



**The Meir Amit Intelligence  
and Terrorism Information Center**

**Spotlight on Iran**

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**Differences of opinion between Majles and president: Guardian Council may recommend broadening Ahmadinejad's authorities at Majles' expense**

This week, Guardian Council spokesman Abbas-Ali Kadkhoda'i provided details on the recommendations of an inquiry committee recently established to decide on the differences of opinion between the president and the Majles.

Political power struggles between the executive branch and the legislative branch have escalated in recent months. While the president accused the Majles of passing anti-constitutional laws violating the constitution and Islamic religious law, Majles speaker Ali Larijani accused the president of interfering with the legislation process, violating the constitution, and ignoring laws passed by the Majles. In light of the differences of opinion, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei instructed Guardian Council secretary Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati to establish a committee to discuss the mutual accusations of the president and the Majles speaker and examine the interaction and relations between the two branches. The committee was comprised of four Majles members, three representatives on behalf of the government, three independent legal professionals, and three Guardian Council members.

Speaking at a press conference convened by the Guardian Council spokesman, Kadkhoda'i said that the committee had held 18 meetings after which it drafted recommendations to be submitted to the Supreme Leader's approval. The recommendations include a certain increase in the president's authorities compared to the Majles. If the committee recommendations are adopted, for example, the president will be given the right to issue a notification to the Majles on grounds of violation of the constitution. In addition, Majles committees will now have less power to discuss certain issues pertaining to the functioning of government ministries. The committee will also likely recommend that the Supreme Leader allow the Guardian Council to avoid, in certain cases, referring issues on which it disagrees with the Majles to the decision of the Expediency Discernment Council, as is the current practice (various news agencies, November 20). It should be noted that the Expediency Discernment Council is currently headed by Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, considered one of President Ahmadinejad's strongest political opponents.

The Guardian Council spokesman's remarks have been strongly criticized this week by top Majles officials who claimed they did not reflect the decisions of the joint Majles-government-Guardian Council committee. Majles speaker Ali Larijani rejected Kadkhoda'i's statement, saying it only reflected the opinion of Guardian Council chairman Ahmad Jannati rather than the opinion of the Majles. He noted that the four Majles members who took part in the committee had submitted their opinions in writing, and that the disagreements between the government and the Majles should be resolved by the Supreme Leader (ILNA, November 22). According to Larijani, while Jannati is within his right to express his opinion to the Supreme Leader, Khamenei is the one who needs to make a final decision that will be binding for both the government and the Majles (Mehr, November 23).



**Left to right: Ahmad Jannati, Ali Larijani, Ali Khamenei, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi (former judiciary chief)**

Prior to that, Ahmad Tavakoli, one of the four Majles members on the committee, said that Kadkhoda'i's remarks did not reflect the committee's conclusions. He noted that during the committee discussions, the Majles representatives had agreed to adopt some of the proposals made by the government, but rejected some others on the increase of the president's authorities. He stressed that the committee did not arrive at any conclusions, and that even if the Guardian Council representatives did form recommendations, they would still require the Supreme Leader's approval (Asr-e Iran, November 22).

### **Different voices on nuclear issue: Oil and Atom conference held by Iranian Diplomacy website**

Iranian Diplomacy, a website dedicated mostly to foreign policy issues and known for its usually pragmatic political views, held a conference this week titled "Oil and Atom: from the nationalization of the oil industry to localization of the nuclear technology". Attended by diplomats, academia members, and students, the conference was aimed to look into the similarities between the nationalization of the oil industry in the early 1950s by PM Mohammad Mossadegh and Iran's current nuclear program.

In the lecture he gave at the conference, international relations expert Davoud Hermidas-Bavand provided an extensive historical overview of the nationalization of oil in the early 1950s. Speaking about the nuclear program, he said that while the nuclear energy issue was similar to the nationalization of oil in its sensitivity for Iranian society, it was different as far as the legal aspects were concerned. According to Hermidas-Bavand, former PM Mohammad Mossadegh ascribed more importance to the political aspects of the nationalization of oil than to the legal aspects, considering it to be a means to end the British influence in Iran.

Dr. Beheshti Pour discussed the UN resolutions passed against Iran in recent years, claiming that, contrary to President Ahmadinejad's opinion, they should not be viewed as worthless "pieces of paper". According to Beheshti Pour, Iran had considerable technical success with

its nuclear program, but failed in the legal battle and was unable to prevent the passing of Security Council resolutions against it. He said that the nuclear issue became a means for the U.S. to exert pressure on Iran as part of the ongoing conflict between the two countries. He noted that, as far as the technical aspect is concerned, the nuclear program was a source of national pride considering the role played by young scientists in its implementation and the cooperation between various groups in its planning and execution, making it a success despite the sanctions imposed on Iran. He noted that the nuclear program belonged to all Iranians, and that the Iranian people must not allow domestic political differences of opinion to influence their views on the issue.



