



**The Meir Amit Intelligence
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Spotlight on Iran

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“Wall Street uprising”: Iran and the U.S. protest wave

The protests that are happening in the United States were widely discussed this week by Iran’s senior officials and media. The protests, which started on Wall Street and spread to other cities across the United States, were said to be yet another expression of the weakness of the Western world and the nearing collapse of the capitalist economic and political order.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast announced this week that the protest in the United States is another step in the awakening of the world’s nations, reflecting the depth of United States citizens’ concern over the economic

principles that dominate the American capitalist system. He expressed concern over the use of violence towards the demonstrators, saying that the brutal suppression shows that the American administration has no tolerance for peaceful protests.

It was the assessment of Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the Revolutionary Guards Basij commander, that the protest movement will lead to the dissolution of the United States, similarly to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, being as it is a deeply-rooted protest that has nothing to do with political parties in the United States.

The Iranian media also extensively covered the protest wave in the United States. Conservative media argued that the protest exemplifies the fundamental, deep faults of the American political and economic system—ones that cannot be solved. The daily Resalat said that the economic crisis in the United States has no logical solution, which is why the American administration is forced to bring in the military to suppress the riots. An editorial titled “Wall Street Uprising” said that there is no treatment for the two fundamental diseases plaguing capitalism—greed and avarice, and that if the storm in the United States continues to grow, the fall of the Western world and of capitalism is inevitable.

The coverage of the riots by the Western media was also met with criticism from Iran’s press, which accused the Western media of using a double standard in its coverage of the riots in the United States compared to the coverage of the riots that broke out in Iran in the summer of 2009, as well as the riots in the Arab world. While the American media extensively covered the riots in Iran and accused it of violating human rights, it is now censoring, according to Iran’s press, reports on the riots in the United States and portraying the demonstrators as law-breakers.

Another blow to Iranians: egg prices skyrocket

This week the Iranian media widely discussed the soaring egg prices in the country. This past week the price for a carton of eggs went up by more than 10 percent, selling for a record 9,000 tomans (nearly 8.5 dollars) at some supermarkets earlier this week.

The significant increase in egg prices resulted in mutual exchanges of accusations between the ministries of agriculture and trade, the various organizations involved in the egg industry, and the Majles. Government representatives said that the high egg prices are unjustified, and that the government will take legal

action against profiteers. The deputy industry minister said that the increase of egg prices is a belated influence of the bird flu, which caused a significant decrease in Iran's egg production in recent months.

Government critics, however, blamed the price increase on the government, saying that the lack of government supervision, a faulty import policy, and neglect for the agricultural sector were the factors that drove up the price of eggs.

This week the Khabar Online website calculated the average monthly expenses of an average family, arguing that while the minimum monthly wage in Iran is about 330,000 tomans (approximately 310 dollars), an average family of four spends 378,000 tomans per month on bread and eggs.

Why did the victory of Iran's soccer team upset Keyhan's editor-in-chief?

Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the conservative daily Keyhan, expressed his regret and discontent over the excitement sparked last week by the Iranian soccer team's blowout 7-0 win against the Palestinian team in preparation for the World Cup qualifying match.

In an editorial titled "Pourya-ye Vali's place is still empty", Shariatmadari reminisced on the 14th-century Iranian sports champion Pourya-ye Vali, who is still a role model for many Iranian athletes for his noble conduct. It was particularly evident in his decision to lose against one of his enemies after hearing his elderly mother pray to Allah to give her son victory in battle.

The victory of the Iranian team is not particularly significant, Shariatmadari said, since it enjoys far better conditions and means compared to the Palestinian team, which has to work in the difficult conditions enforced by the Zionists. If the Iranian team did not want to adopt Pourya-ye Vali's noble conduct, it could have settled for a draw or at least a 1:0 victory against a team that represents "the oppressed Palestinian people".

The criticism of the Iranian team's behavior in the match against the Palestinian team was also joined by Majles member Ali Kayidi, who said that "blasting goals" against "an oppressed, occupied country" was not the proper thing to do. He noted that, as a Muslim, he was dissatisfied with the behavior of the Iranian team towards the Palestinian team, and that it would have been better if the team had shown what it's capable of in international competitions rather than in a match against the Palestinian team.

