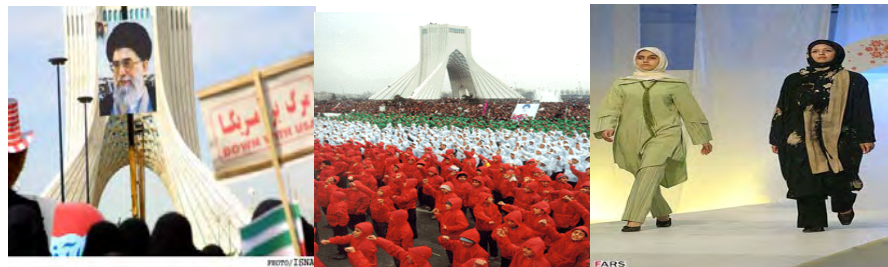




The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center



Highlights of the week

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Iran strongly criticizes resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

Strong criticism has been voiced in Iran this week over the resumption of the political dialogue between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. President Ahmadinejad himself personally lashed out against PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), claiming he had no mandate whatsoever to hold negotiations on behalf of the Palestinian people. In a speech given on the occasion of Qods Day, marked in Iran last Friday, the president said that Abu Mazen was not authorized to represent the Palestinian people or sell parts of Palestinian land to the "Zionist enemy". According to the president, the Palestinians have nothing to talk about with Israel while it continues to occupy their land, murder them, and destroy their

homes. He further added that the US couldn't be counted on to be a fair mediator in the negotiations since it was "in league with the thief", and that its intention was to serve the interests of the Zionists, make them stronger, and give them a pretext to continue oppressing the Palestinian people (various news agencies, September 3). Majles speaker Ali Larijani has also spoken out against the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations this week. In a speech given during the Qods Day events in the city of Qom, Larijani said that the whole purpose of the negotiations was to allow the West to step up the pressure exerted on the Palestinians (ISNA, September 4).

In recent days, Iranian media has been focused on criticizing the resumption of the negotiations. The conservative daily Keyhan claimed that, in fact, the negotiations were aimed to let Israel and the US find a new way to contend with Iran. The resumption of the negotiations reflects a joint Israeli-American decision to deal with the Palestinian issue and the Iranian issue at the same time, while the Israelis and the Americans disagree on which issue deserves a higher priority. The Israelis were forced to agree to resume negotiations upon realizing that they could not launch a military attack to deal with Iran's nuclear program. Netanyahu has no desire to be accused by President Obama of derailing the peace process, which may prompt the US to terminate its activities against Iran. Abu Mazen, too, has no other alternative but to engage in negotiations with Israel, while Obama wants to prove that he is a successful president before the US elections this coming November to cover up the failure of his foreign policy in the past two years. Having failed to pull Syria out of the "axis of resistance", the US is now interested in working with the Palestinians in yet another attempt to weaken that axis. The US fails to realize that the resistance will not stop, since the only possible solution to the conflict is for the Zionists to return to the countries from which they had come. The problem of Palestine will be solved when there is nothing left of the thing called "Israel", making any negotiations with it meaningless (Keyhan, September 5).

The daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami also claimed that resistance is the only way to deal with Israel. Forty years of negotiations with it yielded no positive results for the Palestinian people; in fact, the Zionist oppression of the Palestinians only intensified. The sole reason Israel has been unable to achieve its goals, despite the cooperation it received from "reactionary" Arab leaders, is the fact that ordinary Muslims worldwide support the Palestinian cause. The peace negotiations are a scheme designed to let the Zionist regime grow stronger and realize its goals. The resumption of the negotiations is a new effort to deal with the significant consequences of the massive participation in the Qods Day events across the Muslim world, reflecting the concerns of the Zionists and their allies over the Muslim peoples' support of the Palestinians. The Palestinian people have long since condemned the negotiations, and the

massive participation in the Qods Day events across the Muslim world is living testimony for the stance which rejects the negotiations (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, September 4).

The official daily Iran claimed that Israel does not consider the negotiations to be a way to end the conflict, but rather a means to solve the problem of “defensive survivability” it is currently facing. President Obama compelled Netanyahu to come back to the negotiating table with a promise that the US would not oppose Israel’s policy in the PA-administered territories, particularly in Jerusalem. According to the daily, the Qods Day protests prove that the Palestinian problem cannot be solved with the help of Washington, London, Paris, Cairo, or Amman, but only with Islamic determination (Iran, September 4).



