



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center



Highlights of the week

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Fadlallah's legacy sparks debate between reformists and conservatives following the top Lebanese Shi'ite cleric's death

The leading Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah died at 74 in Lebanon this week. He was considered the Hezbollah spiritual leader in Lebanon. On the backdrop of the ongoing political crisis in Iran, Fadlallah's death also became a matter of political debate between the conservative camp and the reformist opposition. While conservative media stressed Fadlallah's support for the principles of the Islamic revolution, Iran, and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, those media affiliated with the reformist camp emphasized Fadlallah's reservations about the concept of "rule of the religious jurispudent", which prevails in Iran, and about Khamenei's leadership. The reformist-affiliated media went as far as to claim that he supported Iran's reformist movement.

This week, the conservative news agency Fars has aired excerpts from an interview granted by Fadlallah to the agency at some point (the date of the interview was not specified), in which the senior Shi'ite cleric expressed his unequivocal support for Iran and the Supreme Leader. In the interview, Fadlallah praised the Islamic revolution in Iran, saying that it had a major impact on regional and global developments.

The news agency emphasized Fadlallah's praise for Khamenei during the interview. The Lebanese cleric defined Khamenei as an intellectual with a great deal of experience in politics and culture, who had proved himself more than capable of successfully dealing with the crises facing Iran in light of the hostile policy of Western powers, mainly the US. He also complimented the Supreme Leader's policy towards the US and Israel and his support for the Islamic resistance movements in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq (Fars, July 6).

Tabnak, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative camp, claimed that, over the years, Fadlallah had repeatedly voiced support for Iran and the Supreme Leader. The website criticized attempts made by some media to portray Fadlallah as being opposed to the Supreme Leader and to the concept of "rule of the religious jurispudent", claiming that it was a misrepresentation of Fadlallah's image by anti-Iranian media. The website claimed that, during a ceremony held last year in Lebanon, the top cleric had shared with an Iranian delegation his views on Iran and the Supreme Leader, defined Iran as the hub of Islamic thought and culture, and praised Khamenei for being a source of authority and setting an example for all Muslim clerics by the way he dealt with social issues (Tabnak, July 6).

The conservative daily Ebtekar provided an extensive coverage of Fadlallah's life and death and the reactions to his passing away. The daily claimed that Fadlallah considered supporting Iran to be a religious duty until the day he died, and that he avoided expressing his opinions on Iran's internal political affairs. The daily admitted, however, that his relations with Iran had grown strained in recent years, even claiming that several top Shi'ite clerics had questioned his religious authority due to his controversial rulings on such issues as women and Shi'ite mourning rituals (Ebtekar, July 6).



On the other hand, Jaras, a website affiliated with the supporters of opposition leader Mir-Hossein Mousavi, released excerpts from a discussion held with Fadlallah in 2008, supposedly implying that he supported Iran's reformist movement.

According to the website, in the off-the-record discussion Fadlallah voiced his support for top reformist cleric Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, and even pointed out that he had expressed his protest to former president Mohammad Khatami about the way the senior cleric was treated by the Iranian regime. During the conversation, Fadlallah also said he had reservations over the concept of "rule of the religious jurist" (Velayat-e Faqih), saying that the cleric must monitor the way laws are applied in accordance with Islam, meaning that he should not be the ruler himself. When asked about his views on Khamenei and his religious qualifications, Fadlallah said that he did not recognize Khamenei as a "source of emulation" for Shi'ite believers, and that he did not believe that the Supreme Leader was sufficiently familiar with the special conditions prevailing in Lebanon, making it impossible to establish an Islamic government in that country (Jaras, July 6).

In a letter of condolence released this week by the Supreme Leader on the occasion of Fadlallah's death, Ali Khamenei said that Fadlallah was a staunch supporter of the Islamic revolution in Iran, and that he had proven his loyalty to the Islamic republic by words and actions (various news agencies, July 6).

Iranians asked to conserve electricity as electrical consumption breaks new records

As a major heat wave continues to sweep Iran, the Tehran Province electricity company has asked residents to consume as little electricity as possible so that the company can continue to meet the high demand and avoid planned power outages. A senior official in the electricity company has called on Tehran Province residents to set their air conditioners to 24 degrees Celsius, avoid unnecessary use of computers and printers in offices, keep refrigerator doors closed, and not to turn on lights which consume a lot of energy (Fars, July 2).

Energy Minister Majid Namjoo has reported this week that President Ahmadinejad agreed to fine those who consume excessive amounts of electricity, and that during the three next summer months his ministry is going to fine heavy electricity users. The fines will first apply to government ministries using unreasonable amounts of electricity. It was the minister's assessment that, when the subsidy policy reform is carried out in several months, cutting current government subsidies on gasoline, natural gas, and electricity, the electricity consumption in Iran will soon drop by 15 percent (Mehr, July 3).

Last week, the minister admitted that various regions in Tehran experienced power outages due to a significant increase in electricity consumption caused by the severe heat wave. The minister claimed, however, that thanks to careful planning conducted by the Ministry of Energy over the past year, there are not going to be planned power outages in Iran—unless the country experiences extreme, unpredictable weather (IRNA, June 30; Hamshahri, July 1).

The water consumption has also broken new records in recent days, prompting the director of the Tehran Province water and sewage company to issue a warning that, if the heat wave and current water consumption continue, water shortages are expected in various regions in Tehran (ILNA, July 4).

In recent days, Iran has been swept by the worst heat wave in seventy years. Temperatures in Tehran reached 43 degrees Celsius this week, with temperatures of over 50 degrees reported in other regions. In recent years, Iranians have been forced to deal with prolonged power outages in the peak of the summer and winter seasons due to extraordinarily high electricity demand which severely overloaded the electricity grid.