**Oil and Atom conference, [www.irdiplomacy.ir](http://www.irdiplomacy.ir)**

Political science expert Dr. Sadeq Zibakalam, considered one of the major reformist bloc intellectuals, drew the most attention at the conference. Zibakalam noted that, similarly to the nationalization of oil, the issue of nuclear technology reflected Iran's struggle against the world's superpowers. Nevertheless, he said, there are many differences between the nationalization of oil and the nuclear program, making them impossible to compare. Zibakalam claimed that Iran was not the only country that managed to achieve success in the sphere of nuclear technology, and that it created no new technology by developing its nuclear program. He noted that the nuclear program was, in fact, one of Iran's most important projects after the Iran-Iraq War, and that significant progress had been made, but claimed that the progress did not reflect upon the country's other industries. As an example, he mentioned the incident where Iranian helicopters were unable to put out the huge fires that raged in the forests of northern Iran, and claimed that even countries that obtained nuclear technology, including North Korea and Pakistan, still required economic assistance from other countries.

In another context, Zibakalam claimed that the nuclear program reduced the freedom of expression in Iran. He noted that, when the oil industry was nationalized in the early '50s, there was no problem voicing opinions against the nationalization. Various newspapers criticized it, and PM Mossadegh did nothing to stop the criticism. The nuclear program, on the

other hand, poisoned the political atmosphere by making it impossible to freely debate the issue. He argued that the nuclear issue must be raised for serious discussion regardless of who the current president is or who controls the Majles. It was his assessment that, in the next several years, it will be necessary to discuss the question of whether initiating a standoff with the whole world over the nuclear issue is the right thing to do, and whether by doing so Iran can secure its economic and other interests. Zibakalam further stated that while even the Truman-led American administration had supported Iran's stance early in the oil nationalization period, now even its neighbors and the Muslim world do not support it (Diplomasi-ye Irani, November 22).

In recent years, Zibakalam has criticized the Iranian regime's nuclear policy on several occasions. Last March, the senior academia member called on the leaders of his country to agree to the West's proposal to transfer enriched uranium abroad in exchange for nuclear fuel, and issued a warning about the consequences of Iran's refusing the proposal.

### **Iranian-Indian relations tense after Supreme Leader expresses support for Muslims' struggle in Kashmir**

Last weekend, India summoned Reza Ala'i, Iran's chargé d'affaires in New Delhi, to lodge a protest over remarks made by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in support of the struggle of the Muslim residents of Kashmir, the site of a long-standing territorial dispute between India and Pakistan.

In a letter sent last week by Khamenei to Iranian pilgrims leaving on a pilgrimage to Islam's holy sites in Saudi Arabia, Khamenei wrote that the leadership of the Muslim nation is now committed to assist the Palestinian people and those besieged in the Gaza Strip, and to render assistance to the struggle of the nations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Kashmir (various news agencies, November 15). The Indian press has claimed this week that it is the third time in recent months that top Iranian officials have addressed the situation in the Kashmir region and associated the conflict there with the struggle of Muslims elsewhere in the world.

At a meeting with the Iranian chargé d'affaires, Indian Foreign Ministry representatives expressed a strong demarche and "deep disappointment" over the remarks made by the Supreme Leader, claiming they impinged on India's territorial integrity and sovereignty. At the same time, India for the first time abstained from supporting Iran in a vote at the UN assembly last Friday to condemn Iran for violations of human rights. The resolution was passed with 80 votes in favor, 44 against, and 57 abstentions.

Mir-Vaez Farouq, the religious leader of the Muslims in Kashmir, thanked Khamenei for his support this week and called him “a great leader”. He noted that he intended to go to New Delhi himself to meet with the Iranian representative and personally convey his appreciation for Khamenei and the Iranian people (Asr-e Iran, November 21).

The website Iranian Diplomacy reported this week that the change in India’s stance towards Iran also reflected the influence of President Obama’s visit to New Delhi about two weeks ago. According to the website, after several years of good relations between the two countries, New Delhi has recently been drifting away from Tehran. In recent years, India has been considered one of Iran’s most important trade partners—the two countries signed numerous agreements, mainly in the energy sphere. India is also considered a key importer of crude oil from Iran and has supported it on various international forums. The daily noted that the influence of President Obama’s visit to India was reflected, among other things, in an instruction recently given by the Indian Central Bank to its branches abroad to stop doing business with Iranians, and in the decision made by an Indian gasoline company to acquiesce to American pressure by not extending a contract it had signed with Tehran to sell gasoline to Iran (Diplomasi-ye Irani, November 20).

On the backdrop of the India-Iran tensions, the conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami warned the leaders of India this week that they must not count on American friendship, claiming that they should learn the lesson from the fate that had befallen America’s former allies. An editorial published by the daily states that, in recent months, the U.S. has changed its policy towards Pakistan, formerly considered its regional ally, and now prefers to have closer relations with India while U.S. forces bomb Taliban targets in Pakistani territory. According to the daily, India’s leaders must realize that the Americans are not interested in the wellbeing of the region’s nations but rather in the promotion of their own interests and in deepening their political and military presence while taking advantage of internal struggles in the region, including that in Kashmir. The friendship displayed by America towards India is “strictly tactical”, aimed to take advantage of India for its own needs (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, November 21).

