



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

**Spotlight on Iran**

September 2011—Shahrivar 1390  
Week of September 14-21, 2011  
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- ✓ Turkey increasingly criticized by Iran over its decision to deploy anti-missile radar in Turkish territory and Erdogan’s trips to the Arab world
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**Iran and the Arab Spring: inaugural international “Islamic Awakening”  
conference opens in Tehran**

The inaugural international Islamic Awakening conference opened in Tehran this week. Hundreds of participants from 80 countries, including regime leaders, politicians, academia members, and media personalities from Iran and elsewhere came to discuss the developments in the Arab world.

In a speech delivered on the first day of the conference, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on the nations of the region to work towards Islamic unity and be wary of the conspiracies of Western countries, which strive to maintain control of the region. Khamenei said that the United States, NATO, and Western countries should not be trusted, and that the countries of the region

must be on guard against the possibility that elements affiliated with the United States will come to power in Arab countries.

The Iranian media gave extensive coverage of the conference, calling it an opportunity to deepen Iran's influence on the developments in the Arab world, particularly when considering Turkey's political initiatives in the region.

The conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami argued that the main task currently facing Iran is to help the Arab nations establish a new political order. The daily said that Iran must not repeat the mistake it made after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when it allowed Turkey and the United States to take over the economic and political systems of the Muslim republics in Central Asia. Iran must present Arab countries with a successful revolutionary model, a goal the accomplishment of which requires actions rather than slogans and words.

The daily Keyhan also took the opportunity of the Islamic Awakening conference to discuss the developments in the Arab world, saying that the Arab world is now facing a second wave of revolutions, whose values include emphasizing Islamic ideology, shifting from nationalist tendencies to the Iranian Islamic model, and stressing the anti-American and anti-Israeli nature of the Arab uprisings.

### **Turkey increasingly criticized by Iran over its decision to deploy anti-missile radar in Turkish territory and Erdogan's trips to the Arab world**

Turkey came under increasing criticism from Iran this week over its decision to sign an agreement allowing the United States to deploy an advanced X-Band radar in Turkish territory as part of NATO's missile protection program.

Foreign minister Ali-Akbar Salehi said that Turkey's decision is inappropriate and unjustified, and is cause for concern in Iran. The Iranian media also strongly criticized the decision made by Turkey. The Revolutionary Guards periodical Sobh-e Sadeq warned Turkey about the consequences of its decision, saying that the country cannot cast itself as an enemy to the Zionists while following a policy that serves American and Israeli interests in the region.

The Iranian criticism of Turkey was not confined to its agreement to deploy the American radar system. Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of the Majles Foreign Policy and National Security Committee, accused Turkey of serving the interests of its Western allies through its policy in Syria, and noted that the Muslim world expects

Turkey to distance itself from the policy of the West and give primacy to the interests of the Muslim world.

Commenting on PM Erdogan's political trips to North Africa, the Iranian media claimed that Turkey seeks to take advantage of the developments in the Arab world to reinforce its position as the hegemonic power in the region at Iran's expense, and advance its national interests while collaborating with the West.

In an interview given to the Iranian Diplomacy website, Javid Ghorban-Oghli, former director of African affairs in the Foreign Ministry, expressed the Iranian concerns over Turkey's political initiatives in the Arab world. The former top diplomat argued that Turkey has the power to present Arab countries with a worthy, successful model that integrates economic success with religious concepts and values. He noted that Iran's stance on the developments in the Arab world is unrealistic, and that Turkey is likely to play a major role in the future of the Arab world while Iran's status will probably diminish.

### **Largest embezzlement in history of Iran's banking continues to send shockwaves**

Exposed last week, the massive embezzlement in Saderat Bank still dominates political and media attention in Iran.

According to Iranian media reports, the affair was orchestrated by businessman Amir Mansoor-Arya Khosravi, who used his connections with top Saderat Bank officials to fraudulently take over government bonds and later sell them to private banks for 3 billion dollars. He then used the money to buy government assets. About 20 suspects in the affair, including Mansoor-Arya, have been detained in recent days.

With the political power struggles in the conservative camp and the 2012 Majles elections in the background, the president's critics took advantage of the embezzlement to make serious allegations against the government and the "deviant faction" affiliated with Rahim Masha'i, Ahmadinejad's office chief and ally. The president's critics claim that the "deviant faction" was involved in the embezzlement as part of its ongoing attempts to use national economic resources for the advancement of its political interests.

