**



**Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi (Mesbah-Yazdi's
website, <http://mesbahyazdi.org>)**

Overview

1. **Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi is considered one of Iran's most radical clerics**, as well as President Ahmadinejad's source of religious authority (*marja-e taqlid*) and spiritual mentor. Recently Mesbah-Yazdi has stepped up his attacks on Iran's reformist camp, going as far as to refer to the Iranian protestors as the "corrupt on Earth" who act against Islam, charges which carry the **death penalty** in Iranian law. Thus, Mesbah-Yazdi actually **uses religious law to legitimize the campaign of oppression waged by the regime against the reformist camp**, in effect condoning violence against reformist activists.

2. **Recently Mesbah-Yazdi gave a speech to a top-level forum of the Revolutionary Guards in the city of Qom.** In his speech, **he made an association between the leaders of the reformist camp and the "Jews and Zionists" supposedly involved in "schemes" and "incitement" against Iran.** "The world centers of corruption belong to Jews and Zionists," he asserted, "who seek to corrupt the rest of the people in the world so that eventually they can rule the world". According to Mesbah-Yazdi, the Jews are "the best schemers and mischief-mongers in the world, and they will not rest and will not leave Muslims alone until they destroy Islam".¹

3. It is likely that his anti-Semitic rhetoric,² as well as his attacks on Israel and the West and their association with the reformist camp, **reflect Mesbah-Yazdi's authentic worldview; however, they are also designed to help the Iranian regime's efforts to delegitimize the protest movement.**

Mesbah-Yazdi and his worldview

4. **Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi is considered one of Iran's most radical clerics. He is the spiritual mentor of Iran's President Ahmadinejad**, his source of religious authority (*marja-e taqlid*), and the one who provides him with the "clerical umbrella". Mesbah-Yazdi, 76, studied religion in Yazd, Qom, and Najaf, and was also tutored by Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Bahjat Foumani, who passed away several months ago.

5. Mesbah-Yazdi has visited Lebanon and met with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. He taught at several religious institutions, including Haghani Seminary, and took an active part in

¹ See also our January 4 Information Bulletin: ["The Distressed Iranian Regime Intensifies the Claim that the Heads of the Reformist Camp Are Israeli Proxies"](#).

² For an analysis of anti-Semitism as a weapon in the hands of the Iranian regime, see our April 17, 2008 research paper: "Contemporary Arab-Muslim anti-Semitism, its Significance and Implications".

the struggle to topple the Shah. After Khomeini's death, he was one of the clerics who supported Khamenei's appointment as his successor (even though the latter had not attained a high clerical rank), preferring him over Grand Ayatollah Montazeri (who passed away recently). In exchange, Mesbah-Yazdi asked and received a budget for the establishment of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, which he currently heads.



Mesbah-Yazdi at a meeting with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (Mesbah-Yazdi's website)

6. Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi is the spiritual leader of Jamkaran, a Shi'ite group known for its radical views both on internal and on foreign affairs, **associated with Messianism**. It is named after the Jamkaran Mosque, located about 6 km east of the city of Qom. According to Shi'ite traditions, the Vanished Imam (Mehdi) stayed there during his disappearance, declared it a holy site, and ordered the establishment of a mosque there. It is believed that the Vanished Imam will someday return to that place. Accordingly, the mosque has become a pilgrimage site for many Shi'ites from across the globe.³

7. Mesbah-Yazdi is a member of the Assembly of Experts, and is the chairman of the supreme council of Ahl-e Bait (an institution controlled by the Supreme Leader's office, dedicated to connecting Shi'ite Muslims from across the globe). He is also the head of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute **and the publisher of an ultra-conservative weekly called Partow-e Sokhan**.

³ For details see our March 8, 2007 Information Bulletin: "[Iranian president Ahmadinejad is identified with Messianism, one of the factors contributing to the further radicalization of the regime but also challenging the rule of the mullahs](#)".



Image from the weekly's website

8. Mesbah-Yazdi **frequently appears on various forums of the Revolutionary Guards** where he presents his religious and political ideology, stressing the need for maintaining the Islamic regime while **adhering to the principle of the rule of the religious jurispudent** (*velayat-e faqih*). According to Yazdi, that principle, being the cornerstone of Islam, was responsible for the victory of the Islamic revolution and is a vital ingredient for its survival. It should be noted that in the demonstrations held in Iran since the presidential elections, some demonstrators challenged that principle and even chanted slogans against the leader of Iran ("death to Khamenei", "death to the dictator").

Mesbah-Yazdi's lecture to the Revolutionary Guards

9. On January 5, 2010, Mesbah-Yazdi gave a lecture containing **non-mistakable anti-Semitic themes** to senior Revolutionary Guards officials in the city of Qom. The lecture focused on the "latest plots against Iran", as well as "corruption on Earth". Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi dedicated a considerable portion of his lecture to what he referred to as the major role played by Jews in those phenomena, putting "Jews and Zionists" together. **He asserted that the centers of corruption in the world belonged to the Jews and the Zionists, and that they endeavored to corrupt the rest of the people in the world so that they can ultimately rule the world.** According to Mesbah-Yazdi, "the Jews are most cunning at politics, and they even managed to turn a group of [evangelist] Christians into their allies, creating a group of Jewish Christians and taking over the policy of the USA".

