



**Intelligence and Terrorism  
Information Center**

**Spotlight on Iran**

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## **Speech of revolution leader's grandson Hassan Khomeini interrupted by regime supporters on Khomeini's death anniversary**

In an unprecedented behavior, regime-supporting demonstrators prevented Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of the Islamic revolution founder, from finishing his speech at a ceremony marking the 21st death anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini held last Friday (June 4) at the late leader's mausoleum south of Tehran.

The speech made by Khomeini, affiliated with the reformist camp, was interrupted by demonstrators who chanted slogans against him and the reformist opposition. "Death to those who oppose the rule of the religious jurisprudent", "Death to Mousavi", and "The grandson of Ruhollah [Khomeini] is Hassan Nasrallah" were only some of those slogans.

Khomeini was unable to continue his speech due to the interruptions. He made several attempts to calm the public, asked the demonstrators to let him continue speaking, and even called on them to pray for the memory of Ayatollah Khomeini in an attempt to defuse the situation. Since the chanting did not stop, Khomeini was forced to cut his speech short. It was only after Khomeini finished his shortened speech and the Supreme Leader came on stage to deliver his sermon that the demonstrators calmed down and stopped chanting (various news agencies, June 4).

The incident stirred an outcry in Iran and was widely covered by the local media. Senior cleric Ayatollah Asadollah Bayat Zanjani, affiliated with the reformist camp, expressed regret about the incident. In a letter sent to Hassan Khomeini, Zanjani said that the incident had been orchestrated by misguided extremists as an act of vengeance against the imam (Khomeini) (Rah-e Sabz, June 5). Reformist opposition leader Mir-Hossein Mousavi also strongly criticized the demonstrators who interrupted Khomeini's speech, claiming that the disturbance caused by the small group was planned in advance (Rah-e Sabz, June 5).

The interruption of Khomeini's speech was also criticized by Asr-e Iran, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative camp. An editorial released by the website said that even if his views do not coincide with those expressed by some individuals and political factions, those disagreements do not warrant attacking Khomeini, who is the keeper of his grandfather's mausoleum, let alone on the death anniversary of the revolution leader. The incident is proof that some individuals are even willing to violate the sanctity of Khomeini's resting place for their political needs. If those individuals have a problem with Hassan Khomeini, the website says, they have enough media and political means available to them to settle the score anywhere but in the revolution leader's tomb. If they were, in fact, Ayatollah

Khomeini's followers, they would not have stirred up such a riot or dishonor the revolution leader and the holy site by "political games" (Asr-e Iran, June 4).



Government-supporting media, on the other hand, justified the calls against the grandson of the founder of the Islamic republic. Conservative news agency Fars claimed that the public outcry against him was triggered by his close relations with the leaders of the reformist opposition and by his straying from the path and legacy of his grandfather. Following the riots which broke out after the presidential elections, not only did he not speak against those responsible for the riots, who violated the revolution founder's legacy by acting against the regime and collaborating with Iran's enemies, but he even came to their defense and cooperated with them (Fars, June 4).

As already mentioned, Hassan Khomeini is affiliated with the reformist opposition, and did not even attend President Ahmadinejad's swearing-in ceremony a year ago. Last February, Khomeini sparked controversy when he accused Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) of falsely representing his grandfather in a documentary about Ayatollah Khomeini's life shown on Iranian TV on the 31st anniversary of the Islamic revolution. The show featured fragments from a speech made by Khomeini in 1981, in which he instructed the security forces to suppress political processions that did not have the Interior Ministry's approval. After the show was aired, Khomeini sent a strong-worded letter to the chief of Iran Broadcasting, claiming that the documentary ignored the unique conditions prevailing in Iran at the time of his grandfather's speech, and that it was therefore a historical misrepresentation of his character. His letter prompted strong reactions by government supporters. Hossein Shariatmadari, the editor-in-chief of the daily Keyhan, wondered whether Khomeini did not share his grandfather's sentiments on the enemies of Islam and the revolution, expressing regret about his relations with the reformist opposition.

### **Power struggles between government and Majles reach new heights**

The political power struggles between President Ahmadinejad and the Majles have reached new heights this week when vicious accusations were exchanged between the president and Majles Speaker Ali Larijani.

The current conflict began about two weeks ago, after a meeting with the Article 90 Committee (the Majles Inquiry and Review Committee) in which the president strongly criticized the Majles legislation procedure and claimed that the current Majles had passed over 130 laws which contradict the constitution and Islamic religious law. In response to claims brought up by committee members about the government's non-enforcement of laws passed by the Majles, the president said that many laws passed by the Majles created severe economic and social problems. The president also placed blame on the Expediency Discernment Council, which has the power to decide on differences of opinion which occasionally arise between the Majles and the Guardian Council, claiming that the Expediency Discernment Council had passed laws which contradicted the constitution and Islamic religious law (Fars, June 30). It should be noted that the Expediency Discernment Council is headed by Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, one of President Ahmadinejad's outstanding political opponents.

Majles Speaker Ali Larijani responded to the president's claims this week by threatening to expose to the Majles and to the public cases in which the government had acted illegally. Early during a Majles session held this week, Larijani strongly rejected the president's claim on transferring over 130 laws to the Expediency Discernment Council to pass because they contradicted Islamic religious law or the constitution, saying that the Guardian Council had reservations about only 10 to 15 draft laws passed by the Majles, and that most of them pertained to agreements signed between the government and foreign countries. The Majles speaker stressed that the Majles operates in accordance with the constitution and with the strategy set forth by the Supreme Leader. He emphasized the importance of the principle of separation of powers and claimed that the government must not become involved in the legislation process or express its opinion on laws passed by the Majles (Mehr; Fararu, June 6).



Following Larijani's statements, the president sent a letter to Guardian Council chairman Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, complaining about the performance of the Majles and reiterating his claim that many laws passed by the Majles go against the constitution. The president addressed several amendments introduced by Majles members during legislation procedures to laws the government sought to pass in the spheres of housing, education, and finance, claiming that those amendments were cause for severe economic and social problems, contradicted the constitution, and were tantamount to interfering in the government's authorities. He accused the Majles of creating laws that cannot be implemented and of interfering in government affairs making it very difficult for it to put its plans into practice (Farda, June 7).

This past year, disagreements have heated up between the Majles and the government on several important issues. Last March, a serious dispute arose between the two authorities on the budget proposal submitted by the government to the approval of the Majles. In an argument that broke out between the president and the Majles speaker on that issue, the president claimed that the modifications introduced by the Majles to the Budget Law contradicted the constitution, making it impossible for the government to put it to practice. Strong disagreement also emerged over the subsidy policy reform when Majles members opposed the original draft law submitted by the government on that issue. Only recently did the government and the Majles reach a compromise allowing them to start implementing the program.

On the backdrop of the disagreements between the Majles and the government, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called this week on Majles members to cooperate with the government. In a meeting he held with the Majles speaker and other Majles members, the leader said that the government and the Majles must closely cooperate with each other. The responsibilities of the two bodies and the borders between them are set forth in the constitution, Khamenei said, even though some of those borders are vague and not sufficiently defined. He said that the government must obey the laws of the Majles, but that the Majles should make it easier for the government to work, to not impede its activities, and avoid making changes to government draft laws in such a way as to change them completely (Fars, June 8).

## **Iran TV presents: Iranian nuclear scientist who “disappeared” in Saudi Arabia talks about his abduction by American and Saudi intelligence services**

This week, Iranian TV has aired a video of questionable authenticity allegedly showing Shahram Amiri, an Iranian nuclear scientist from Malek Ashtar University, who disappeared in June 2009 during a pilgrimage to the holy sites in Saudi Arabia and, according to claims made by Iran, was abducted by the American intelligence services.



The four minute long video shows Amiri describing how he was abducted in a joint operation carried out by American and Saudi intelligence services during a visit to the Saudi city of Madina last summer. Amiri said that he was in the city of Tucson, AZ, and that the video was recorded on April 5 in an Arizonian city. According to Amiri, after his abduction he was flown to the US where he was tortured for several months by the American intelligence services. He added that in recent months, he had been under heavy pressure to admit to being a senior official in Iran's nuclear program, and to having been seized with secret documents and a laptop containing sensitive information on the nuclear program. That confession, he said, was meant to allow the US to exert political pressure on the Iranian government regarding its nuclear program. At the end of the video, Amiri addressed the international community asking to work towards his release. Following the release of the video, the conservative news agency Fars claimed it was proof that American claims on the Iranian nuclear program are fabricated and worthless (Fars, June 8).

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast addressed the affair as well, saying that the video confirms Iran's claims on the abduction of Amiri and that it was taking legal action on that issue. Mehmanparast ruled out the possibility of a trade in which the nuclear scientist would be exchanged for the release of three Americans detained in Iran since July 2009 on charges of espionage (IRNA, June 8).

Shortly after the video was shown on Iranian TV, another video was uploaded on YouTube showing a man presenting himself as Shahram Amiri and claiming that he was in the US of his own free will and that he was perfectly safe. According to him, he never acted against his homeland and he has nothing to do with political issues or military research. He noted that he went to the US to continue his studies and said he hoped to be reunited with his family after graduation. The source and credibility of that video are also unclear.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tMY-oraOfA>

### **Growing concern over euro decline**

This week, Mahmoud Bahmani, the governor of the Central Bank of Iran, denied a report released last week on Press TV, an English-language Iranian television network, according to which Iran intends to sell 45 billion euros from its foreign currency reserves for dollars and gold in view of the continuing devaluation of the European currency. Bahmani noted that the Central Bank is following developments on the foreign currency exchange market and makes decisions on necessary measures, but that the information on selling 45 billion euros in exchange for dollars is not true (various news agencies, June 6).