Last week the conservative website Mashregh published a letter sent about one year ago by Rahim Masha'i to the ministers of transportation and economy, asking

them to speed up the sale of shares of the government steel giant Khuzestan Steel to a company headed by Mansoor-Arya.

Last Wednesday the president made his first comment on the affair. Ahmadinejad denied any government involvement in the embezzlement, saying that his was the cleanest government in the history of Iran. However, in recent days his critics have continued strongly criticizing the president and his government, saying he failed to live up to his promise of fighting corruption and did not take the necessary measures to monitor the banking system.

Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the daily Keyhan, criticized the president's reaction to the affair, and called him to distance himself from the "deviant faction", which uses government resources to advance its interests and forces the president to protect those involved in economic corruption.

### **Iran and the Arab Spring: inaugural international "Islamic Awakening" conference opens in Tehran**

The inaugural international Islamic Awakening conference opened in Tehran this week to discuss the recent developments in the Arab world. It was attended by hundreds of participants from 80 countries, including regime leaders, politicians, academia members, and media personalities from Iran and elsewhere. During the two-day conference, five professional committees discussed various issues pertaining to the developments in the Arab world (Aftab News, September 17).

In a speech delivered on the first day of the conference, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on the nations of the region to work towards Islamic unity and be wary of the conspiracies of Western countries, which strive to maintain control of the region. Khamenei stressed that, even with the corrupt and tyrannical regimes of the region toppled, the Muslim nations still have work to be done. He warned that victory may turn into defeat unless the nations of the region are on their guard against Western conspiracies. Western countries, Khamenei said, are trying to preserve their influence in the region even after the popular revolutions, and if they do not succeed, they may try and instigate internal wars between the tribes, ethnic groups, and parties on one hand, and the region's countries on the other.

Khamenei noted that the United States, NATO, and such "criminal" regimes as Britain, France, and Italy should not be trusted, and that the region's nations must be wary of the possibility of elements affiliated with the United States coming to power. He called on Arab nations to avoid religious, ethnic, tribal, and racial strife, as well as border conflicts, which may undermine Muslim unity—the key to victory. It is necessary to preserve the Islamic

principles behind the uprisings in the Arab world and the accomplishments of the revolutions, and avoid deviating from the revolutionary path and the slogans of the revolution, he said. The ultimate goal, according to Khamenei, is the establishment of a united Islamic nation and a new Islamic civilization based on religion, morals, and science. He added that Muslims must oppose secular and liberal ideas, and that secular democracy has nothing to do with Islamic principles.

The Supreme Leader then proceeded to discuss the Palestinian issue, and said that just as the countries of the Balkans and the Caucasus gained independence after 70 years, there is no reason why Palestine should not become free from the “claws of the Zionists” (Fars, September 17).



Ali Akbar Velayati, the Supreme Leader’s advisor on international affairs and chairman of the conference, also spoke about the importance of the Palestinian issue, saying at the start of the conference that it has become one of the major foundations of the Islamic awakening in the Arab world (Mehr, September 17).

The Iranian media gave extensive coverage of the conference and its significance, saying it is an opportunity to deepen Iran’s influence on the developments in the Arab world. The conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami argued that the main task currently facing Iran is to help the Arab nations establish a new political order after the popular revolutions.

An editorial published by the daily said that some Arab and Western countries, including Turkey, attempted to deny the Islamic character of the uprisings in the Arab world and present them as being just Arab or democratic. In practice, the uprisings reflect the influence of the values of Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic revolution, on Arab nations, and the effect of the model he presented them with: popular uprising without the use of weapons.

There can be no denying, the daily argued, that a considerable part of the Arab public took to the streets carrying Islamic slogans and demanding a return to Islamic identity, which the

Arab dictators tried for decades to suppress. The way things currently stand, however, politicians and activists on the ground should not concern themselves with the question of whether the uprisings in Arab countries are Islamic, Arab, or democratic. What the nations currently emerging from revolutions need is a practical model and assistance with formulating a constitution and establishing a future political order.

The daily said that Iran must not repeat the mistake it made about the former Soviet republics in Central Asia after the dissolution of the USSR. When the Soviet Union collapsed, there was a lot of talk from the Iranians, but it was Turkey and the United States that took action and seized control of the economy and politics of those countries. This mistake should not recur with regard to Arab countries. Iran must increase its philosophical and cultural influence on the region's countries and present them with a successful revolutionary model that will keep them from possibly reverting to reactionism, imperialism, and tyranny. It is a goal the accomplishment of which requires actions rather than slogans and words (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, September 18).

The daily Keyhan also took the opportunity of the Islamic Awakening conference to discuss the developments in the Arab world, saying that the Arab world is now facing a second wave of revolutions. The Arab public has returned to the streets to keep tyranny from reappearing in a new guise, prevent deviation from the objectives of the revolutions, speed up the realization of said objectives, keep foreign imperialists from taking over, and establish a new order in the Middle East.

One of the characteristics of this second revolutionary wave is its emphasis on Islamic ideology, which, despite claims to the contrary made by the West, was the motivating force behind the Arab uprisings. Another characteristic is the attempt to prevent the attempt to establish a secular model for the revolutions, which can be seen in Turkey's policy. The revolutionists in the region are turning away from nationalist tendencies and moving ever closer to the Iranian Islamic model.

The emphasis on the anti-American and anti-Israeli nature of the uprisings in the Arab world is another characteristic of the current wave. In addition, the new wave of revolutions reflects the defeat of the strategy pursued by the United States, which tried to direct the first wave of revolutions in such a way as to serve its interests (Keyhan, September 18).

In its editorial, the Bultan News website called to take advantage of the Islamic Awakening conference to promote unity in the Muslim world. The conference participants should focus on the common denominator of the Islamic world, discuss the dangers facing it, and help achieve internal unity to prevent enemies from exploiting the domestic differences of opinion in the Muslim world to advance their interests.

The website warned about a vacuum of ideology and leadership that may form as a result of the popular uprisings in the Arab world. The conference should be used to discuss the new socio-political order to be established following the success of the revolutions. The Iran-led conference can prevent the West and secular groups from robbing the revolutions in the Arab world of their Islamic, popular, and anti-imperialist identity (Bultan News, September 17).

The Iranian Diplomacy website also stressed the importance of the conference for the increase of Iran's involvement in the Arab world, particularly when considering the Turkish initiatives in the region. An editorial published by the website said that the conference may allow Iran to increase its influence with public opinion in the Middle East after months of having limited influence. While top Turkish officials travel across the Arab world in an attempt to strengthen Turkey's status as the regional leader and encourage the establishment of a political order that involves Turkey, the meeting of the conference in Tehran may allow Iran to present its views to the nations of the Middle East and spread the Iranian Islamic model in the region (Iranian Diplomacy, September 18).

### **Turkey increasingly criticized by Iran over its decision to deploy anti-missile radar in Turkish territory and Erdogan's trips to the Arab world**

Turkey came under increasing criticism from Iran this week over its decision to sign an agreement allowing the United States to deploy an advanced X-Band radar in Turkish territory as part of NATO's missile protection program.

Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi said that Turkey's decision is inappropriate and unjustified. Speaking at a press conference with the Armenian foreign minister, Salehi said that the deployment of the system is cause for concern in Iran and in other countries in the region, and that Turkey has to reconsider its decision (IRNA, September 17).

Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi also had reservations about Turkey's decision, saying that the countries in the region pose no threat to Turkey that would justify the deployment of the missile protection system in its territory (ISNA, September 19).

The Iranian media extensively covered Turkey's agreement to deploy the American radar. The government news agency IRNA put an emphasis on the criticism made by Turkish politicians and media of the deployment, arguing that the purpose of the missile protection system is to serve "the conspiracies of the imperialists" against the Muslim world (IRNA, September 18).

The Revolutionary Guards periodical Sobh-e Sadeq strongly criticized Turkey's decision and warned it about the consequences.

An editorial published by the weekly said that the game played by Turkish leaders on the Western court does not serve Turkish domestic and foreign interests. Turkey cannot cast itself as an enemy to the Zionists and protector of the Palestinian people while following a policy that serves American and Israeli interests in the region.

Turkey's policy will impact its relations with its neighbors and its status in Muslim public opinion. The Turks should know, the article said, that the West never keeps its promises, and whatever promises Turkey received from Western countries for deploying the radar will remain worthless, while Turkey stands to lose the most from the game played by its leaders (Sobh-e Sadeq, September 18).

The Iranian criticism of Turkey was not confined to its agreement to deploy the American radar system: PM Erdogan's political trips to North Africa led to criticism of Turkey's policy in the Arab world.