10. Mesbah-Yazdi called Jews "the most corrupt race", stressing that "there is no other ethnic group like that in the region or in any country in the world, which considers itself a chosen people, a special child of God that all other men must sacrifice themselves for like animals". Mesbah-Yazdi asserted that the Jews "are the best schemers and mischief-mongers in the world, and they will not rest and will not leave Muslims alone until they destroy Islam". Consequently, the Ayatollah further stated that "we believe that the Jews are the enemies of Islam, a fact acknowledged by the Quran 1400 years ago; their crimes throughout history are testimony to that truth".

11. **Mesbah-Yazdi made an association between the Jews and Iran's reformist camp.** He also accused the reformists of being the proxies of the US. According to Mesbah-Yazdi, instead of chanting "death to the USA", the reformists want to sell it oil and share Iranian interests with it. He concluded by saying that that reformist concept originated in weakness of mind and faith that stemmed from their fascination with foreign ideas, and that reformists traveled abroad and came back to Iran under the spell of Western ideas, to the extent of being willing to ignore the Islamic regime for "the forbidden pleasures of the world". Referring to the leaders of the reformist camp, Mesbah-Yazdi said that **"they prefer to be the servants of Obama rather than the servants of Allah, and they deserve the most severe of punishments"**.⁴

The use of terminology condoning violence against reformist camp activists

12. In a previous lecture given to Revolutionary Guards commanders (December 27), Mesbah-Yazdi referred to the extensive anti-government demonstrations during the Ashura, as well as the protest since the June elections in general, as "corruption on Earth" (*fasad fil-arz*). He said that those who took part in demonstrations against the regime were terrorists fighting against Islam (using the term *mohareb*, a terrorist who fights against Islam). The terms "corrupt on Earth" and "*mohareb*" were coined by **Khomeini** to refer to anti-regime opposition. **The meaning of those terms can be found in the Iranian penal code:** "Anybody who takes up arms to create fear and to divest people of their freedom and security is *mohareb* and *mofsed fil-arz* [the corrupt on Earth]. Anybody convicted of being *mohareb* or *mofsed fil-arz* or both may be sentenced to death at the behest of the ruling judge."⁵

13. **In Iranian law, those two offenses are punishable by death.** During the rash of murders of intellectuals and philosophers in 1998, it was widely believed that Mesbah-Yazdi was the one who had provided the Islamic religious ruling (*fatwa*) necessary to define them as *mohareb*. **Now, Mesbah-Yazdi is using that terminology once again.** In his lecture to Revolutionary Guards commanders, he said, "The [blatant] incitement and the events that have taken place in Iran in recent months have not been without historic precedent, and they will happen again. Obviously, the slogans, the behavior, and the cover [under which the demonstrators operate] are different, but they all fall under the same title: **corruption on Earth**".

⁴ <http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8810170630>

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/08/iran-judiciary-military-colour>

14. According to various reports, since the outbreak of the riots Mesbah-Yazdi has published several Islamic religious-judicial rulings (*fatwas*) defining the demonstrators as *mohareb*. According to Mesbah-Yazdi, the demonstrators receive instructions and directions from the West and "corrupt Islam".⁶

15. The use of that terminology, which in fact condones violence against regime opponents, has a **practical expression**. So far, five detainees arrested during the Ashura riots have been accused of acting against Islam, which means that they may receive the death penalty. Perhaps this is a new phase in the political murders of Iranian opposition figures, **grounded in the religious-judicial authorization to perpetrate such acts provided by the cleric Mesbah-Yazdi**, who draws upon Islamic law to legitimize those murders in the service of the Iranian regime leadership.



Ahmadinejad (left) with his source of emulation, Mesbah-Yazdi (Mehr News Agency)

Blatant anti-Western rhetoric

16. Much of Mesbah-Yazdi's website is dedicated to strong criticism of Western materialism. In a speech given on December 9, 2009 to graduates of a religious seminary in Qom, Mesbah-Yazdi called on them to be on alert since the enemies of Iran (in the West) attempted to mislead the Iranian youth and cultivate doubt regarding Islam in the hearts of the younger generation.⁷ He strongly opposes American attempts to find a common ground with Iran and those Iranians in favor of that trend, **calling the US the enemy of the Islamic method**. He stresses that Iran must not be misled by Washington's smiles and displays of affection, since the US is corrupt, artificial, and its culture is hollow.⁸

⁶ <http://mesbahyazdi.org/farsi/?news=121>; <http://bit.ly/5tLMCV>

⁷ <http://mesbahyazdi.org/farsi>

⁸ Hemayat Online, November 10.

17. Mesbah-Yazdi also calls for a radical change in Iran's liberal arts studies **and to accelerate the Islamization of Iran's universities**, since he believes that Islamic education is the only one conceivable.⁹ Mesbah-Yazdi is against the integration of women in senior positions in various spheres of management, administration, and the labor market, claiming that those who promote such ideas attempt to exploit women in order to provide men with pleasure. However, according to Mesbah-Yazdi there is nothing wrong and there is no contradiction between Islam and embracing Western technology ("embracing Western technology is not tantamount to accepting Western hedonist culture"). To prove his point, Mesbah-Yazdi noted that "Iran's youth, who are responsible for Iran's nuclear achievements, have proven that achievements in that sphere are possible without embracing Western culture".¹⁰

⁹ Rah-e Sabz, November 5.

¹⁰ Iran, November 16.