The reformist daily Mardom Salari, however, argued that the suffering of the Palestinian people has nothing to do with the soccer match between the Iranian and Palestinian teams, opposing Shariatmadari's claim that the Iranian team should have settled for a tie or a close victory. The daily said that it is the policy of the same government supported by the editor-in-chief of Keyhan that forced the Iranian team to play against the weaker Palestinian team, since no other country is willing to face the national team in a friendly match.

Facebook news: 17 million Iranians are Facebook members; Supreme Leader's ruling on the use of the social network; another malfunction had Facebook unblocked (?)

Mehdi Ja'fari, the head of Information Department in the Students Basij, announced last week that 17 million Iranians are members of the social network even though it is filtered by the authorities. Speaking at a conference in north Iran, Ja'fari warned about the threats facing Iran's society in cyberspace, and said that the enemies of Iran make use of computer technology to undermine Iranian society and particularly the religious values of the younger generation.

Meanwhile, access to Facebook, usually blocked by the authorities, was temporarily restored this week as a result of a technical malfunction. Several Iranian bloggers suggested that this had to do with a ruling by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on the use of Facebook which was published on several Iranian news websites this week. According to the ruling, there is no prohibition in principle against the use of Facebook, as long as the social network is not used for such improper ends as spreading moral corruption or publishing lies and content that may encourage sinful behavior or encourage the enemies of Islam.

"Wall Street uprising": Iran and the U.S. protest wave

The protests that are happening in the United States were widely discussed this week by Iran's senior officials and media. The protests, which started on Wall Street and spread in the past several days to other cities across the United States, were said to be yet another expression of the weakness of the Western world and the nearing collapse of the capitalist economic and political order.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast announced this week that the protest in the United States is another step in the awakening of the world's nations, reflecting the depth of United States citizens' concern over the economic principles that dominate the American capitalist system. He expressed concern over the use of violence towards the demonstrators, saying that the brutal suppression shows that the American administration has no tolerance

for peaceful protests. He added that the only way out of the crisis is for the American administration to comply with the demands of the citizens for social justice, focus on the internal problems plaguing the United States, pull out the American troops stationed across the globe, and redirect security budgets towards improving the economic situation and life quality of U.S. citizens (Mehr, October 8).

In the wake of the protest wave, Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the Revolutionary Guards Basij commander, said he believes that the end of the United States is near. He noted that, just as the Soviet Union collapsed as a result of its economic problems and the failure of its policy, the United States will fall as well. Speaking at a conference of students from Imam Hossein University in Tehran, Naqdi said that the protest movement in the United States will lead to the crumbling of the American political regime, being as it is a deeply-rooted protest that has nothing to do with political parties in that country (IRNA, October 8).

Masoud Jazayeri, deputy chief of staff for culture and defense publicity, also discussed the riots in the United States, saying that they are a promise for an "American spring". The protest in the United States indicates, he said, that Western capitalism is crumbling, and that Western liberal democracy is in decline. President Obama's slogans of change have come to a dead end, and the American people, seeing their president pursue the same policy adopted by President Bush, are no longer willing to tolerate the corruption of those who hold the country's wealth. The citizens of the United States are getting poorer and poorer, while the rich are becoming richer as a result of the administration's policy.

In Jazayeri's assessment, President Obama's helplessness with regard to the Wall Street crisis will turn the economic uprising into one that is political and social. The American people have had it with the capitalist order, and they now want to put an end to injustice, poverty, and political, cultural, and economic corruption. Speaking about the suppression of the rioters, Jazayeri said that the violence used by the police shows that the American security forces are more violent than their "students" in Arab countries (Fars, October 9).



Iranian students protest the suppression of the riots in the United States

The Iranian media also extensively covered the protest wave in the United States. Conservative media argued that the protest exemplifies the fundamental, deep faults of the American political and economic system—ones that cannot be solved.

The daily Resalat said that economists, sociologists, and psychologists in the Western world have no reasonable solution for the economic crisis that is taking place in the United States, which is why the American administration is forced to bring in the military to suppress the riots. An editorial titled “Wall Street Uprising” said that a third of American wealth is held by just one percent of the population, and that the class differences in the country have reached a state of social explosion. Capitalism is plagued by two fundamental diseases—greed and avarice, which have made the West arrogant and condescending. It is unlikely that such diseases can be treated in societies whose culture is based on sex and violence.