In an interview given by Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of the Majles Foreign Policy and National Security Committee, to the Iranian Diplomacy website, the conservative Majles member accused Turkey of serving the interests of its Western allies through its policy in Syria. Turkey is a member of NATO and is interested in joining the EU; accordingly, it is forced to adopt the policy of the United States and European countries. Boroujerdi noted that the Muslim world expects Turkey, as an important and influential Muslim country, to distance itself from the policy of the Western world and the United States, and give primacy to the interests of the Muslim world.

Speaking about claims that, through its policy, Turkey seeks to become the leader of the Muslim world, Boroujerdi said that Turkey cannot be expected to lead the Muslim world after PM Erdogan declared support for a secular Egypt after the fall of President Mubarak (Farda, September 18).

The Iranian media also criticized Turkey's regional policy, claiming that it seeks to take advantage of the developments in the Arab world to reinforce its position as the hegemonic power in the region at Iran's expense, and advance its national interests while collaborating with the Western world. According to the Iranian media, Turkey seeks to present the Arab world with an alternative government model to that offered by Iran after the toppling of Arab regimes in recent months.

This week Fars News Agency published a commentary that appeared on Voice of Iraq Radio about PM Erdogan's latest trips to North African countries. According to the commentary, Erdogan's visit is part of a U.S.-led project, with the collaboration of the Arab Persian Gulf states, to weaken Iran's regional position. Erdogan is coordinating his regional policy with the



Western world and the United States, except when it comes to his attitude towards Israel, in which case he has to consider the domestic public opinion in Turkey as a result of the Mavi Marmara incident. This is evident both in Turkey's policy in Syria and in its efforts to strengthen the Sunni elements in Iraq, being an attempt to curb Iran's growing influence (Fars, September 19).

One example of Iranian concerns over Turkey's political initiatives in the Arab world could be seen in an interview given by Javid Ghorban-Oghli, former director of African affairs in the Foreign Ministry, to the Iranian Diplomacy website.

Speaking about Erdogan's visit to North Africa, Ghorban-Oghli said that it was designed to advance Turkey's regional position and take advantage of regional developments to increase its political and cultural influence. The former Iranian diplomat argued that, as far as Turkey itself is concerned, its policy is correct because it has the power to present Arab countries with a worthy, successful model that integrates economic success with religious concepts and values.

Ghorban-Oghli criticized Iran's current approach towards the developments in the Arab world, saying that it is unrealistic, unlike that adopted by Turkey. Iran believes that the developments in the Arab world reflect an "Islamic awakening", while that is not actually the case. Islamic parties and groups played no major role in the uprisings in the Arab world, and no Arab country is interested in establishing an Islamic government. Turkey, however, has taken a more realistic approach towards the developments in the Arab world, and unlike Iran, it enjoys international and regional support. Therefore, Turkey is likely to play a major role in the future of the Arab world while Iran's status will probably diminish (Iranian Diplomacy, September 19).

The Iranian criticism of Turkey's policy was also reflected in a daily column in the Keyhan newspaper that features opinions sent in by readers. In the column published on Monday, September 19, one reader said he came to the conclusion that the policy implemented by Turkey under the banner of Islam is actually a new type of hypocrisy. It is not inconceivable, the reader wrote, that in the future the government of Turkey will apologize to Israel for sending the Mavi Marmara to the Gaza Strip.

### **Largest embezzlement in history of Iran's banking continues to send shockwaves**

Exposed last week, the massive embezzlement in Saderat Bank still dominates political and media attention in Iran.

Saderat Bank director Mohammad Jahromi, formerly the minister of labor and social affairs in Ahmadinejad's government, reported last week that, in what was the largest embezzlement in the history of Iranian banking, which lasted nearly two years, almost 3 billion dollars were stolen and then used for the purchase of government assets.

According to Iranian media reports, the affair was orchestrated by businessman Amir Mansoor-Arya Khosravi, who used his connections with top Saderat Bank officials to fraudulently take over government bonds and later sell them to private banks for 3 billion dollars. He then used the money to buy government assets. Economy Minister Seyyed Shamseddin Hosseini reported this week that the embezzlement suspect has been detained. Also detained were 19 people suspected of being involved in the affair.



