



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



Highlights of the week:

- ✓ Psychological warfare or actual threat: Iranian reactions to public debate on possibility of Israeli military attack
- ✓ Iran steps up in support of Revolutionary Guards' Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani
- ✓ When the president turns the heat on: Ahmadinejad lashes out against opponents at a support rally
- ✓ Public uproar continues over "inappropriate hug" of two soccer players

Psychological warfare or actual threat: Iranian reactions to public debate on possibility of Israeli military attack

The intensive public debate on the possibility of a military attack on Iran has drawn a great deal of attention from Iran's top officials and media this week. Iranian leaders issued threats against Israel, while Iran's media analyzed the reasons behind the international media's preoccupation with the possibility of a military attack on Iran.

Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Committee member Hossein Ebrahimi warned earlier this week that Iran will react strongly to any Israeli offensive, and that the Israelis will feel the Iranians' wrath in Tel-Aviv before they can take action against Iran. Earlier, Iran's Chief of Staff Hassan Firouzabadi and Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi also warned Israel against a possible attack on Iran. In an interview to the Turkish daily Hürriyet, Salehi said that Iran is ready for war with Israel and will react to any attempted attack without hesitation.

The majority of Iran's conservative media outlets have speculated in recent days that Israel's threats to act against Iran are part of a psychological and media campaign aimed to step up the international pressure on Iran and toughen sanctions against it, and that they are not necessarily indicative of an actual intent to launch an offensive. Iranian news websites extensively cited Israeli journalists and commentators' warnings about the consequences of a military attack on Iran, and reported on the internal differences of opinion among Israel's politicians and top security officials about a possible attack.

The Asr-e Iran website argued that the media offensive against Iran serves the interests of all Western countries. Israel is taking advantage of the media climate against Iran to further pressure Western countries into dealing with the Iranian nuclear program in a way that will benefit it the most, the United States is using the media speculation on a possible Israeli attack to persuade other Western countries to step up sanctions against Iran, while Russia and China are taking advantage of the current state of affairs to try and impress upon the Iranian authorities the gravity of the situation.

The daily Keyhan discounted the ability of the United States and Israel to act against Iran, saying that years of Western action against Iran have made it immune to new threats. The daily Qods argued that the Israeli authorities are well aware of Iran's military capabilities, warning that, in response to the first Israeli missile fired on Iran, Tel-Aviv and Haifa will be showered with thousands of missiles that will turn two million Israeli citizens into refugees and Israel into a museum.

The reformist daily Sharq, however, warned against discounting the intent of the United States and Israel to attack Iran. A commentary article by top diplomat Sadeq Kharazi said that Iran needs to take the political initiative to avoid giving more power to Western warmongers interested in provoking a military

confrontation with Iran at any cost. Given the pressure exerted on it, Iran must take a number of measures, which include resuming nuclear talks with the West based on the Russian proposal, alleviating tensions with its neighbors (particularly with Saudi Arabia), normalizing its relations with Turkey, and asking for a clarification from Britain, which has also recently brought up the possibility of a military operation against Iran.

Iran steps up in support of Revolutionary Guards' Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani

The mention of the Revolutionary Guards' Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani in connection with the Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador has prompted an unprecedented wave of support for Soleimani from Iran's top officials and conservative media. The support intensified this past week after Iranian media came out with reports that top U.S. officials had recently suggested assassinating top Iranian officials, including Soleimani.

Last week 240 Majles members signed a statement of support for the Qods Force and its commander. Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi and Supreme National Security Council Chairman Sa'id Jalili also expressed their support for Soleimani. Jalili said that even if the Americans mobilize all their resources against Iran, it will take only one man like Soleimani to force them into submission.

The conservative press also rallied to show support for the Qods Force and Soleimani. In an article titled "Who is Hajj Qasem Soleimani?" the daily Javan praised the commander of the Qods Force, describing him as a person whose merits go beyond his capabilities as commander. The daily argued that, contrary to claims made by Western media, Soleimani is not a mysterious figure at all and is known in Iran mostly for his long-standing service of the regime and the revolution.