World Zionism blamed for Brazil's defeat

Last week, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki expressed his satisfaction over the defeat of the US, England, and France at the World Cup in South Africa. Referring to the failure of the three countries, Mottaki said that there was a correlation between politics and diplomacy on one hand and soccer on the other. The countries which played a major part in imposing the new sanctions against Iran were eliminated in the early stages of the World Cup, while countries involved to some extent in the sanctions did not reach the advanced stages.

After the defeat of the Brazilian and Argentinean teams in the World Cup, Mottaki's statement was ridiculed this week by government opponents. One government critic wrote a blog entry about the defeat of the two South American teams, titled: "The elimination of Argentina and its Ahmadinejad-supporting coach [Maradona] from the World Cup", claiming that following Mottaki's statement, the countries that support Iran are defeated and humiliated one after the other by the countries that support sanctions against Iran (<http://friendfeed.com/parsianboy/6abc782b>). Another blogger also commented on Mottaki's statement, saying that if the US and Britain were eliminated from the World Cup because of their support of the sanctions, Brazil was eliminated because of its opposition to the UN Security Council resolution to impose sanctions against Iran (<http://ke-ik.blogspot.com>, July 2).



Iranian fans watching the World Cup games at Tehran's Azadi cinema

Iran's conservative press, on the other hand, adopted a different approach to explain the defeat of Brazil and Argentina. Earlier this week, the official news agency IRNA released a commentary article titled "A Dutch tulip or a cup of bitter Brazilian coffee?" claiming that Brazil's defeat resulted from political motivations, and that Western countries routinely use the World Cup games to voice their political opinions.

According to IRNA, Holland's victory may provide moral support to Dutch politicians supported by "the Zionists", who often manipulate sports events to realize their goals and strengthen their grip on the continent of Europe. For example, the defeat of France may serve the interest of France's President Nicolas Sarkozy by diverting attention from the failure of his economic and political policy. There is also a strong connection between Italy's pro-Zionist right wing headed by Silvio Berlusconi and the Milan soccer club. Holland is highly significant for Israel since it is the seat of the International War Crimes Tribunal, which is supposed to discuss the Goldstone Report on Israel's crimes in Gaza. The numerous referee errors in the games raise many concerns, according to IRNA. The question is who is served by Holland's victory over Brazil, and whether the results of the matches are determined on the pitch or by an "invisible hand" working behind the scenes, the same hand which prevented the UN Security Council from passing resolutions against Israel (IRNA, July 4).

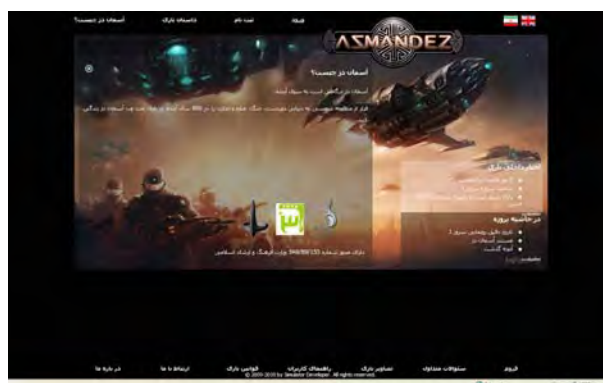
National Computer Game Foundation presents first Iranian online game

Last week, the National Computer Game Foundation unveiled the first Iranian online game: Sky Fortress (Asman-Dejh). The game, developed over two years by a group of young Iranian programmers, allows up to 5,000 players to play at the same time. It can be played in two versions: Persian and English.

The story of the game involves a space war breaking out in 2722 between humans, scattered across the solar system and plagued by internal power struggles, and robots, threatening to

destroy mankind. During the war, some humans leave the solar system to settle in a new galaxy in order to plan the rescue of their fellow human beings.

Speaking at the launch ceremony of the game, foundation chairman Behrouz Mina'i said that about 10 million Iranians play computer games, but only about one hundred of them have game development skills. According to Mina'i, the new game aims to encourage young Iranians to become game developers themselves. Project manager Farzam Molkara said at the ceremony that the National Computer Game Foundation also continues to invest in politically-themed computer games, including games dealing with the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel (Mehr; Press TV, June 30; website of the game: www.asmandez.com).



From the website of the game: www.asmandez.com

The National Computer Game Foundation was established in 2006 by order of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. It is supervised by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance. The foundation is responsible for producing, importing, exporting, and distributing computer games, providing technical support to Iran's computer game industry, and monitoring games, which includes banning "improper" games that contain violence, sex, alcohol and drug consumption, offense against Muslims or Islam, or secular views. Some of the games developed by the foundation also aim to further the goals of the regime, such as spreading the principles of the Islamic revolution and even promoting the nuclear program. Launched in recent years was a game about the Islamic revolution requiring the player to take part in activities against the Shah during the revolution, and a game about Iran's nuclear program which follows the attempt of the commander of Iran's special intelligence forces to rescue two nuclear scientists taken captive by the US in Iraq.

Pictures of the week: Iran's first human robot

This week, Iran has unveiled "Surena-2", a human robot weighing 45 kg (100 lbs.) and standing 145 cm tall (4'9"). It was developed by a group of over 20 experts on robotics from the University of Tehran, who are still developing sight and hearing systems for the robot. Iranian media reported that such robots are designed to carry out "sensitive, difficult missions", but did not specify the exact purpose for which the robot was developed and gave no details on its capabilities.



From the government's spokesman website: <http://www.dolat.ir/NSite/FullStory/?id=190568>



From the Society of Iranian Industries and Mines website: www.iranrd.net