



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

**Spotlight on Iran**

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**Supreme Leader makes decision about Iran's stance towards Abu Mazen's plan: Palestine from the river to the sea**

Speaking at the 5th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada held last weekend, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that a solution where a Palestinian state is established in only part of Palestine and the State of Israel is recognized cannot be accepted. Khamenei stressed that any practical proposal has to be based on the principle that "all of Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people" and "Palestine—from the river to the sea". He once again outlined Iran's proposed solution to the Palestinian issue: a referendum of historic Palestine's original inhabitants to decide the fate of the Palestinians.

The Supreme Leader's speech was emphasized by the Iranian press, which, following Khamenei's remarks, expressed adamant opposition to PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' political plan and his appeal to the UN for recognition of independent statehood within the 1967 borders.

The daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami said that the Supreme Leader's remarks are extremely important, since those who attended the international conference could clearly hear him say that he is categorically opposed to the proposal to establish a Palestinian state in only part of Palestine. The Supreme Leader's statement reaffirms Iran's policy towards the Palestinian issue, and is particularly significant considering President Ahmadinejad's statements in New York, which may have given the impression that Iran accepts Abu Mazen's plan—one that is tantamount to recognition of the "Zionist occupation regime".

Israel's ongoing policy of settlement and occupation of Palestinian land show, according to the daily, that force is the only language the occupiers understand, and that the only consequential way of dealing with them is by expanding anti-Zionist resistance.

In an editorial titled "This is Tehran, capital of the revolution", the daily Keyhan said that as long as the "cancerous tumor" (Israel) remains standing, there will be no peace anywhere in the Middle East. Twenty years into the peace talks between Israel and the Arabs, no objective observer believes anymore that the way to the realization of the Palestinians' rights is through negotiations. All of Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people, and no one has the right to give up a single piece of Palestinian land.

Following Khamenei's lead, Tehran Emrouz, a daily close to Tehran's mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, also expressed opposition to the plan proposed by Abu Mazen. Speaking about the statement made by President Ahmadinejad in New York, according to which the establishment of a Palestinian government within the 1967 borders is the first step towards the realization of the Palestinians' rights, the daily claimed that this statement ignores its own implications: that is, recognition of the Zionist regime, denial of Palestinian claims to territories occupied prior to the 1967 war, and disregard for the refugee problem. The idea of "from the Nile to the Euphrates", on which the illegitimate State of Israel was

established, should be countered by the expansion of the “freedom- and independence-loving” thought of “Palestine—from the river to the sea”.

### **Five months to Majles elections: conflict escalates between United Conservative Front and Stability Front**

Five months to the Majles elections slated for early March 2012, this week conservative Majles member and President Ahmadinejad’s political opponent Ali Motahari strongly criticized the Stability Front (Jebhe-ye Paydari), established in July by elements affiliated with the president and the radical faction of the conservative camp.

In an interview granted to Khabar Online, a website close to Majles speaker Ali Larijani, Motahari accused the front of representing the “deviant faction” (a term used to refer to the political faction in the conservative camp affiliated with Rahim Masha’i, the president’s office chief) and said that most of its founders were opportunists who made no effort for the revolution but were able to take the place of the “real revolutionists” by circumstance.

Meanwhile, it appears more and more likely that representatives from the Stability Front and the United Conservative Front will not be able to reach an agreement on a joint list of candidates for the Majles elections. The list is supposed to be drawn up by an Arrangement Committee comprised of 15 members (two 8+7 committees) representing the various conservative groups and headed by two top conservative clerics Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani, chairman of the Assembly of Experts; and Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, chairman of the Society of the Lecturers of Qom Seminary.

In an interview given to the Khabar Online website this week, Seyyed Reza Taqavi, member of the 7-member committee, reported that the talks held in recent months between representatives of the two fronts produced no agreement on a joint list of candidates. One of the obstacles was the refusal of the Stability Front’s demands for broad representation in the 7+8 committees and for the removal from the committees of representatives of Majles speaker Ali Larijani and Tehran’s mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf. It was his assessment that the Stability Front will run for the Majles as a separate independent list.