A Keyhan editorial titled "Why are they afraid of the Qods Force?" said that over the past decade the Qods Force has become a key element underpinning Iran's regional strength, and that it has played a major role in the defeat of the American "war machine" in Iraq and Afghanistan. The power of the Qods Force, according to the daily, lies not in its operative capabilities but rather in the philosophy it stands for, which reflects revolutionist Islam's uncompromising struggle against the West.

Iranian web surfers also showed support for Soleimani in recent days. Bloggers and users of the social networking websites Facebook and Google+ expressed their support for the commander of the Qods Force, posting his photographs under the title "We are all Qasem Soleimani".

This past year Soleimani has gained increasing exposure on Iran's media, and has even been mentioned as a potential candidate to someday replace Mohammad Ali Ja'fari, the current Revolutionary Guards commander.

When the president turns the heat on: Ahmadinejad lashes out against opponents at a support rally

In a speech given last Thursday (November 3) at a closed-door meeting with his supporters, President Ahmadinejad lashed out against his political opponents. Unofficial reports from the meeting, held without journalists, have been published on several news websites in recent days, drawing considerable interest from Iran's political system and media.

Ahmadinejad categorically denied his political opponents' claims that he does not obey the instructions of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. He argued that many of those who declare support for the leader are corrupt, and that their support for Khamenei does not serve his interests.

The president discussed a claim made by his opponents in the conservative camp that he and his allies belong to a "deviant faction", saying that if being opposed to his opponents' opinion is deviation, then he is, in fact, a deviant.

Ahmadinejad also accused his opponents of attempting to undermine his government by making false allegations against his allies. He strongly rejected the claims that his allies are involved in corruption, including the massive embezzlement recently exposed in Iran's banking system, stressing that none of the allegations have been proven. He also strongly condemned the judiciary, saying it refused to investigate the involvement in corruption of people included in a list he had forwarded to the judiciary chief.

In his speech, the president also discussed international developments, saying Iran is nearing the final confrontation with the West, which may be political and

not necessarily military. He warned that, unless Iran remains vigilant, it can suffer a devastating blow.

Public uproar continues over “inappropriate hug” of two soccer players

The behavior of two Iranian soccer players who “inappropriately” hugged while celebrating a goal at a league match is still causing a stir in Iran. Mohammad Nosrati and Sheys Rezaei, of Persepolis, were suspended from the team last week and fined tens of thousands of dollars after Nosrati was seen squeezing the backside of teammate Rezaei during a goal celebration at a local league match. A top official in the Prosecutor General’s Office in Gilan Province announced this week that the two players will be brought to trial on charges of violating public morality.

This week Sheys Rezaei released an open letter publicly apologizing for his behavior, stressing that he had meant no harm or disrespect for the values of Iranian society.

Top cleric Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi ruled this week that the behavior of the two soccer players was ugly and violated public morality, and that publishing images which document such activity is against Islamic religious law.

Psychological warfare or actual threat: Iranian reactions to public debate on possibility of Israeli military attack

The intensive public debate on the possibility of a military attack on Iran has drawn a great deal of attention from Iran’s top officials and media this week. Iranian leaders issued threats against Israel, while Iran’s media analyzed the reasons behind the international media’s preoccupation with the possibility of a military attack on Iran.

Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Committee member Hossein Ebrahimi warned earlier this week that Iran will react strongly to any Israeli offensive, and that the Israelis will feel the Iranians’ wrath in Tel-Aviv before they can take action against Iran. Ever since the Islamic revolution, the United States, Britain, and Israel have often threatened Iran, the Majles member said, and there is nothing new in Israel’s threats. Ebrahimi added that the military capabilities shown by Israel during the second Lebanon war were weak, and that Israel gained nothing from that war other than humiliation. He warned that if Israel does act

on its threats, it will be met with the political strength of the Iranian regime and the solidarity of the Iranian people (Fars, November 6).

