



## Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center



### **The president introduces his ministerial candidates: women named to cabinet for the first time since the Islamic revolution**

This week President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has introduced his choices for the new government's ministers. For the first time since the Islamic revolution, the president is planning to allow women become ministers in his government. The president has nominated Fatemeh Ajorloo for welfare and social affairs minister, Dr. Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi for health minister, and Dr. Sousan Keshavarz for education minister.

Ajorloo, 43, a psychologist by trade, is currently a member of the Majles. She formerly served in various positions in the Revolutionary Guards, the students' Basij, and various Majles committees. Dastjerdi, 50, a physician by trade and former Majles member, formerly served in senior positions in the Health Ministry and was the director of several hospitals. Keshavarz, who holds a doctorate in the philosophy of education, was formerly the deputy minister of education.



Left to right: Keshavarz (IBNA News Agency), Dastjerdi, Ajorloo (Mardomak website)

There have been no women ministers since the Islamic revolution (1979), although in 1997 President Mohammad Khatami did appoint a woman for vice president for the first time. Ahmadinejad also appointed a woman for vice president in his previous government (there are eight vice presidents serving under the president of Iran).

The president intends to retain Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, Industry Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian, Economy Minister Dr. Shams al-Din Hosseini, and Cooperatives Minister Dr. Mohammad Abbasi. The president also proposes Hojjatoleislam Haydar Maslahi (the Supreme Leader's representative in the Islamic Endowment Organization, the Supreme Leader's former representative in the ground forces of the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij, and President Ahmadinejad's advisor on clerical affairs) for intelligence minister; Ahmad Vahidi (former deputy defense minister and chairman of the political and defense committee of the Expediency Council) for defense minister; Mostafa Mohammad Najjar (who served as defense minister in the outgoing government) for interior minister; Kamran Daneshjoo for science and technology minister; Reza Taqipour for communications minister; Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini for Islamic guidance minister; Abdolreza Sheikholeslami for labor and social services minister; Seyyed Massoud Mirkazemi (who served as commerce minister in the outgoing government) for oil minister; Mohammad Ali-Abadi for energy minister; Sadeq Khalilian for agriculture minister; Ali Nikzad for housing minister; and Hamid Behbahani for transportation minister.

Ahmadinejad said that he appointed the ministers based on their ethical and professional skills and their ability to function as a team (various news agencies, August 16). The ministers appointed by the president require the approval of the Majles.

## **Reformists become increasingly outspoken, challenging the Supreme Leader**

Last week, in what was clearly a blunt challenge to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's leadership, a group of Majles members issued a demand to investigate the Supreme Leader's conduct with regard to the recent events in Iran following the presidential elections.

In a public letter sent by the Council of Former Iranian Parliamentarians to Ayatollah Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Assembly of Experts, the council members condemned the suppression of the riots which broke out in Iran following the presidential elections and the wave of arrests which followed in their wake. They also strongly criticized the "show trials" against senior members of the reformist bloc, which, according to the signers of the letter, were reminiscent of the Stalin trials. In their letter, the council members also addressed claims regarding torture and suppression of detainees at the Kahrizak detention center, and expressed their support of reformist presidential candidate Mehdi Karoubi's demand to investigate information on alleged incidents of rape of young men and women detained during the riots.

According to the signers of the letter, responsibility for the activity of the judiciary and Iran's internal security forces according to the Iranian constitution lies with the Supreme Leader. He bears the overall responsibility which stems from his religious authority, and is defined by the constitution as equal among equals in the eyes of the law. Accordingly, the former Majles members demand the Assembly of Experts to investigate the conduct of the Supreme Leader and those elements under his responsibility based on clause 111 of the Iranian constitution. According to that clause, the Assembly of Experts has the authority to impeach the Supreme Leader if it finds him unfit to fulfill his constitutional obligations (Emruz, August 13).