The website Tabnak also addressed India’s strong reaction to Khamenei’s remarks, claiming that India may well be using the Supreme Leader’s statement as an excuse to exert pressure on Iran. Expressing solidarity with the Muslims in Kashmir isn’t meddling in India’s internal affairs, Tabnak claimed, just the same as Iran’s helping flood victims in Pakistan wasn’t meddling in the affairs of that country. The website called on the Iranian authorities to follow the threats against Iran that had recently appeared in Indian press and may, according to

Tabnak, mark the beginning of a new tendency in India's policy towards Iran (Tabnak, November 22).

### **Iranian Association of Nazism website approved by Ministry of Islamic Guidance**

For the past several months, the website [www.irannazi.ir](http://www.irannazi.ir) has been operating in Iran. It operates on behalf of an organization called the Iranian Association of Nazism and Adolf Hitler's Supporters. The website's homepage states that it operates in accordance with the laws of the Islamic republic and is monitored by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance. Its operators note that it is a website of "scientific and historic research"; in practice, however, the website encourages the spread of Nazi ideology and Adolf Hitler's ideas.

According to the website statistics, it currently has nearly 300 registered users who have so far posted over 2,300 posts in 320 different threads. The website is divided into several forums dealing with various subjects. In each forum, the website users can post messages that pertain to the forum's main topic.

One forum features contents dealing with memorandums and news about the activity of the Iranian Association of Nazism.

Another forum is called "The Third Reich" and is divided into several topics, including Nazism, which deals with Nazi ideology and principles; Adolf Hitler, which deals with the "personality, ideas, and speeches" of the leader of Nazi Germany; The Third Reich, which deals with the history of the Third Reich; and Third Reich Leaders, which deals with major historical figures in Nazi Germany.

The third forum is called "World War II" and is also divided into several topics: Events of World War II; Wehrmacht, which deals with the armed forces of Nazi Germany; and Holocaust and Zionism, which deals with "the struggle against Zionism" and "rumors about the Holocaust".

The fourth forum is dedicated to various topics, including ancient Iran, sports, science, arts and culture, video games, songs and music, philosophy, and topics pertaining to army and weapons (mainly those used in Nazi Germany).

A fifth forum is titled "Germany" and features topics pertaining to German history, language, and culture, as well as modern-day Germany.



Last weekend, Tabnak, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative bloc, strongly criticized the Ministry of Islamic Guidance for allowing the Iranian Neo-Nazi website to operate. According to the website, despite the government's strict control over various websites operating in Iran, it appears that the contents of that particular website are completely non-monitored. Tabnak wanted to know how the ministry had given the radical website an operation license, thus encouraging the distribution of its contents, instead of encouraging the distribution of contents that are compatible with Iran's religious principles. The website noted that www.irannazi.ir had only been blocked once by the authorities, and that even then it was unblocked eventually, allegedly indicating that the radical group called the Iranian Association of Nazism operates under approval from the authorities (Tabnak, November 18).

The Neo-Nazi website itself notes that it was blocked by the authorities for the publication of offensive material against religious minorities, i.e., the Jews. According to the operators of the website, the Jews' considerable influence allowed them to have the website temporarily blocked for over two weeks; eventually, however, the operators managed to resume the website's activity. They asked the website visitors to refrain as much as possible from using the term "Jews" and to replace it with the term "Zionists" to avoid further restrictions on the website's activity on grounds of offending the religious minorities in Iran.

In response to the publication in Tabnak, the Ministry of Islamic Guidance reported this week that it did not give the website an operation license and that the website was not monitored by the ministry (Tabnak, November 20).

### **Yet another original Iranian invention: world's first Islamic necktie**

Last week, the news website Bultan News (www.bultannews.com) reported the launch of the first Iranian-made "Islamic necktie". It is designed to resemble Zulfiqar, the sword of Ali bin Abu Talib, the first Shi'ite imam, and is decorated with a hadith (a tradition attributed to Prophet Muhammad) pertaining to the sword. Designer Hemat Komeili noted that he had



decided to design a tie that fits the values of Islam because many clerics opposed the use of Western ties. According to Komeili, the tie he designed was approved by several top Shi'ite clerics. He stressed that he had no intention of encouraging violence by designing the tie in the shape of Imam Ali's sword, since it had never been used for violence but only for protection against injustice and the spread of justice. The sword, therefore, is considered sacred; hence its use for the tie's design (Bultan News, November 16).



Ever since the Islamic revolution (1979), ties have been considered an expression of Western culture in Iran, with the authorities making considerable efforts to eradicate tie wearing. Despite the efforts, the use of ties has increased in recent years, particularly among the younger generation of Iranians, as part of the increasing Western influence on dress codes in Iran. Top regime officials and government ministry employees, however, still avoid wearing ties on public appearances. In May 2008, the deputy chief of customs even issued a warning that the customs authorities intended to have the import laws updated to ban the import of ties, saying they were unacceptable in Iranian culture

## Pictures of the week: crackdown on networks specializing in smuggling liquor into Iran