Earlier, Iran's Chief of Staff Hassan Firouzabadi and Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi also warned Israel against a possible attack on Iran. In an interview to the Turkish daily Hürriyet, Salehi said that Iran is ready for war with Israel. It's now eight years that Iran has been hearing Israel's threats, Salehi said, and such threats are not news. He warned that Iran will react to any attempted attack without hesitation (Fars, November 3).

In addition to the threats made by Iran's top officials against Israel, the public debate about the possibility of an attack on Iran attracted considerable interest from the Iranian media. Several commentary articles published in Iran's press in recent days speculated that Israel's threats are part of a psychological and media campaign aimed to step up the international pressure on Iran and toughen sanctions against it, and that they are not necessarily indicative of an actual intent to launch an offensive. Iranian news websites extensively cited Israeli journalists and commentators' warnings about the consequences of a military attack on Iran, and reported on the domestic differences of opinion among Israel's politicians and top security officials about a possible attack.

The Asr-e Iran website argued that the extensive debate in the West about the possibility of an attack on Iran is part of a media and propaganda campaign designed to put more pressure on Iran and prepare world public opinion for escalating sanctions against it. Signs of the campaign are also evident in the United States' claims about the Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador in Washington, the release of the IAEA chairman's report on the Iranian nuclear program, and the growing pressure on Iran with regard to the human rights issue.

The website said that the propaganda attack on Iran serves the interests of all Western countries. Asr-e Iran pointed out the differences of opinion between Israel and the United States about the willingness to come to terms with a nuclear Iran and did not rule out the possibility that Israel will attack Iran without first coordinating the military offensive with the United States, despite the danger such an attack will pose to American forces in the region. A propaganda and media campaign against Iran and a discussion about the military attack option allow Israel to further pressure Western countries into dealing with the Iranian nuclear program in a way that will benefit it the most

The media speculation about a possible attack also serves the interests of other Western countries that are willing to go only as far as toughening sanctions against Iran to persuade it

to give up its nuclear program. The United States, opposed to a military attack, is interested in using the media debate on a possible Israeli attack to persuade other Western countries to step up sanctions against Iran. Russia and China are taking advantage of the current media climate to try and impress upon the Iranian authorities the gravity of the situation, make them agree to suspend the uranium enrichment, and resume serious talks with the 5+1 group of countries. Therefore, the media speculation about a possible attack serves all the countries involved in contacts with Iran on the nuclear issue (Asr-e Iran, November 6).



The daily Keyhan discounted the ability of the United States and Israel to act against Iran given the failures they suffered in recent years in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and Bahrain. Years of Western action against Iran have made it immune to new threats, the daily said (Keyhan, November 6). An editorial titled “Orchestra of clowns” said that the difficult position of the United States, European countries, and Israel does not allow them to go to war against Iran. The United States is facing an extensive domestic protest and an economic crisis that keeps it from covering the expenses of the war in Afghanistan. Britain, France, and other countries in Europe are also dealing with a severe economic crisis and a growing wave of protest. Israel is facing a wave of protest and strikes of its own, and Israeli ministers, with the exception of PM Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, are strongly opposed to a military action against Iran, warning about its devastating consequences for Israel.

The main reason behind the media campaign waged by the United States and Israel against Iran, the article said, lies in the developments in the Middle East. The problem is not Iran's nuclear program, but rather its power and growing influence in the region. The aim of such psychological warfare is to wring concessions from Iran at the negotiating table to reduce its strategic depth and influence on regional developments, with the Islamic awakening and the internal crisis in the United States in the backdrop (Keyhan, November 8).

The daily Qods argued that Israel is well aware of Iran's military capabilities and knows that Iran is not Iraq of the 1980s, and that, in response to the first missile fired on Iran, Tel-Aviv

and Haifa will be showered with thousands of missiles that will turn two million Israeli citizens into refugees. If the “Zionist regime” takes any action against Iran, the daily warned, Israel will become a museum (Qods, November 8).