**The embezzlement suspect swallows the bank:  
"Peach, go down my throat!"**

With the political power struggles in the conservative camp and the 2012 Majles elections in the background, the president's critics took advantage of the embezzlement to make serious allegations against the government and the "deviant faction" affiliated with Rahim Masha'i, Ahmadinejad's office chief and ally. The president's critics claim that the "deviant faction" was involved in the embezzlement as part of its ongoing attempts to use national economic resources for the advancement of its political interests. Majles member Evaz Heydarpour said in an interview to Fars News Agency that the Majles Foreign Policy and National Security Committee has documents proving that the "deviant faction" is involved in the affair (Fars, September 16).

Last week the conservative website Mashregh published a letter sent about one year ago by Rahim Masha'i to the ministers of transportation and economy, asking them to speed up the sale of 50.5 percent of the shares of the government steel giant Khuzestan Steel to a

company headed by Mansoor-Arya. In the letter, Masha'i claimed that the transaction had been approved by President Ahmadinejad. The website also reported that the government was planning to use its revenues from selling the steel company shares to fund a transportation project in northern Iran that was also to be awarded to the company headed by Mansoor-Arya (Mashregh News, September 12).

Last Wednesday the president made his first comment on the affair and categorically denied any government involvement in it. In a speech given during a visit to Ardebil Province, the president said that his was the cleanest government in the history of Iran, and that various elements seek to undermine the government and blame it for every single issue. The president noted that so far the government remained silent about the accusations out of respect for the Supreme Leader and the Iranian people, but that the silence will not last forever. He further added that he had alerted the governor of the Central Bank to problems in the banking system that could be exploited for acts of corruption, and that in recent years the government had put considerable efforts into the promotion of reforms in the banking system. Ahmadinejad called on the judiciary chief to take resolute action against those involved in the embezzlement (Mehr, September 14).

In addition to the president's remarks, a detailed statement by the president's office commenting on the publication appeared on the Mashregh website. According to the statement, the claims brought up by some media about government involvement in the embezzlement reflect their efforts to undermine the government. The president's office argued that the government had indeed agreed to award a transportation project in northern Iran to a company involved in railroad construction in exchange for selling the shares of the Khuzestan national steel company as part of the privatization of government companies. According to the president's office, the sale of the shares is an alternative to having the contractor company budgeted by the Transportation Minister, and there is nothing legally wrong with that (IRNA, September 15).

Despite the clarifications provided by the president's office, Ahmadinejad and his government are still facing harsh criticism over the affair. Alef, a website affiliated with Ahmad Tavakoli, head of the Majles Research Center and one of Ahmadinejad's strongest political opponents in the conservative bloc, argued that the president failed to live up to his promise of fighting economic corruption. Ahmadinejad preferred to focus on the corruption that existed in the country before he became president, and ignored the spread of corruption during his own term. The website accused the government of not taking the necessary measures to monitor the banking system and thus allowing such a large embezzlement to take place (Alef, September 15).

The reformist daily Mardom Salari said that the president's claim about his government being the cleanest in the history of Iran is puzzling given the fact that in recent months several top government executives affiliated with the "deviant faction" have been arrested on suspicions of involvement in economic corruption (Mardom Salari, September 15).

Raja News, a website affiliated with the radical faction of the conservative camp, also criticized the president's remarks, arguing that the government is the one responsible for monitoring the banking system. Even if there were no political considerations involved in the embezzlement, it is enough to indicate that government monitoring has a severe problem which facilitated the embezzlement. The affair shows that Ahmadinejad's slogans against corruption remained just that: slogans. Had the president made it possible to investigate the involvement of some of his allies in corruption affairs, Raja News said, it would not have grown to such enormous proportions (Raja News, September 15).

Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the daily Keyhan, warned the president about the continuing influence of the "deviant faction" within his government. In an editorial published earlier this week, Shariatmadari criticized the president's reaction to the affair and called on him to distance himself from the "deviant faction", which is involved in economic corruption, uses government resources to advance its interests, and forces the president to protect those involved in economic corruption instead of fighting them (Keyhan, September 17).

Meanwhile, last weekend the judiciary chief put general prosecutor Hojjat-ol-Eslam Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Eje'i in charge of the embezzlement investigation (Fars, September 15). The Majles also intervened in the affair this week and held a session on it attended by the economy minister, the governor of the Central Bank, the director of Saderat Bank, and representatives from the Intelligence Ministry, the Organization of State Control, and the Office of the Accountant General (Mehr, September 16).

## Pictures of the week: President Ahmadinejad in New York

From <http://un.president.ir>, the official website launched by the president's office for his visit to the UN assembly