## **Religious establishment increasingly critical of birth control policy**

In recent days two of Iran's top conservative clerics expressed their reservations about Iran's current birth planning policy. Top cleric Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani warned last week that birth planning is causing a decline in Shi'ite population in some places, saying that a decline in the world's Shi'ite and Muslim population must not be permitted.

The criticism of the birth control policy in Iran was joined this week by top cleric Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani, who said that birth planning is in no way helpful to the state and may bring about a decline in Shi'ite population. He said that, in the past, the Supreme Leader had also expressed reservations about the birth planning policy and said that Iran could support as many as 150 million people.

The statements made by the two top clerics reflect the resumption of the Iranian internal debate on the birth planning policy, first introduced in the late 1980s. The debate has reemerged this past year after President Ahmadinejad announced on several occasions that he does not agree with the current birth control policy. In early 2011 the Expediency Discernment Council ruled that the birth policy should not be changed, and that increasing the population will not help solve Iran's problems.

A birth-control campaign launched by the regime in the second half of the 1980s included top clerics, who stressed that Islam does not prohibit the use of contraceptives, and that according to the traditions of the Prophet and Quran verses, the top priority is the economic welfare of Muslims. Accordingly, it is permissible to limit the population growth rate in some circumstances.

## **Efforts to control web surfing: access to VPN servers blocked**

Telecommunications Minister Reza Taqipour admitted this week that in recent days the authorities blocked VPN (Virtual Private Network) servers that allow internet access, on grounds that the use of VPN is against the law. Fars News Agency reported that VPN access was disabled on orders from the committee in charge of setting criteria for illicit internet content, which argued that VPN servers are used by Iranian web surfers to access illegal websites.

The blocking of access to VPN servers led to speculations that this is the first step towards the creation of the internal national internet network, which the government said it intends to introduce in the near future. The network is

supposed to be cut off from the global internet network, aimed to give the regime more power to monitor web traffic.

### **Supreme Leader makes decision about Iran's stance towards Abu Mazen's plan: Palestine from the river to the sea**

Last weekend the 5th International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada was held in Tehran. The conference was attended by more than 50 delegations from dozens of countries, including Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Oman, Sudan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Paraguay, Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, Bolivia, Kyrgyzstan, and Hungary.

In a speech given on the first day of the conference, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that a solution where a Palestinian state is established in only part of Palestine and the State of Israel is recognized can't be accepted. He asserted that any plan that seeks to divide Palestine has to be rejected. The implication of the proposal to establish two states is concession to Zionist demands and recognition of a Zionist state on Palestinian land. Such a plan ignores the historic rights of the Palestinians and threatens the rights of those Palestinians living in the 1948 territories. It perpetuates the "cancerous tumor" (Israel), facilitating the continued existence of the threat posed to the Muslim nation and the peoples of the region.

Khamenei stressed that any practical proposal has to be based on the principle that "all of Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people" and "Palestine—from the river to the sea". The Palestinians can, of course, liberate parts of Palestinian land gradually, as they did in Gaza, but the ultimate goal—liberating all of Palestine—must never be abandoned. He added that achieving this goal will require actions rather than words. The governments, the Muslim nations, and the resistance groups in Palestine, Lebanon, and other countries must play a part in the long struggle for the liberation of Palestine.

The Supreme Leader outlined Iran's proposed solution to the Palestinian issue. Iran does not support, he said, a classical war between armies or throwing the Jews who immigrated to Palestine into the sea, but rather a referendum among the Palestinian people. All the original inhabitants of Palestine—Muslims, Christians, and Jews living in Palestine and elsewhere, but not the foreign immigrants who came to Palestine over the years—will be allowed to take part in the referendum and decide on the future of Palestine. The fate of the non-Palestinian immigrants who came to Palestine will be decided by the regime established following the referendum. It is a just and reasonable solution supported by global public opinion.