The reformist daily Sharq, however, warned against discounting the intent of the United States and Israel to attack Iran. In a commentary article by Sadeq Kharazi, the former top diplomat said that the enemies of the Islamic republic are trying to prepare the ground for a military attack against it, calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately resume the nuclear talks with the 5+1 group of countries based on the Russian foreign minister’s proposal.

Kharazi said that the media debate about the possibility of a military attack is aimed to step up pressure on the IAEA chairman ahead of the release of the report, aimed to prepare the ground for further sanctions against Iran. He criticized the passive diplomacy employed by Iran in light of recent developments. It is not enough to deny and protest the American allegations against Iran. Iran needs to take the political initiative to avoid giving more power to warmongers interested in provoking a military confrontation with Iran at any cost. Kharazi stressed the need for active Iranian diplomacy and listed the measures Iran needs to take to deal with the pressure exerted on it: resuming the nuclear talks with the West; holding talks with Saudi Arabia to resolve the differences of opinion between the two countries; addressing a diplomatic appeal to Britain, which has for the first time brought up the possibility of a direct military intervention in Iran; normalizing its relations with Turkey; alleviating tensions with its neighbors; and holding talks with the Persian Gulf states and Iraq to examine ways for advancing regional security and stability (Sharq, November 6).

Iran steps up in support of Revolutionary Guards’ Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani

The mention of the Revolutionary Guards’ Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani in connection with the Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador has prompted an unprecedented wave of support for Soleimani from Iran’s top officials and conservative media. The support intensified this past week after Iranian media came out with reports that during a recent Congress session top U.S. officials had suggested assassinating top Iranian officials, including Soleimani.

Dolat-e Ma (“Our Government”), a website affiliated with President Ahmadinejad’s supporters, reported last weekend that 240 Majles members signed a statement of support for the Qods Force and its commander following the American allegations about their involvement in the plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador in Washington. The announcement stated that the Revolutionary Guards and the Qods Force protect the revolution from the threats facing Iran,

and are responsible for safeguarding its national security and interests. The Majles members called on the United States to stop spreading propaganda and plotting against the Revolutionary Guards. The president's office chief Rahim Masha'i also expressed his support for Soleimani, describing him as one of the noblest, most dignified sons of the Iranian nation and the regime (www.dolatema.com, November 2).

Supreme National Security Council Chairman Sa'id Jalili also had praise for Soleimani. Speaking at a ceremony held last weekend to mark the anniversary of the 1979 takeover of the United States embassy in Tehran, Jalili said that even if the Americans mobilize all their resources against Iran, it will take only one man like Soleimani to force them into submission. "The global arrogance" can't make a place for itself in the world by targeting the likes of Soleimani, Jalili said (Fars, November 4).

Speaking about reports on the United States' alleged plan to assassinate Soleimani, Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said that while U.S. leaders accuse Iran of supporting terrorism based on false evidence, they themselves call for the assassination of the Qods Force commander. He expressed his support for the Qods Force, saying that it is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, and "a thorn in the eyes of the Zionist occupiers" (Fars, November 6).

The conservative press also rallied to show support for the Qods Force and Soleimani. In an article titled "Who is Hajj Qasem Soleimani?" the daily Javan praised the commander of the Qods Force, describing him as a person whose merits go beyond his capabilities as commander. The article said that, contrary to claims made by Western media, Soleimani is not a mysterious figure at all and is known in Iran mostly for his long-standing service of the revolution. Iranians have no need of the Hollywood stories told by Americans about Soleimani and his activities beyond Iran's borders. That is only one side of the coin, whose other side is his many-year activity inside Iran as a soldier in service of the regime. He fought on the front line in the beginning of the war against Iraq, and then served as commander in Iran's southeastern border regions during what was considered the most peaceful period in Sistan-Baluchistan Province.

Soleimani has been the "nightmare" of the West since becoming commander of the Qods force in 2000. For Iranians, however, he is a source of pride, a person known for his unassuming, shy appearance and modest, friendly character. If it wasn't for his military uniform, Javan said, no one would think him a military commander (Javan, November 5).

The daily Keyhan dedicated its editorial, titled "Why are they afraid of the Qods Force?", to the force and its commander. The article said that America's recently-made-public

preoccupation with the Qods Force and its commander Qasem Soleimani is nothing new, and that it's been a decade that the Americans are afraid of the Qods Force, which has become a key element underpinning Iran's regional strength. Few understand the major role played by the Qods Force and Soleimani in the defeat of the American "war machine" in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The United States' problem with the Qods Force is a small example of its problem with Iran. The Americans are unable to understand what the Qods Force is, how it operates, and what its goals are. They do not realize that the Qods Force is much more than just an operative force. Its power lies in the philosophy it stands for, which transcends borders and reflects an eternal struggle against the values of Western civilization.

The fear of the Qods Force is the fear of the uncompromising powers of revolutionist Islam. The secret of resistance lies not in Hezbollah and Hamas' missiles but rather the thought on which their activity is based. The fear of the Qods Force reflects a recognition of the widespread hatred against Israel in the region. Throughout the years in which the Americans were convinced that their allies in Egypt, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia were keeping the region under American control and making it safe for Israel, the Qods Force operated to incite and spread the fire of struggle against Zionism in the hearts of the believers—a struggle that has become the main force driving revolutionist Islam in the region. The fear of the Qods Force is the fear of the expansion of Iran's revolutionist model. The Americans know that their greatest problem is how to deal with the return of political Islam to the region, which implies the spread of the Iranian model there. Soleimani gave no weapons to the warriors in the region, because he didn't need to. He taught them how to turn thought into a tool that can be used to strike against the global arrogance.

The fear of the Qods Force is also the fear of borders becoming irrelevant. The Qods Force has taught the region's believers that instead of staying in their homes they have to go out and fight in the homes of the enemy. The fear of the Qods Force is the fear of the bravest, greatest Iranians who anonymously accept dangerous missions to help the oppressed Muslims spread Islam (Keyhan, November 5).

The daily Qods discussed the United States' claims against Soleimani in an editorial titled "Soleimani-phobia on the agenda of Western mainstream media". The article said that one cannot ignore the significant increase in the number of reports about the Qods Force in Western media and the efforts to present a false, distorted picture of Qasem Soleimani.

The daily warned about the possibility that such reports are evidence of a secret plan by Western military men and politicians to act against Iran. Even if the United States or Israel do not intend to launch a military offensive against Iran in the short run, the numerous reports about the Qods Force and its commander could indicate a long-term plan aimed to pull the West out of its economic crisis and divert public opinion from internal challenges (Qods, November 6).

Iranian web surfers also showed support for Soleimani in recent days. Bloggers and users of the social networking websites Facebook and Google+ expressed their support for Soleimani, posting his photographs under the title “We are all Qasem Soleimani”.

This past year Soleimani has gained increasing exposure on Iran’s media, and has even been mentioned as a potential candidate to someday replace Mohammad Ali Ja’fari, the current Revolutionary Guards commander.



“We are all Qasem Soleimani”, from the blog <http://bachehayeghalem.ir/dailyfa/we-are-all-qassem-suleimani>

When the president turns the heat on: Ahmadinejad lashes out against opponents at a support rally

In a speech given last Thursday (November 3) at a closed-door meeting with his supporters, President Ahmadinejad lashed out against his political opponents. Unofficial reports from the meeting, held without journalists, have been published on several news websites in recent days, and some have been denied by the president’s office. Dolat-e Ma, a website affiliated with the president’s supporters, released an in-depth report about the president’s remarks and was blocked by the authorities earlier this week.