About one year ago, President Ahmadinejad ordered to convert some of Iran's foreign currency reserves from dollars to euros, citing the need for complete separation from the US banking system in view of the American stance on Iran.

Meanwhile, this week Iranian media has reported the continuing devaluation of the euro, threatening to compromise even further Iran's foreign currency reserves. A commentary published on Khabar On-Line, a news website affiliated with the government's critics in the conservative camp, claimed that last year, economists had expressed reservations about the president's decision to convert the foreign currency reserves from dollars to euros. Those experts estimated that over-reliance on the European currency may jeopardize the national foreign currency reserves. In light of the financial crisis in Europe, their prediction has come true even sooner than predicted. The website estimated the Iranian foreign currency reserves at the end of the past Persian year (March 2010) at 96.3 billion dollars, of them 38 billion euros. Khabar On-Line reported that the 18-percent devaluation of the euro in the past three months resulted in a drop of about 5 billion dollars in Iran's foreign currency reserves (Khabar On-Line, June 6).

The conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami also warned about the continuing plunge of the euro, but suggested that the Central Bank avoid making rash decisions on changing the composition of the foreign currency reserves. The decision to convert from dollars to euro, the daily claimed, was based on political considerations meant to hit the US, instead of professional economic considerations. Under the current conditions, the right thing to do is to watch market conditions, avoid making hasty decisions, and to diversify reserves even beyond dollars and euros. The Central Bank must learn from past experience, avoid political and symbolic measures, and manage the currency reserves in a way that will safeguard Iran's national interests. The daily reported that the euro continued to drop early this week and was trading at 1,267 tomans, a drop from the 1,353 tomans exchange rate of about three months ago. In contrast, the dollar gained significantly on the Iranian currency, trading at 1,055 tomans compared to about 1,000 tomans early in the current Persian year (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, June 7).

### **Debate on economic figures continues: have foreign investments in Iran increased or decreased?**

This week, ILNA news agency reported a sharp decrease in foreign investments in Iran in 2002-2008. According to the report released by the agency, affiliated with the reformist camp, foreign investments decreased 2.3 times during that time: from 3.5 billion dollars in 2002 to less than 1.5 billion dollars in 2008. Experts say the sharp drop results both from the global economic crisis and the effects of the policy of economic sanctions on Iran. The news agency reported that, unlike in Iran, foreign investments rose sharply in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Kazakhstan, considered to be Iran's economic competitors. According to the report, foreign investments in Saudi Arabia increased from 450 million dollars in 2002 to over

38 billion dollars in 2008; in Turkey, which in recent years has taken measures to make it easier for foreign investors to enter, foreign investments increased from one billion dollars in 2002 to over 18 billion dollars in 2008; foreign investments in Egypt increased from less than one billion dollars in 2002 to 9.5 billion dollars in 2008; and in Pakistan foreign investments increased from less than one billion dollars in 2002 to nearly 5.5 billion dollars in 2008 (ILNA, June 6).

The ILNA report on the sharp decrease in foreign investments in Iran was published days after official news agency IRNA reported a sharp increase in foreign investments in Iran in 2007-2009. Citing figures released by the Foreign Investments Organization in the Ministry of Economy, the agency reported that foreign investments in Iran increased from 5.1 billion dollars in 2000-2004 to over 30 billion dollars in 2005-2009. IRNA claimed that the growth was particularly evident in light of World Bank data indicating a sharp decrease in foreign investments in other developing countries in 2007-2009 caused by the global economic crisis (IRNA, June 1).



This is not the first time that a debate arises over Iranian economic figures. In May, Ahmad Tavakoli, the chairman of the Majles Research Center, reported that Iran's economic growth rate dropped to 2.3 percent in 2008-2009. However, President Ahmadinejad reported shortly prior to that that the economic growth had reached 6.9 percent during that time. Debate arose over unemployment figures as well. While the minister of labor and social affairs recently reported that Iran's unemployment rate had reached 11.3 percent last year, several media and economic experts estimated that the actual unemployment rate was at least two times higher than the official figures, and accused the government of deliberately misrepresenting the unemployment figures.

### **Pictures of the week: child labor in glass factory**

Mehr news agency released this week photographs of children working in a glass factory. According to UNICEF estimates, there are between 400 thousand to one million child laborers in Iran. Many of them are refugees from Afghanistan who immigrated to Iran as a result of

the civil war in that country. Many children found themselves on the streets after running away from their homes due to economic or social hardships or abuse. Others were sent by their parents to work on the streets to help their families that suffer from severe economic distress. According to reports published in recent years in Iranian press, over 100 street children die every day in Iran. Also reported were many cases in which children were used for criminal activities, such as drug or alcohol trade, as well as cases in which those children were raped or sexually abused.

In recent years, authorities stepped up measures to deal with the phenomenon of street children. As part of the operation to increase social security, efforts were made to collect many children from the streets and move them to special shelters established for that purpose. There are also NGOs taking part in the initiative.