Khamenei called on Muslim states to cut off their public and covert ties with Israel. Countries that have relations with Israel cannot claim to support the Palestinians, and no slogan they make against the Zionists can be taken seriously. He also called on the Islamic resistance organizations to continue their fight to liberate Palestine and on Western countries to stop supporting Israel, because otherwise they will suffer badly in the not-too-distant future.

The real threat to Israel, Khamenei said, comes not from Iran's missiles or the Islamic resistance groups, but from the determination of the men, women, and youths in Muslim countries (Fars, October 1).



The Supreme Leader's speech was emphasized by the Iranian press, which, following Khamenei's remarks, expressed adamant opposition to PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' political plan and his appeal to the UN for recognition of independent statehood within the 1967 borders.

The reformist daily Resalat said that there is a consensus among the Palestinians and the Muslim world about the strategy required to contend with the Zionists: transferring sovereignty from the Zionists to the Palestinian people by means of a referendum. Mahmoud Abbas, supported by the Zionists, creates disagreements among the Palestinians to foil this strategy, but the attempt to divide Palestine will never bear fruit. The PLO cannot foil the true aspirations of the Palestinian people by appealing to the UN. The second Lebanon war and the war in Gaza are proof that the resistance is able to pull Israel out of the heart of the Muslim world through sacrifice and struggle (Resalat, October 2).

The daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami said that the Supreme Leader's remarks are extremely important, since those who attended the international conference could clearly hear him say that he is categorically opposed to the proposal to establish a Palestinian state in only 22 percent of the territory of Palestine and give away the remaining territory to the Zionists, and that all of Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people.

The Supreme Leader's stance reaffirms Iran's policy towards the Palestinian issue, and is particularly significant considering President Ahmadinejad's statements in New York, which may have given the impression that Iran accepts Abu Mazen's plan—one that is tantamount to recognition of the "Zionist occupation regime".

In addition, the Supreme Leader emphasized the bond between Palestine and the Muslim nation. The issue of Palestine is not just the concern of the Palestinians and Arabs living in the region, it is a fundamental issue that touches upon the entire Muslim world. The atmosphere in the region has changed considerably as a result of the Islamic awakening in the Arab world, and the relative power of those who support the resistance can now be felt.

The daily accused Abu Mazen of betraying the Palestinian people and collaborating with the Zionists with the purpose of making up for his defeats and hitting the resistance. The Western world and the Zionists are only using him to suppress the Palestinians. How does Abu Mazen intend to establish a state in a small part of Palestinian territory without an army or air force, without Jerusalem, and without the return of 4.5 million Palestinian refugees to Palestine? His appeal to the UN is tantamount to recognition of the occupation of Palestine, recognition of the occupiers, and commitment to give up the right to resist the occupation.

Israel's ongoing policy of settlement and occupation of Palestinian land show, according to the daily, that force is the only language the occupiers understand, and the expansion of anti-Zionist resistance is the only consequential way of dealing with the enemy, which will only yield under pressure (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, October 2).

The daily Keyhan was also categorically opposed to any compromise on the Palestinian issue. In an editorial titled "This is Tehran, capital of the revolution", the daily said that as long as the "cancerous tumor" remains standing, there will be no peace anywhere in the Middle East. Twenty years into the peace talks, first in Madrid and then in Oslo and Washington, no objective observer believes anymore that the way to the realization of the Palestinians' rights is through negotiations, peace conferences, or agents like Mahmoud Abbas.

There is no question that all of Palestine, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and from south Lebanon to north Egypt, belongs to the Palestinian people, and no one has the right to give up a single piece of Palestinian land, let alone give away 80 to 90 percent of it to the occupiers (Keyhan, October 2).

Following Khamenei's lead, Tehran Emrouz, a daily close to Tehran's mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, also expressed opposition to the plan proposed by Abu Mazen.