Ahmadinejad began by saying that, in his capacity as president, he is unable to express most of his opinions because national interests require him to keep his thoughts to himself. He categorically denied his political opponents’ claims that he does not obey the instructions of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Ahmadinejad said that, when he was approached by a critic who claimed he did not obey the Supreme Leader’s instructions, he asked him for just one

example where he had acted contrary to one of Khamenei's religious rulings. As an example, his opponent mentioned a decree issued by the president in April 2006 to allow women into soccer stadiums. Ahmadinejad replied that he brought up the issue to the Supreme Leader, who told him that in the past he had prevented presidents from allowing women into stadiums to keep the issue from being exploited for political needs, but that he did allow Ahmadinejad to issue such a decree.

The president strongly condemned those who claim that the government acts contrary to the Supreme Leader's position, saying that they are corrupt. Many of those who declare their support for the Supreme Leader do so after returning from a several-month vacation with pockets full of money. The support of these people does not serve Khamenei's interests, the president said. He then went on to implicitly criticize elements in the Supreme Leader's office who allegedly leak details about his private meetings with Khamenei to his political opponents.

The president discussed claims made by his opponents in the conservative camp that he and his allies belong to a "deviant faction". He said that his rivals have no right to contend that they are the exclusive representatives of the right Islam, adding that if all those opposed to his rivals' opinion are "deviants", then he is willing to admit that he is a deviant as well. Ahmadinejad also responded to claims that he belongs to the Hojjatiyeh school of thought (a movement established in the early 1950s, Hojjatiyeh believes in the coming return of the Vanished Imam, who will supposedly reappear at a time when chaos and injustice prevail, and claims that a true Islamic government can only be established after his return). He wondered how he can be accused of belonging both to Hojjatiyeh and the Baha'i faith, when the two are mutually contradictory (Hojjatiyeh has supported the persecution of Baha'is since its inception).

He accused his opponents of working against the government by making false allegations. The government enjoys great popularity with the people, Ahmadinejad said, but its opponents are trying to destroy it even at the cost of compromising the international status of the regime. He strongly rejected the claims that his allies are involved in corruption, including the recently-exposed banking embezzlement. He said that when his deputy Mohammad-Reza Rahimi was accused of being involved in corruption by his political opponents, he met with the Supreme Leader and told him that even if some of the allegations against Rahimi prove to be true, he would personally make a television appearance, apologize to the public, and be willing to resign. Not even one allegation against Rahimi has been proven, however, and the same is true for the other allegations made against his allies.

The president said that he gave the judiciary a list of individuals involved in corruption, but that the judiciary refused to deal with the matter claiming that those were politically-motivated accusations. He noted that he told judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani that there were people involved in economic corruption working in the judiciary itself, and even made an implied reference to the involvement of Larijani's brother, Mohammad-Javad Larijani, in the illegal takeover of land in the Tehran region.



President Ahmadinejad and judiciary chief Sadeq Larijani

Ahmadinejad also discussed the circumstances that led to his participation in the 2005 elections, saying that when he had been offered to run for president, he told those who brought up the initiative that if a simple person like himself became president, it would be another revolution in Iran that would put an end to aristocracy and nepotism. He added that after being elected president in the 2005 elections, he had to take into account his opponents' demands and appoint many people who were not his allies as cabinet ministers, including former Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

When asked about Mottaki's dismissal in December 2010, Ahmadinejad replied that he had never had an interest in appointing him as cabinet minister. After deciding to remove Mottaki from office, Ahmadinejad had trouble informing the foreign minister of his decision as Mottaki was constantly busy with trips to foreign countries and even missed a number of government sessions. On the eve of Mottaki's trip to Senegal, Ahmadinejad told him he had decided to remove him from his post of foreign minister and appoint him the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization. Mottaki insisted to travel abroad even though the president made it clear that he was no longer minister as far as he was concerned. Ahmadinejad claimed that he instructed to release the report on the minister's removal from office on the day of Mottaki's scheduled return from Senegal; however, Mottaki independently decided to extend the visit, which is why the announcement on his removal was released when he was still abroad.