Sobh-e Sadeq, the Revolutionary Guards mouthpiece, also joined in the criticism of the negotiations’ resumption, accusing Palestinian Authority leaders and moderate Arab countries of supporting a compromise with the “Zionist regime” for their own personal and “family” interests. Every reasonable, freedom-loving person understands that it is the Palestinians’ right to fight the occupiers to liberate their land, said a commentary article published in the weekly newspaper. Some supporters of the “compromise front” claim that Palestinian rights would be better served by negotiations with Israel. The truth is, however, that since the beginning of the peace process in the ‘70s until now, no Palestinian rights have been secured by means of negotiations, the Zionists’ crimes have only intensified, and the building of settlements in the occupied territories as well as the annexation of Jerusalem have continued. It is clear, therefore, that continuing the negotiations is hopeless, and that the real reason why some elements in Arab countries and in the PA support the peace process is their desire to guarantee their own interests while reaching a compromise with Israel and betraying Islam and the Palestinian people. For example, Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak supports a compromise with Israel to guarantee Western support for the continuing oppression of domestic opposition to his government, thus preserving his own power and the power of his son, Gamal, after his eventual death. The weekly concluded by saying that the negotiations in Washington were only meant to give the Zionists an opportunity to complete the occupation of Palestine and expel the Palestinians from their land. The proximity of the Israeli-Palestinian

negotiations to Qods Day stresses the need for continuing resistance against world Zionism, which will eventually result in the liberation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a prelude to the prayer which the “Vanished Imam” will give in Jerusalem (Sobh-e Sadeq, September 6).

Unprecedented attack on residence of reformist opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi on the eve of Qods Day

Last Friday night, nearly one hundred pro-government rioters attacked the northern Tehran residence of reformist opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi. Saham News, a website affiliated with Karoubi, reported that the rioters had thrown stones and Molotov cocktails at the residence, smashed the windows and streetlights at the building entrance, sprayed paint, and removed the security cameras installed there. The rioters, who chanted slogans in favor of the Supreme Leader, also attempted to break into the residence, forcing Karoubi’s security guards to fire into the air. According to the website, four people were injured in the riots, including Karoubi’s chief of security, who was beaten by the rioters and rushed to the hospital suffering from severe injuries (Saham News, September 2).

Karoubi’s supporters claimed that the attack was aimed to keep him from taking part in the Qods Day rallies, so that his supporters could not take advantage of them to hold demonstrations against the regime. Karoubi’s supporters also claimed that Basij forces that have been surrounding Karoubi’s residence for the past several days egged on the rioters. On Friday, reformist opposition websites reported that hundreds of Basij militia and Revolutionary Guards had encircled Karoubi’s residence to keep him from coming out and taking part in the rallies. In addition, the telephone lines of his residence were cut off (Jaras, September 3).



Karoubi’s residence after the rioters’ attack, www.sahamnews.org, September 2

In a statement released by Karoubi following the attack, the opposition leader called on his supporters to stay away from his residence to avoid risking their lives. In an interview granted to RASA, a TV station affiliated with the reformist opposition, Karoubi said that he was not concerned about the attack, claiming it was designed to keep him from voicing his

opinions on issues pertaining to the current situation in Iran, and that he would continue fighting for the rights of the Iranian people. He noted that the government, being unable to solve Iran's political, economic, and cultural problems, is interested in creating a crisis because its existence depends on it. He further claimed that elements in the Revolutionary Guards consider the sanctions to be a blessing because they can exploit them to steal public money (Jaras, September 2).

Opposition leader Mir-Hossein Mousavi also released a special statement following the attack on Karoubi's residence. The statement said that, similarly to the attack on the houses of top reformist clerics several months ago, this latest attack was proof of the regime leaders' fear of the popular movement. The attack, Mousavi noted, proves that the occupation of Jerusalem and hostility towards Israel are only used as excuses by the regime leaders, and that the real enemies, as far as those leaders are concerned, are Karoubi and all the other freedom-loving people. The measures taken by the regime, Mousavi wrote in his statement, are not an obstacle for the people's desire for a new election—quite the opposite (Jaras, September 2).

Following the attack, Mousavi and his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, held a telephone conversation with Karoubi to express their sympathy. Karoubi thanked Mousavi and said that the most important thing right now was to protect the people and their rights (Saham News, September 3). Mousavi and his wife had visited Karoubi's residence earlier this week.

Last week, Karoubi's wife Fatemeh wrote a letter to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to protest the constant harassment her husband endured from rioters, Basij forces, and Revolutionary Guards who had been gathering outside of their residence for several days. According to Fatemeh, the harassment is meted out in the name of support for the Supreme Leader, while the internal security forces look the other way. This week, the Revolutionary Guards denied any involvement in the attack on Karoubi. A special memorandum of opinion released by the Tehran Province Revolutionary Guards says that the rioters have nothing to do with either the Revolutionary Guards or the Basij forces, and that the attack deserved condemnation (ILNA, September 5).

Since the Iranian presidential election in June 2009, Karoubi has been attacked by pro-government rioters on several occasions.

Will the president contradict Supreme Leader's recommendation? Growing criticism of Ahmadinejad's plan to appoint special envoys on foreign affairs

The president's plan to appoint some of his close associates as special envoys on foreign affairs has been increasingly criticized by Iran's media and political establishment this week. The president recently announced his intention to appoint his office chief Esfandiar Rahim Masha'i, Hamid Reza Baqa'i, Mohammad Mehdi Akhundzadeh, and Abolfazl Zohrevand as his special envoys on Middle Eastern, Asian, Caspian Sea, and Afghan affairs, respectively.