The Council of Former Iranian Parliamentarians consists of over 700 members, each of whom served at least one Majles term and most of whom are now affiliated with the reformist bloc. The media, which reported on the letter, did not specify who the council members that had signed the letter were, or their exact number.

The council's unprecedented letter was published just one day after some of Iran's media outlets reported that Ali Mohammad Dastgheib, a member of the Assembly of Experts, demanded that the assembly convene urgently to discuss the latest happenings in Iran. According to Dastgheib, the assembly must promptly discuss the public demands, as brought up by their representatives, Mir-Hossein Moussavi and Mehdi Karoubi. He said that the citizens of Iran had expressed their

protest over the fact that the Iranian constitution was not correctly applied in the riots that broke out following the presidential elections, and that they expected their representatives in the assembly to discuss their demands. The assembly must therefore fulfill its constitutional responsibility (Mowj-e Sabz-e Azadi, August 12).

What is more, several Iranian websites affiliated with the reformist opposition have reported this week that several dozen clerics from Qom, Esfahan, and Mashhad sent an unsigned letter last week blaming the Supreme Leader for the riots that broke out after the elections and demanding that he be impeached by the Assembly of Experts. The letter, which may or may not be authentic, says that Khamenei turned the Revolutionary Guards into his "personal guard" and Iran's media into his own propaganda machine (Mowj-e Sabz-e Azadi, August 15).

Consisting of 86 clerics, the Assembly of Experts, according to the constitution of the Islamic republic, is responsible for supervising the Supreme Leader's actions, appointing his heir, and even impeaching him, if it finds him unfit to continue serving in his position. Most of the assembly members, elected in December 2006, are currently affiliated with the traditional-conservative bloc.

### **New stage in the reformists' struggle: Moussavi announces the establishment of a new social front**

Reformist leader Mir-Hossein Moussavi has announced this week the establishment of a new social front called Green Path of Hope, marking a new stage in the reformist bloc's struggle following the presidential elections. In a meeting with members of Iran's Islamic Association of Doctors, Moussavi announced that the front would endeavor to implement the Iranian constitution through a system of numerous independent, comprehensive social networks. He also noted that the front would promote the just demands and rights of Iranian citizens. Green is the symbol of the front, said Moussavi, and its demand is the complete implementation of the Iranian constitution.



**Green Path of Hope on Facebook**

In his speech, Moussavi once again severely criticized the Iranian authorities, saying that if they had treated fairly the citizens before the latter took to the streets, and respected their lawful human rights instead of humiliating them and launching a propaganda campaign on Iran's broadcasting authority, the current crisis could have been prevented.

Moussavi once again brought up claims regarding irregularities during the presidential election campaign, saying that even before the election day he had approached the relevant parties, including the judiciary chief, the attorney general, the Majles speaker and the Supreme Leader's office regarding irregularities he was reported about by civilians. Moussavi categorically denied the claims on a possible connection between the public protest and various Western countries, saying that the official media had better stop making false accusations against millions of citizens and look for the real culprits, those who robbed the people of their trust and security and were serving the enemy with their paranoid analyses. He also criticized the show trials against those arrested in the riots, saying that the detainees' rights were violated during their trials (ILNA, August 15). The show trials against the detainees continued this week; during the third court session held early this week, indictments were read to some 30 additional detainees, including a young Jewish man.

Reformist media outlets have reported this week that Moussavi is currently holding consultations with his close associates and advisors regarding the formulation of the official announcement on the establishment of the new front and also regarding its make-up. The central council of the front will consist of 5-6 members, including Khatami and Karoubi (Mardom Salari, August 17; ILNA, August 18).

As could be expected, Moussavi's announcement on the establishment of the new front came under severe criticism from the government's supporters. In a particularly strong-worded editorial published by the editor-in-chief of the daily Keyhan, Hossein Shariatmadari claimed that

Moussavi's establishment of the new front was yet another step in his cooperation with the US to change the Iranian regime. He compared the new front to opposition movements established by the US in East Europe in the late 1980s in order to promote regime change in such countries as Poland, Georgia, and Serbia.

The establishment of the front, says Shariatmadari, was to be expected, being yet another step in the coup attempt led by the CIA as part of the war waged by the US against Iran with the cooperation of the reformist bloc. After the reformists and the Americans failed to bring about political change in Iran through the elections, they are now launching a new stage. The establishment of the front is not Moussavi's initiative but rather the continuation of an American formula for changing the Iranian regime, and the common denominator of all its supporters—US, Israel, the royalists, the economically corrupted, the Baha'is, and the Marxists—is opposition to the Islamic revolution (Keyhan, August 17).

### **Iran's new judiciary chief is the Majles speaker's brother**

This week, Ayatollah Sadeq Ardeshir Larijani has officially replaced Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi as Iran's judiciary chief. Sadeq Larijani was born in 1960 in the city of Najaf, Iraq. He is the son of senior cleric Grand Ayatollah Haj Mirza Hashem Amoli, one of the most important Shi'ite clerics in Najaf and in Qom. He is the brother of Majles Speaker Ali Larijani; Mohammad Javad Larijani, former deputy foreign minister and chairman of the Majles Research Center, currently the secretary of Human Rights Division in the judiciary and director of the Center for Theoretical Physics and Math Research in Tehran; Baqer Larijani, the president of Tehran's University of Medicine; and Fazel Larijani, Iran's former cultural attaché in Canada.

Larijani served as member of the Assembly of Experts and in 2001 was appointed by the Supreme Leader to the Guardian Council. He will be the fifth and youngest judiciary chief since the Islamic revolution.

In his first speech as judiciary chief during the swearing-in ceremony, Larijani stressed the importance of keeping the law and warned that he would show no mercy to those who dare to break the law or violate the citizens' rights. Larijani also emphasized the need for fighting crime and maintaining the independence of the judiciary, drawing on the cooperation of all authorities to realize the goals of the Islamic republic (various news agencies, August 17).

Iran's former Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Shahroudi held his position for the past ten years. He is known for his conservative views, even though he did attempt to promote a number of legal reforms during his tenure. Shahroudi opposed the use of stoning as a form of capital punishment, issued a moratorium on public executions, proposed a bill for commuting punishments for minor offenses to community service, and suggested several amendments in marital laws for the benefit of women. However, his initiatives were implemented only in part, and during his tenure, the judiciary continued being involved in violations of human rights, political arrests, and closing down of newspapers. As soon as he ended his tenure, Shahroudi was appointed by the Supreme Leader as a member of the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council.



### **Another reason for anti-Chinese protest in Iran: pants with the word "Allah" printed on their back**

Asr-e Iran, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative bloc, has found yet another reason to lash out against China this week: Chinese-made pants with text on their back that reads "In the name of Allah the compassionate, the merciful" are exported to Iran. The website reported that the women's pants whose picture appeared on the website were selling on Tehran's markets at only 21 thousand tomans (about 21 dollars) and, because they were so cheap, some buyers did not notice the writing on their back.



The website complained that while the Italian Benetton company was boycotted in Iran due to its relations with the “Zionist lobby”, the Iranian authorities did not prevent the import of Chinese goods, despite the suppression of China’s Muslims and the offense against Islam as reflected in the export of Chinese pants with the inscription “Allah” to Iran. It should be noted that the volume of trade between Iran and China has increased significantly over the past several years (Asr-e Iran, August 18).

In recent weeks, several Iranian news websites, including Asr-e Iran, strongly criticized the Chinese government for suppressing the riots of the Muslim minority in the province of Xinjiang.

### **An Iranian conservative website speaks out against the proliferation of online dating websites**

This week, the conservative website Farda has lashed out against online dating websites which operate in Iran in recent years. According to a research article published on the website, there are now 39 active dating websites in Iran, two of them defined as “Islamic dating websites”.

The website says that even though those websites are marriage-minded, they are often used by young men seeking to meet Iranian women for other purposes. The website warns that the increasing use of such websites by youngsters may turn into a veritable “social crisis” in the future.

The website reports that online dating websites have appeared in Iran during the past three years. Among other things, those websites include chat rooms most of whose users (63-68

percent) are young people, and about half of whose contents include personal information, including pictures of the young men and women.



The homepage of www.iranzendegi.com, an Iranian dating website

According to an expert interviewed for the article, the proliferation of dating websites resulted in the emergence of new ways for young Iranian people to meet each other, ways that are frequently abused. According to that expert, various studies indicate that the relationships formed through those websites are superficial and therefore do not usually result in deep, meaningful relationships between the partners. He notes that other studies indicate that about 80 percent of men using dating websites have no intention of finding a woman for purposes of marriage, their sole intention being to seduce women for sex.

Farda also discussed the opposition from clerics to the increasing use of online dating websites. For example, the cleric Seyyed Javad Moussavi from the Islamic Propaganda Organization warned against the abuse of dating websites, saying that they could hurt women who, by surfing on those websites, would be exposed to moral offenses carried out on the Internet. Various experts also warned that the websites could tear families apart and cause conflicts between married partners, and that the effects could already be seen in the increasing number of couples filing for divorce.

The website also reported that several suggestions were recently made to increase government control of online dating websites. One of the suggestions was to establish a special board to supervise the websites, prevent the abuse of personal information published on them, and take action against the publication of false personal information by web surfers (Farda, August 15).

It is not the first time that Iranian media reports on the significant increase in the number of Iranian dating websites operating on the Internet. Various experts assume that the phenomenon stems from the severe legal limitations imposed on public encounters between young men and women in Iran. Faced with those limitations, many people are forced to choose dating website as a way of finding a partner. In the past, senior Iranian officials and clerics warned that dating websites operated in an “immoral” and illegal fashion, calling on the authorities to take action against them.

### **Guinness world record for an Iranian chess player: 500 simultaneous parties**

Iranian chess player Morteza Mahjoob broke a Guinness world record last week after playing 500 simultaneous chess parties for over 8 hours. Mahjoob scored 397 wins, 13 losses, and 90 draws. The Iranian grandmaster broke the previous Guinness world record set earlier this year by Bulgarian chess player Kiril Georgiev, who played 360 simultaneous parties.

Mahjoob, 29, has been a member of Iran’s national chess team for 12 years. In 1994 he became Iran’s junior chess champion and a year later became Iran’s student champion. In 2000, Mahjoob defeated former world champion Anatoly Karpov in a simultaneous chess party held between the Russian grandmaster and Iran’s national chess team.



The game of chess has been the subject of clerical debate in Iran since the Islamic revolution in 1979. After the Islamic revolution, the Iranian authorities banned chess in public. Even though the game was played in ancient Persia and some even say that it originated in Iran, it was viewed as a “royalist” game which encouraged gambling and shirking religious duties. In 1988, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a religious ruling allowing chess, following which the game once again blossomed in the country. Special chess parks were established, a

national chess association was created, and chess championships were once again held across Iran. However, the religious debate on the game has not ended. Citing oral traditions attributed to Prophet Muhammad, several clerics ruled that the Prophet banned the game. Other clerics, however, argued that the game was not known in the Arabian Peninsula during the Prophet's time, saying that the traditions pertaining to that matter were unreliable.

In 2000, one of the senior clerics in the city of Kashan, Ayatollah Jafari Sabouri, issued a religious ruling banning the game once again, claiming that it had a negative influence on the population and on religious life. He even called the public to join him for a public burning of chess boards. After the ruling was issued, the municipality of Kashan banned the use of chess boards in city parks. However, in 2008, senior conservative cleric Ayatollah Nouri Hamdani ruled that while the game was forbidden by religious law, it could be played as long as it was not used for gambling.

### **Pictures of the week: the Iranian team is Asia's new basketball champion**