In his speech, Ahmadinejad also discussed international developments, saying Iran is nearing the final confrontation with the West, which may be political and not necessarily military. He warned that, unless Iran remains vigilant, it can suffer a devastating blow from which it will be unable to recover for 500 years (www.dolatema.com, November 3; www.jadnews.ir, November 6).

In light of the bitter political power struggle in the conservative camp, the release of the president's remarks aroused considerable interest in Iran's political system and media. Asr-e Iran, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative faction, called on the judiciary to speed up its investigation of the president's allies allegedly involved in corruption (Asr-e Iran, November 6). Former Majles member Emad Afrough, considered one of the president's strongest critics in the conservative camp, also called on the judiciary to continue investigating the involvement of top government officials in corruption. In an article published on the Farda website, Afrough said that the president maintains the same insolent, quarrelsome approach he has been known for since the presidential election campaign, makes unfounded accusations against his opponents, and hinders the judiciary's fight against corruption by his remarks (Farda, November 7).

Former Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki commented on Ahmadinejad's remarks by saying it is inappropriate for the president to make 24 false claims in a 20-line announcement. He said he would provide his own version of his dismissal after the present government completes its term (Aftab News, November 8).

Public uproar continues over “inappropriate hug” of two soccer players

The behavior of two Iranian soccer players who “inappropriately” hugged while celebrating a goal at a league match is still causing a stir in Iran. Mohammad Nosrati and Sheys Rezaei, of Persepolis, were suspended from the team last week and fined tens of thousands of dollars each after Nosrati was seen squeezing the backside of teammate Rezaei during a goal celebration at a local league match.



A top official in the Prosecutor General's Office in Gilan Province announced this week that, in addition to the disciplinary measures already taken against them by the Persepolis management, the two players will soon be brought to trial on charges of violating public morality (Mehr, November 6).

This week Sheys Rezaei released an open letter publicly apologizing for his behavior to the Iranian people, the leaders of the Persepolis club, the Soccer Association, the Morality Committee, the Discipline Committee, the media, and his fellow soccer players. In the apology letter, Rezaei noted that he had behaved the way he had due to inattentiveness, and that he had meant no harm or disrespect for the values of Iranian society or public morality. He stated that he is willing to accept any decision made with regard to the incident and any punishment for his behavior (Fars, November 5).

The religious establishment was also called upon to address the incident this week. Top cleric Ayatollah Nasser Makarem-Shirazi, asked by Persepolis officials to provide a religious legal perspective on the issue, ruled this week that the behavior of the two soccer players was ugly and violated public morality, and therefore deserved the strong reaction from the team's managers. The cleric also ruled that the media should avoid publishing and distributing images that document the two players' behavior, as it goes against Islamic religious law. He stressed that athletes must make sure they behave morally and avoid ugly, undignified acts even in case of a victory or defeat. He added that any athlete behaving in an undignified manner should not be allowed to step out onto the field so that the atmosphere in the stadium remains Islamic and human (Fars, November 7).

Meanwhile, this week the Farda website criticized the coverage of the incident by the Western media. The website claimed that the media took advantage of Rezaei and Nosrati's "unsportsmanlike conduct" to compromise Iran and the image of Iranian soccer players, while showing complete disregard for similar behavior by Western soccer players. The website said that the Western media, which extensively covered the present incident, completely ignored the fact that Iranian soccer player Amin Motevaselzadeh won the World Fair Play Award in 2010 (Farda, November 7).

Pictures of the week: processions marking the anniversary of U.S. embassy takeover in Tehran (November 4, 1979)



Photo : Hamed Jafarnejad FARS NEWS AGENCY



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Photo : Hassan Mousavi FARS NEWS AGENCY



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