Speaking about the statement made by President Ahmadinejad in New York, according to which the establishment of a Palestinian government within the 1967 borders is the first step towards the realization of the Palestinians' rights, the daily claimed that this statement ignores its own implications: that is, recognition of the Zionist regime, denial of Palestinian claims to territories occupied prior to the 1967 war, and disregard for the refugee problem. The daily said that some politicians, wittingly or not, have fallen into the trap of the establishment of a Palestinian state as a first step. The fate of Palestine will not be decided in the UN or at the negotiating table; instead, it will be decided through the determination, willpower, and faith of the Palestinian people and the other Muslim nations.

The idea of "from the Nile to the Euphrates", on which the illegitimate State of Israel was established, should be countered by the expansion of the "freedom- and independence-loving" thought of "Palestine—from the river to the sea", not only among Palestinians, but also among all Arab and Islamic nations. The reality of Palestine being liberated from the claws of Zionism in the not-too-distant future has to be recognized. No military force—not the Israeli army, not Western armies—can prevent this reality when considering the waves of resistance in the Muslim world. The future of Palestine has to be decided by Palestinians, not by foreigners who use Israel to expand their influence in the region and plunder its resources.

Obviously, the United States and the Western world will never agree to a proposal to let the Palestinian refugees come back and hold a referendum of the Palestinians to decide on Palestine's fate. However, just like the Islamic revolution and the uprisings of the Muslim nations in the region were forced upon them, the realization of the Palestinians' rights will be forced upon them as well, and no Palestinian territory can be handed over to the enemy (Tehran Emrouz, October 2).

### **Five months to Majles elections: conflict escalates between United Conservative Front and Stability Front**

Five months to the Majles elections slated for early March 2012, this week conservative Majles member and President Ahmadinejad's political opponent Ali Motahari strongly criticized the Stability Front (Jebhe-ye Paydari), established in July by elements affiliated with the president and the radical faction of the conservative camp. The front consists of political activists considered to be President Ahmadinejad's allies, including his former cabinet ministers, currently-serving Majles members close to the president, and political activists



belonging to the Ammar Headquarters, a think-tank affiliated with the radical faction of the conservative camp. The front is supported by radical cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi.

In an interview granted to Khabar Online, a website close to Majles speaker Ali Larijani, Motahari accused the front of representing the “deviant faction” (a term used to refer to the political faction in the conservative camp affiliated with Rahim Masha’i, the president’s office chief), saying that the “real revolutionists” need to take action to weaken it. He pointed out that there is a contradiction in the claim made by the Stability Front members of supporting the president but not Masha’i, since the president himself has stated on several occasions that he accepts Masha’i’s views. Therefore, the two cannot be separated. Motahari claimed that most of the founders of the front were opportunists who made no effort for the revolution but were able to take the place of the “real revolutionists” by circumstance (Khabar Online, October 2).



**Inauguration conference of the Stability Front;  
right to left: Kamran Bagheri Lankarani, Gholam-  
Hossein Elham, Morteza Agha Tehrani, Sadegh  
Mahsouli, Ruhollah Hosseinian**

Meanwhile, it appears more and more likely that representatives from the Stability Front and the United Conservative Front will not be able to reach an agreement on a joint list of candidates for the Majles elections. The list is supposed to be drawn up by an Arrangement Committee comprised of 15 members (two 8+7 committees) representing the various conservative groups and headed by two top conservative clerics Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani, chairman of the Assembly of Experts; and Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, chairman of the Society of the Lecturers of Qom Seminary

In an interview given to the Khabar Online website this week, Seyyed Reza Taqavi, member of the 7-member committee, discussed the talks held in recent months between representatives of the Stability Front and the United Conservative Front in an attempt to

achieve unity in the conservative camp. He said that no agreement was reached between the fronts on a joint list of candidates after the demands of the Stability Front were refused. Taqavi, member of the Combatant Clergy Association, reported that the Stability Front demanded to have 3 representatives in the 8-member committee and one in the 7-member committee. It also demanded the representatives of Majles speaker Ali Larijani and Tehran's mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, both considered President Ahmadinejad's key political opponents, be removed from the 7+8 committees. Taqavi noted that the Stability Front already started preparations for the Majles elections in Iran's various provinces. It was his assessment that the Stability Front will run for the Majles as a separate independent list (Aftab News, October 2).

Hamid Reza Taraqi, vice chairman on international affairs of the Islamic Coalition Party, also discussed the preparations made by the conservative camp for the elections, telling the Fararu website that representatives of the Stability Front had been invited several times to join the United Conservative Front. He said that their non-participation in the United Front meetings will only harm them without causing substantial damage to the conservative camp, since they do not enjoy any significant social or public status (Fararu, October 1).

In recent days Majles deputy speaker Mohammad Reza Bahonar and Majles member Hassan Ghafouri-Fard criticized the Stability Front and categorically rejected its demands for considerable representation in the 7+8 committees.

Bahonar defined the front as the "front of deviation", saying that political activists have been warning about the formation of a "deviant front" in the conservative camp—a front which considers itself "more conservative than others" and poses a threat no less significant than that posed by the instigators of the 2009 riots. Bahonar discussed the coming Majles elections at a meeting of the Islamic Engineers Association, saying the elections were particularly significant by virtue of being the first to be held after the 2009 riots (Mehr, October 1).

Ghafouri-Fard also warned about the "deviant faction's" attempts to garner more influence in the next Majles elections. In an interview given to a weekly published on behalf of the Islamic Coalition Party, the Majles member said that the purpose of the "deviant faction" is to gain control of the Majles and then take over the presidency. He noted that, without a concerted fight against the faction, it can someday become a greater threat than the events of 2009.

Speaking about the Stability Front, Ghafouri-Fard said that while he considers it part of the conservative camp, its conditions for joining the United Conservative Front are unacceptable.

“The train of elections through the 7+8 mechanism” has already left, and those who want to join cannot do so at the expense of others, the Majles member said (Khabar Online, October 2).

### **Religious establishment increasingly critical of birth control policy**

In recent days two of Iran's top conservative clerics expressed their reservations about Iran's current birth planning policy. Top cleric Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani warned last week that birth planning is causing a decline in Shi'ite population in some places. Golpayegani said that the Shi'ites are a minority in many Muslim countries, which is why the birth control issue requires sensitivity. He noted that, at a time where many non-Muslim countries provide families with benefits and rewards with the purpose of increasing the birth rate, a decline in the world's Shi'ite and Muslim population must not be permitted (Shi'a News, September 26).

The criticism of Iran's birth control policy was joined this week by top cleric Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani. At a meeting with Islamic Guidance minister Dr. Mohammad Hosseini, the top conservative cleric said that birth planning is in no way helpful to the state and that the current policy, if not changed, can bring about a decline in Shi'ite population, already evident in many cities in Iran's border regions.

Sobhani said that, in the past, the Supreme Leader had also expressed reservations about the birth planning policy and noted that Iran could support as many as 150 million people. According to Sobhani, it is the religious and national responsibility of the authorities to increase the population and give that issue the attention it deserves (ISNA, September 29).

The statements made by the two top clerics reflect the resumption of the internal debate in Iran on the birth planning policy, first introduced in the late 1980s. The debate has reemerged this past year after President Ahmadinejad announced on several occasions that he does not agree with the current birth control policy. The president introduced his views on the issue in October 2006 by stating that he objected to the idea according to which two children per family is enough, saying that Iran is a country with tremendous potential that could accommodate 120 million residents. In an interview given to Iranian TV in April 2010, the president claimed that even Western governments regretted their family planning policies and were forced to make considerable efforts to preserve Western identity and culture in light of the significant decrease in population growth.

The president's remarks on the need to change the family planning policy were strongly criticized even by elements affiliated with the conservative camp. The president's critics claimed that, in light of Iran's current economic situation and the severe problems facing the

education and health systems, changing the family planning policy is not the right thing to do. In early 2011 the Expediency Discernment Council also ruled that increasing the population is not a logical strategy for solving Iran's problems and that the birth policy should not be changed.



Iran's family planning policy has undergone far-reaching changes since the Islamic revolution. The family planning program officially launched in the summer of 1967 to decrease the natural population growth rate was suspended shortly after the revolution. Shortly afterwards, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the revolution, ruled that there was no religious prohibition against using contraceptives; however, the executive board of family planning was disbanded, a significant number of family planning clinics were shut down or cut back, and the supply of contraceptives remained limited. After the Iran-Iraq War broke out (September 1980), Iran's authorities began portraying population size as a major source of military strength and national security. The regime's policy to strengthen the status of the family by encouraging marriage and encouraging women to return to their homes led to a sharp increase in birth rate in the first half of the '80s, when it reached an annual 3.9 percent.

The second half of the '80s saw an increased recognition of the economic and social consequences of an uncontrolled increase in population, perceived as an impediment to economic growth and development. In December 1989, Iran adopted a birth planning program to limit the number of pregnancies and the number of children per family. The family planning law, which cut benefits for families with many children while encouraging small families, was approved by the Majles in 1993. The program included a public awareness campaign on the media and through the education system, as well as the establishment of clinics and medical centers to provide family planning services. The authorities also encouraged the use of contraceptives, including castration and sterilization operations. Young couples were even required to receive instruction on contraceptives to get their marriage license. The renewal of the birth planning policy was a success, and the birth rate dropped to 1.2 in 2001.

The regime's efforts to limit the birth rate were also assisted by top clerics, who emphasized that Islam did not prohibit the use of contraceptives and that, according to the Prophet's traditions and the Quran, the economic welfare of Muslims is the top priority, making it acceptable to limit population size in some cases. The positions of the top clerics were featured in a series of articles published in the daily Keyhan in 1987 as part of the public debate on the issue of birth rate. All clerics agreed that Islam does not prohibit the use of contraceptives.

In 1994 Iran's Health Ministry submitted a report to the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo. The report emphasized Shi'ite clerics' support of birth planning and included their ruling according to which the birth rate may be limited in times where work opportunities are limited and the workforce is already large, in order to prevent uncontrolled population growth, facilitate the creation of new workplaces, and encourage economic and scientific growth.

### **Efforts to control web surfing: access to VPN servers blocked**

Telecommunications Minister Reza Taqipour admitted this week that in recent days the authorities blocked VPN (Virtual Private Network) servers that allow internet access, on grounds that the use of VPN is against the law. He added, however, that the blocking of VPN servers has nothing to do with the government plan of creating a closed national internet network that is cut off from its global counterpart ("clean internet" project) (ISNA, October 3).

Fars News Agency reported that VPN access was disabled on orders from the committee in charge of setting criteria for illicit internet content, which argued that VPN servers are used by Iranian web surfers to access websites prohibited by law (Fars, October 3). The committee includes representatives from the ministries of telecommunications, Islamic guidance, education, and intelligence; the Islamic Information Organization, the interior security forces, and Iran Broadcasting.

Since last Thursday (September 29), Iranian web surfers have reported difficulties in accessing VPN networks resulting from the blocking of PPTP (Point-to-Point Tunneling Protocol), which allows connection to such networks. Many Iranian web surfers use VPN links to overcome the blocking of websites prevalent in the country and make it more difficult for the authorities to monitor their web traffic.

Despite the telecommunications minister's denial, the blocking of access to VPN servers led to speculations that this is the first step towards the creation of the internal national internet network. This past year Iranian officials, primarily the telecommunications minister, have on numerous occasions discussed the government's intention to introduce a separate, closed internet network that will be cut off from its global counterpart.

The project is designed to give the regime more power to monitor traffic over the internet, which it perceives as a major scene of activity used by its domestic and external enemies. According to the authorities, the network will make it possible to considerably reduce the cost of web services and increase internet connection speed.

## Pictures of the week: nano-technology achievements revealed