A commentary article published last week on the Iranian Diplomacy website listed several possible explanations for the president's decision to appoint special envoys: disagreements with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, a close associate of Majles speaker Ali Larijani, who is considered one of the president's political opponents; the president's intention to keep his controversial office chief Rahim Masha'i away from internal affairs by appointing him as an envoy on Middle Eastern affairs; and his desire to appoint his confidants as envoys to promote various initiatives in foreign policy, a sphere to which he ascribes a great deal of importance (Diplomasi-ye Irani, August 25).

The critics of the president's decision claim that the appointment of the special envoys will create an unnecessary redundancy in the foreign policy and compromise the Foreign Ministry's authorities, and that the candidates for the president's envoys are not sufficiently qualified for such positions.

Criticism against the president has stepped up in recent days after Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei implicitly criticized his decision. During a meeting with Ahmadinejad and his government members held last week, Khamenei said that the government must prevent redundancy in various spheres, including the sphere of foreign policy. He further added that ministers must be allowed to work within their spheres of responsibility and in accordance with their powers (various news agencies, August 30).

Following the Supreme Leader's statement, three Majles members have called on the president to reverse his decision. During the weekly Majles session held Sunday, Majles members Asadollah Badamchian, Hossein Sobhani-Nia, and Mohammad Dehqan claimed that the appointment of the envoys creates unnecessary redundancy in foreign policy and goes against the Supreme Leader's recommendations (Mehr, September 5).

The Majles Research Center also released a special statement claiming that the envoys' appointment contradicts clause 127 of Iran's constitution, requiring that the appointment be

approved by the government and brought to the attention of the Majles to examine the decision. The center further claimed that while it is permissible to appoint special envoys to deal with specific issues, it is wrong to make envoys responsible for geographic areas that fall under the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry. The center also criticized the president's candidates for special envoys, claiming they do not have the required personal and professional skills (Fars, September 5).

Iranian media have also strongly criticized the president's decision in recent days. Farda, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative faction, claimed that the president's plan goes against the recommendation voiced by the Supreme Leader, who stressed that it is the Foreign Ministry that is responsible for planning Iran's foreign policy and relations with other countries. Despite the Supreme Leader's recommendation, not only has the president not reconsidered his decision, it has been reported in recent days that he intends to appoint additional special envoys on African and South American affairs to operate outside of the Foreign Ministry. Iran's public opinion, the website said, expects the government to act in accordance with the Supreme Leader's recommendations (Farda, September 6).

The reformist daily Mardom Salari also criticized the decision, claiming it contradicts the Supreme Leader's recommendation. The daily mentioned that, following last year's presidential election, the president refused to reconsider his decision to appoint Rahim Masha'i as his first deputy, and was forced to withdraw the appointment (and appoint Masha'i as his office chief) only after the Supreme Leader's explicit instruction on this matter was published by the Majles deputy speaker. The daily claimed that, even in the conservative camp, criticism of the president is constantly on the rise, and that developments in the affair will prove the extent of the president's loyalty to the Supreme Leader (Mardom Salari, September 6).

IDF's Mavi Marmara takeover: now an Iranian video game

A new video game titled "Attack on the Freedom Flotilla" was shown in Tehran this week at a ceremony attended by the deputy chief of the joint staffs of the armed forces on culture and media affairs and the Basij commander. The game deals with the IDF's takeover of the ship Mavi Marmara this past May.

Speaking at the ceremony, Basij commander Mohammad Reza Naqdi said that it had taken the Basij only 26 days to develop and produce the game. He noted that computers and the Internet have now become one of the ways by which culture is transmitted to the younger generation. Naqdi further said that the victory of the Muslims in Palestine is close at hand, and that the "Zionist regime" will be gone from the world map in as much as 10-15 years.

A game titled “Devil Den 2” was also shown at the ceremony. A sequel to “Devil Den”, the game deals with the “schemes of the Zionists” as they are depicted in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Iran News Agency, www.inn.ir, September 2).

The two new titles join an ever-growing list of Iranian video games produced in recent years with encouragement from the National Foundation of Computer Games at the Ministry of Islamic Guidance. The games produced in recent years include some that deal with the Islamic revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and even the Iranian nuclear program.



Iranian computer games, National Foundation of Computer Games website, www.ircg.ir

Meanwhile, cleric Habib Dastani Banisi said in an interview granted this week to the conservative Fars News Agency that in recent years “the Christians and the Zionists” devote considerable attention to the field of video games, being part of the “soft war” waged by the West on young Iranians in order to influence their views (Fars, September 5).

Pictures of the week: top Iranian officials taking part in Qods Day events in Tehran



Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Assembly of Experts and the Expediency Discernment Council



Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad



Chief of Staff Hassan Fairuzabadi



Judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani



Tehran's mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf