Iran Election Aftermath

While the presidency is the highest office filled by a direct popular vote, Iran's president does not make foreign policy or command the nation's military. The highest ranking political and religious authority in the nation is the supreme leader, currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. (Iran's Supreme Leader is elected by the nation's Assembly of Experts, a deliberative body of 86 Mujtahids, or Islamic scholars.)

The *New York Times* reported that Ayatollah Khamenei was quoted in a message broadcast every 15 minutes on the state radio station admonishing Moussavi to pursue his objections to the election result calmly and legally. The broadcast reported that at a meeting held on the night of June 14, Khamenei told Moussavi: "Naturally, in this election, complaints should be followed through legal channels."

The radio also said Khamenei had instructed the nation's Guardian Council of the Constitution (which serves as Iran's supreme court — though it considers Islamic law as well as civil law in rendering decisions) to examine opposition complaints of widespread electoral irregularities.

Khamenei's plea for calm was in apparent response to unrest resulting from disputes concerning the election's outcome. Reuters news reported that stick-wielding supporters of Ahmadinejad had clashed with followers of Moussavi. And Iran's semi-official Fars news agency quoted Morteza Tamadon, the governor general of Tehran, who said on June 15 that a rally planned by Moussavi's supporters had been declared illegal because the Interior Ministry had denied permission to hold it. Other news reports said Moussavi had postponed the rally and urged his followers to demonstrate legally and peacefully.

Reuters also quoted former president Mohammad Khatami — a Mousavi backer — who criticized Iranian authorities on June 15 for denying permission for the rally in Tehran. "I was determined to take part in today's peaceful demonstration and speak to you and express my practical protest to the unkindness done to the people and the revolution," Khatami said in a faxed statement. However, Khatami continued, that despite the ban on a rally "you and we will nevertheless continue our movement in this course and would expect that the clear demands of Mr. Mousavi, which is the demand of all of us, will be heeded."

Mousavi has appealed to the nation's Guardian Council to throw out the results of the election.

BBC News reported that dozens of students were arrested during a protest at Tehran University on the night of June 14. Zahra Rahnavard, the wife of opposition candidate Mousavi, appeared at a rally held at the university the next morning, but Reuters news quoted one of her aides as saying that she had been prevented from speaking.

News sources named Mohammad Reza Khatami, brother of former President Mohammad Khatami; Behzad Nabavi, a former deputy parliament speaker; Mohsen Mirdamadi, who headed parliament's foreign policy commission under Khatami; and Khatami's government spokesman, Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, as having been detained by authorities. However, it appeared that at least some of the detentions were of short durations, as the Associated Press reported that a number of people were released on June 14 and that Mohammad Reza Khatami is mentioned as being among them.

Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based group that campaigns for freedom of the press, named a number of leading journalists who had been arrested, including Reza Alijani, Hoda Sabaer, Ahamad Zeydabadi, and Taghi Rahmani.

Reports from the BBC quoting various foreign media indicate that there is substance to allegations that the government is attempting to suppress the opposition's freedom to express itself. Among these are:

- Reporters Without Borders said the editor of the news website Nooroz, Said Shariti, has been arrested and 10 or so pro-opposition websites have been censored and that the Farsi-language satellite broadcasts of Voice of America were blocked over the weekend.
- YouTube and Facebook are hard to access and pro-reform sites such as Khordadeno, AftabNews and Ghalamesabz have at times been completely inaccessible.
- The Saudi-funded Arabic TV station al-Arabiya said its offices in Iran were shut down for "unknown reasons" for one week.
- Access to the BBC's Persian-language satellite TV channel and the BBC's news website was curbed.
- The German television network ZDF said on June 14 that its reporter in Iran and other reporters were being "prevented from doing their jobs in a massive form." The network complained that it was unable to show a broadcast feed from the network's correspondent depicting protests.

A June 15 CNN report assessed the reaction of international leaders to the Iranian election and its aftermath. The report quoted Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's June 13 statement: "We are monitoring the situation as it unfolds in Iran but we, like the rest of the world, are waiting and watching to see what the Iranian people decide. The United States has refrained from commenting on the election in Iran. We obviously hope that the outcome reflects the genuine will and desire of the Iranian people."

CNN also quoted a June 13 statement from the EU Presidency that said it was "concerned about alleged irregularities during the election process and post-electional violence that broke out immediately after the release of the official election results on 13 June 2009."

"The Presidency hopes that outcome of the Presidential elections will bring the opportunity to resume the dialogue on nuclear issue and clear up Iranian position in this regard. The Presidency expects the new Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will take its responsibility towards international community and respect its international obligations."

Meanwhile, speaking at an EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg on June 15, U.K. Foreign Minister David Miliband called on Iran to respond to a U.S.-backed offer of civilian nuclear technology, trade agreements, and security guarantees in return for cooperation in stopping the production of nuclear fuel.

Miliband said the results of the disputed Iranian election could further stall progress. "Our serious concern was about the implications of recent events for the engagement the international community

seeks from the government of Iran," Bloomberg News quoted the British official as saying.

Miliband continued: "We view with considerable concern the failure of Iran to come back in response to the offer that came from the EU three-plus-three [the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: U.S., Russia, China, U.K. and France, as well as Germany]."

Iran has almost continuously been a cause of grave concern for Western nations since the pro-Western Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was forced from power in 1979 — mainly due to a vicious campaign waged by U.S. and British foreign policymakers. After the Shah's removal, Iran came under the control of a radical, anti-Western Islamic regime led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. (Not to be confused with Ali Khamenei, the present Supreme Leader of Iran.) Within nine months, fanatics loyal to the new regime bit the U.S. hand that had fed them and took 52 hostages from the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The infamous Iran Hostage Crisis would last for 444 days and the fallout from it would serve to deny President Jimmy Carter reelection.

As journalist James Perloff wrote in his article, "Iran and the Shah: What Really Happened": "It was the CFR [Council on Foreign Relations] clique — the same establishment entrenched in the Bush and Obama administrations — that ousted the Shah, resulting in today's Iran."

It makes little difference which of Iran's political factions controls the presidency, which is a weak office with very limited power. The radical Islamic regime created by our own foreign policy establishment will continue to rule Iran, as yet another pretext to justify U.S. interventionism abroad — a policy our nation's earliest leaders warned vehemently against.

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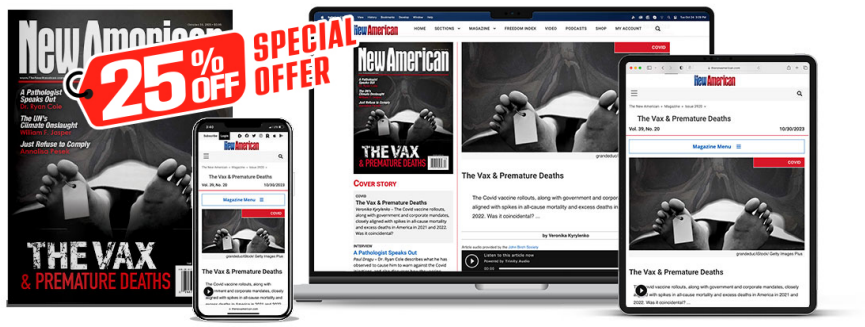

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