The pressure exerted by the “world of the oppressed” on the “world of the oppressors” is increasing, and the voice of the American people heard in the “Wall Street uprising” is one of the voices to be listened to and encouraged. The American administration wants to conquer the world’s nations, particularly the Iranians, using the Voice of America, but the world’s nations want to hear the voice of the American people who demand their rights. If the storm in the United States continues to grow in the fire of social demands, Resalat said, the fall of the Western world and of capitalism is inevitable (Resalat, October 8).

The daily Siyasat-e Rooz argued that the protest wave in Europe and the United States reflects a popular demand to put an end to the “capitalist tyranny” that governs Western countries. For years, citizens of the Western world have had to accept the political and economic rule of the rich, and now they are taking to the streets not to improve their lives but to put an end to the capitalist system in Europe and the United States (Siyasat-e Rooz, October 8).

The coverage of the riots by the Western media was also met with criticism from Iran’s press, which accused the Western media of using a double standard in its coverage of the riots in the United States compared to the coverage of the riots that broke out in Iran in the summer of 2009, as well as the riots in the Arab world. The American media’s stance towards the riots in the United States compared to the riots in Iran reveals, according to the daily Javan, its true nature. While the American media accused Iran of violating human rights in the 2009 riots, it is now censoring reports on the riots in the United States and portraying the demonstrators as thieves and law-breakers (Javan, October 8).

Another blow to Iranians: egg prices skyrocket

This week the Iranian media widely discussed the soaring egg prices in the country. The price of a carton of eggs has gone up from 5,100 tomans (about 4.8 dollars) to 6,700 tomans (about 6.3 dollars). One carton of eggs was selling for a record 9,000 tomans (nearly 8.5 dollars) at some supermarkets earlier this week.

The significant increase in egg prices resulted in mutual exchanges of accusations between the ministries of agriculture and trade, the various organizations involved in the egg industry, and the Majles. The deputy minister of industry, mines, and trade said this week that the high egg prices are unjustified, warning that the government will take legal action against anyone selling a carton of eggs for more than 6,000 tomans. He noted that the increase of egg prices is a belated influence of the bird flu, which hit Iran's poultry industry in the end of the last Iranian year and caused a significant decrease in egg production. He claimed, however, that the current egg prices are much higher than needed, since there are many elements that take advantage of the situation for profiteering. He expressed his hope that the measures the government intends to take, which include the increase of egg import, will drive egg prices down in the next several weeks to a maximum of 5,000 tomans per carton (Mehr, October 9).

The director of the Egg Producers Association also argued that the current egg prices are unjustified, stressing that egg producers are selling eggs for far less than what they are sold for by supermarkets. He blamed the Trade Ministry for the considerable gap between the price of eggs sold by producers to their retail price (Tabnak, October 8).



"You can't eat them anymore", from Rooz Online, October 9

Senior Majles and egg industry officials also blamed the price increase on the government, saying that the lack of government supervision, a faulty import policy, and neglect for the agricultural sector were the factors that drove up the price of eggs. Issa Ja'fari, spokesman for the Majles agriculture committee, warned this week that unless the government gives

enough attention to the increasing production costs in the agricultural sector, the price of dairy products will go up as well.

Ja'fari said that the subsidy policy reform brought about a significant increase in production costs, as a result of which production in the agricultural sector has decreased and prices have gone up. The incorrect import policy followed by the government and the lack of government control of prices have also hit local production and caused yet another increase in prices, according to Ja'fari. He stressed that those who enjoy the higher prices are the middlemen and the dealers, rather than the producers (Aftab News, October 9).

Qassem Mohammadi, another member of the Majles agriculture committee, also accused the government of neglecting the agricultural sector, citing it as the cause for the increase in egg prices. In an interview given to Mehr News Agency, Mohammadi said that the Trade Ministry has to step up its monitoring of the egg industry and the import of eggs into Iran (Mehr, October 9). Reservations about the egg import policy were also voiced by the director of the association of egg producers' cooperatives, who said in an interview to Fars News Agency that Iran currently imports eggs only from Turkey, when it can import eggs at cheaper prices from other countries, such as India.

Prompted by the increase in egg prices, the Khabar Online website calculated the average monthly expenses of an average family, arguing that while the minimum monthly wage in Iran is about 330,000 tomans (approximately 310 dollars), an average family of four spends 378,000 tomans per month on bread and eggs (Khabar Online, October 8).

The Fararu website sarcastically commented that egg prices have become so high that soon citizens of Golestan Province in northeast Iran will start giving eggs as dowry for soon-to-be-wed women (Fararu, October 9). The reformist daily Sharq quoted a 70-year-old taxi driver who said desperately that eggs have become gold, and that someday soon children will see eggs only on photographs because they will become too expensive to buy (Sharq, October 9).



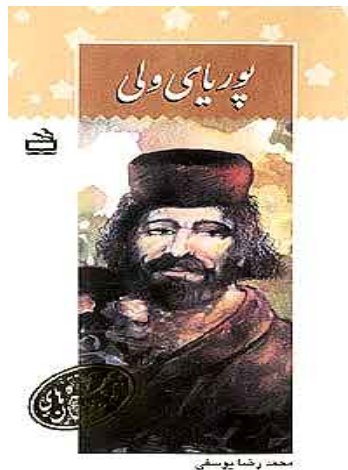
From the daily Mardom Salari, October 9

Why did the victory of Iran's soccer team upset Keyhan's editor-in-chief?

The Iranian soccer team won against the Palestinian team 7:0 in a preparation match for the World Cup qualifier held in Tehran last Wednesday (October 5). Earlier this week Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the conservative daily Keyhan, expressed his regret about the excitement generated by the Iranian soccer team's blowout win among Iran's sports reporters.

In an editorial titled "Pourya-ye Vali's place is still empty", Shariatmadari reminisced on Pourya-ye Vali, a 14th-century Iranian mystic, poet, and sports champion, who was renowned for his physical strength and is still a role model for many Iranian athletes who practice Zurkhaneh, a sport that combines bodybuilding and martial arts.

Some champions leave no memory, while others, like Pourya-ye Vali, are forever remembered in history for their conduct, Shariatmadari wrote. One evening while in a mosque, Pourya-ye Vali heard a woman pray: it was the mother of the opponent he was to compete against the next day. The elderly mother was praying to Allah to give her son victory. Pourya-ye Vali was moved by the prayer and decided to lose to his opponent to comply with the prayer, even at the cost of possible damage to his prestige. And this is precisely why his legacy lives on forever.



Pourya-ye Vali, from <http://yinyang.ir>

Sports journalists excitedly reported the victory of Iran's soccer team, referring to the match as a "festival of goals". Pourya-ye Vali preferred losing to his opponent, whom he could have easily defeated, only to make an old woman happy. Iranian journalists, however, were excited about the victory of the Iranian team, which defeated the representatives of the "oppressed Palestinian people" who were visiting Iran. The victory is not particularly

significant, Shariatmadari said, given the difficult conditions imposed by the Zionists on the Palestinian team. Compared to the Iranian team, the Palestinian team does not have considerable means and cannot hold regular practice sessions. The editor-in-chief of Keyhan praised the statement made after the defeat by the Palestinian coach, who said that he did not consider the defeat a loss since the very fact of his team's arrival to Islamic Iran despite the many difficulties it faced was an achievement to be proud of.

Shariatmadari said he doesn't know how the Iranian team could have expressed the Iranian people's appreciation for the Palestinian people and maintain the dignity of the Palestinian team, which came to Iran in the midst of "fire and blood". Even if the Iranian team did not want to follow in the footsteps of Pourya-ye Vali and adopt his code, it could have settled for a draw or at least a 1:0 victory.

It is unfortunate, said the editor-in-chief of Keyhan, that the Iranian team did not follow the example of the Revolutionary Guards member who once drove a Land Cruiser jeep and easily passed all the cars on the road before encountering an old Iranian car, a Paykan. The driver was a father, and from the back seat his two small children urged him to speed up and not let the jeep pass the car. Even though the father had no chance of matching the speed of the new jeep, the jeep driver wanted to make the two children happy and therefore slowed down. Several miles later he stopped his car in a parking lot, approached the children in the Paykan and told them, "You should be happy, because I couldn't pass your father's car" (Keyhan, October 8).

The criticism of the Iranian team's behavior in the match against the Palestinian team was also joined by Majles member Ali Kayidi, who said that "blasting goals" against "an oppressed, occupied country" was not the proper thing to do, since sports competitions are important for the growth of cultural and political ties. It would have been better if the team had shown what it's capable of in international competitions, such as the World Cup qualifiers, rather than in a match against the Palestinian team, particularly at a time when a conference in support of the Palestinians is held in Tehran, Kayidi said. He added that sports are also about upholding moral standards, and that, as a Muslim, he was dissatisfied with the Iranian team's "goal-blasting" against the Palestinian team (Aftab News, October 9).

The reformist daily Mardom Salari, however, argued that the suffering of the Palestinian people has nothing to do with the soccer match between the Iranian and Palestinian teams. In an editorial titled "Soccer politics or political soccer", the daily opposed Shariatmadari's claim that the Iranian team should have settled for a tie or a close victory. The author of the article said that Shariatmadari's proposal is wrong from the point of view of sports, since a

match in preparation for the World Cup qualifier is precisely what allows the team's coach to examine the skills of all players. Politically, the daily said, it is the policy of the same government supported by the editor-in-chief of Keyhan that forced the Iranian team to play against the weaker Palestinian team, since no other country is willing to face the national team in a friendly match (Mardom Salari, October 10).

Facebook news: 17 million Iranians (?) are Facebook members; Supreme Leader's ruling on the use of the social network; another malfunction had Facebook unblocked

Mehdi Ja'fari, the head of Information Department in the Students Basij, announced last week that 17 million Iranians are members of the Facebook even though it is filtered by the authorities.

Speaking at a conference held in the north Iranian city of Amol, Ja'fari warned about the threats facing Iran's society in cyberspace, and said that the enemies of Iran make use of computer technology to undermine Iran's society and realize their objectives as part of the "soft war". He said that the threats and dangers lurking in cyberspace must be identified in order to find means of dealing with them. He said that the most significant danger involves the possibility of dissolution of religious values among the younger generation. He noted that there are currently over 300 thousand Persian-language websites working against the Iranian national and religious beliefs (www.favanews.com, October 5).

Meanwhile, access to Facebook and other sites (including Twitter and YouTube) usually blocked by the authorities was temporarily restored this week for several hours. A senior Telecommunications Ministry official told Fars News Agency that this was the result of a temporary technical malfunction, denying reports that the websites were unblocked due to a deliberate policy (Fars, October 10). This is the second time in the past several months where websites that are usually blocked by the authorities become unblocked as a result of a technical problem. A similar malfunction took place in July, and was said to arise from the introduction of a new system for filtering Google and Yahoo search results by the Telecommunications Ministry.

Several Iranian bloggers suggested that the unblocking of Facebook this week had to do with a ruling issued by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the use of the social network. According to the ruling, which was published on several Iranian news websites this week, there is no prohibition in principle against the use of Facebook.

When asked to comment on the issue from the standpoint of Islamic law, the Supreme Leader said there is nothing to prohibit the use of Facebook as long as it is not used for such improper ends as spreading moral corruption or publishing lies and content that may encourage sinful behavior or encourage the enemies of Islam. After the ruling was issued, the Supreme Leader was asked to clarify whether it is permissible to visit the Facebook website for the sole purpose of interacting with friends, without performing any activities that may undermine Iran's national interests, given the fact that the website is blocked by the authorities. The leader's reply was that his ruling is one of principle and is not a statement of opinion on the terms of use of Facebook. Khamenei noted that social networks are essentially tools for gathering information that may strengthen the enemies of Islam. He argued, however, that his ruling neither flatly prohibits nor authorizes the use of Facebook, representing instead a "middle-ground approach" where the use is not completely prohibited nor permitted under Islamic religious law (www.598.ir, October 8, 2011).

This July a spokesman for the committee responsible for setting website filtering criteria denied a report published several days prior to that, according to which the committee intends to unblock Facebook. He said, however, that defining the use of Facebook as a "criminal offense" depends on how it is used. Only if the network is used for spreading information that compromises state security, offends the sanctity of Islam, or undermines morality is its use considered a criminal offense.

Pictures of the week: student activist Peyman Aref released from Evin prison after a sentence of one year and 74 whippings



Photos from www.rahana.org, an Iranian human rights website