

IRANIAN DOMESTIC MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

9-15 MAY 2011

STACY TOPOUZOVA

14 MAY 2011

STATE-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCES

(Source: Tabnak news website, in Persian 1416 GMT, 14 May 2011)

- Chairman of the Expediency Council Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani thanked the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamene'i for "creating harmony" between President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad and parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and "the dispute concerning the merging of ministries", Tabnak news agency reported on 14 May.
- Moreover, Rafsanjani "expressed the hope that such disputes do not take place again", Tabnak said, adding that Rafsanjani made the remarks at the beginning of today's session of the Expediency Council.

(Source: Fars News Agency website, Tehran, in Persian 0825 GMT, 14 May 2011)

- "President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad expressed gratitude to Masud Mikazemi, Sadeq Mahsuli and Ali Akbar Mehrabian for their services as ministers of oil, welfare, and mines and industries and thereby he declared the end of their responsibilities", Fars reported on 14 May.
- The report added that no caretaker has been named for any of the afore-mentioned ministries.
- There are suspicions that these ministers have presumably been removed to pave the way for the merging of a number of ministries.

PRIVATELY-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCE

(Source: The Green Voice of Freedom website, en.irangreenvoice.com, in English 14 May 2011)

- In a letter to a committee charged with protecting citizen rights and freedoms, 26 political prisoners from different prisons in the country described some of the horrors faced by inmates, calling for an investigation into the prevailing human rights violations perpetrated by the Revolutionary Guard and Iran's Intelligence Ministry.
- According to opposition website Kalemeh, the list of signatories to the letter include some of Iran's most prominent dissident figures such as former senior diplomat Mohsen Aminzadeh, reformist party leader Mohsen Mirdamadi, Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, Behzad Nabavi, Feyzollah Arabsorkhi and journalist Keyvan Samimi.
- In a letter to the chairman of the "Central Board for the Sound Implementation of the Law regarding the Respect for Contingent Freedoms and Protecting Citizen Rights," political inmates held in the notorious and Raja'ishahr prisons as well as detention centers in Khuzestan province highlighted some of the worst human rights abuses perpetrated against them by the Revolutionary Guards and Iran's Intelligence.
- "As signatories to this letter of complaint, we have been tortured. One of the most common tortures has been our solitary confinement in very small cells. A measure that's considered by the country's most senior officials as torture, and [even] prison guards concur that weeks of solitary confinement cause accused severe physical and mental disorders for the accused [inmates]."
- The inmates stress the human rights violations mentioned in their letter represent a "portion" of the illegal conduct of Iranian authorities. "What's been cited here does not reveal the depth of the tragic actions carried out against those accused and tried following the 2009 presidential election," they added.
- "Contrary to Article 1 of the citizen rights law the arrests that followed the 2009 presidential election were carried out without clear and transparent judicial orders, and mass arrests took place

with a single warrant and as part of one whole directive, lacking the signature [of an official] or the name of the accused, or at times [the arrest warrants] containing the names of tens of individuals."

- The imprisoned activists also say that "in some cases," their arrest warrants were issued before the election and the subsequent protests that erupted and were based on the opinions and political leanings of certain members of the IRGC and the intelligence apparatus, which reflected their desire to settle political scores with rivals in the reformist camp, more than anything else. "Unfortunately, most of the arrests were accompanied with violence, insults, and humiliation, while some of the accused were severely beaten up while being detained," the letter added.
- The reformists in captivity also criticized their conviction, which were based on suspicion, rather than any solid evidence or in accordance with any legal procedure. "In many cases, the indictment contained non-legal and ambiguous terms and the principle that the accused is innocent [unless proven guilty] was violated."
- The prisoners argued "the sentences handed down were at the same level as that of political articles by segments of the press against political rivals," while describing the "court, judge and the indictment as tools at the hands of military, intelligence and security agents for imprisoning political activists and maintaining the status quo."
- "Almost all of the signatories of the letter" maintain they were deprived of legal representation and access to law books, pen and paper, despite the fact that several laws explicitly state the right of detainees to acquire the attorneys of their choosing. "The defendants' access to a lawyer was typically just minutes before the court hearing, and usually in the presence of the judge or a third person chosen by the interrogators and sometimes the trials took place without the presence of an attorney in the courtroom. In some instances, interrogators forced the defendants to deprive themselves of the right to choose a solicitor. In certain cases, the defendants were told by the office of the court administration that having a lawyer would cause nothing but trouble and would increase their sentences and that it would be better for them to avoid having a lawyer."
- "Without exception, all of the signatories to this letter have been met with the immoral and un-Islamic treatment by prison guards," write the inmates. "Psychological and physical torture, disgraceful verbal insults towards us, our families and our loved ones, as well as falsely and repeatedly accusing us, during most interrogations, of having illegitimate relations."
- "Apparently, using blindfolds served different purposes such as concealing the identity of interrogators, the agents, as well as humiliating and infuriating the defendants. What's surprising is that this illegal procedure is common even in the periphery of the courtroom!"
- The letter added, "Concomitant with almost all the arrests and interrogations were the insults and demeaning ways the interrogators used verbal insults against us, our families, dear ones and those we respect, including the leaders of the opposition movement Mirhoseyn Musavi and Mehdi Karrubi, while using the most profane and hideous terms on a regular basis to belittle and weaken the morale and feelings of the defendants."
- The Green Movement activists maintain, "The concealment of the interrogator's identity provides him with the possibility to use any physical and verbal ferocity on the defendant with the assurance that his identity will remain anonymous."
- In addition, most of the interrogators charged with handling the defendants' cases, have been "young, inexperienced and radical," the prisoners write, while describing their "immoral, inhumane and un-Islamic" treatment as "systematic" and "common practice" within prison walls.
- The letter, which has also been forwarded to the head of the Iranian parliament's Article 90 Commission, accuses the interrogators of delving into private lives of prisoners and gathering information on the most intimate details of their daily lives in an attempt to intimidate inmates and to use the information as a bargaining chip in forcing them to make false confessions.

- Interrogators are also accused of "distorting" the writings of defendants and at times forcing them to sign blank sheets, later to be filled in by interrogators in the presence of judiciary and security officials who would later orchestrate the highly politicized post-election show-trials.
- The "unlimited" power and authority of the Intelligence Ministry and the IRGC over the Iranian judiciary, is also among the points raised by the political prisoners who have signed the letter of complaint. The defendants accuse the two bodies of having an important role in organizing the actual indictment text.
- In the end, the prisoners call for a fact-finding mission to be set up in order to investigate the widespread violations of the rights of those arrested following the 2009 presidential election and to make the outcome of such an investigation available for the Iranian public.

13 MAY 2011

STATE-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCES

(Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, Tehran, in Persian 0851 GMT, 13 May 2011)

- President Ahmadinezhad's advisor Esfandiar Rahim-Masha'i expressed full support for the supreme leader stressing that the concept of "the guardianship of the jurisconsult" is an important ideal of the Islamic Revolution and "the greatest legacy of the late Imam Khomeyni."
- In an interview with the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Rahim-Masha'i clarified his position and expressed his loyalty to the supreme leader saying: "As I have repeatedly said, we believe that living under the protection of the leadership is a rehearsal for living under the global rule of the Lord of the Age [12th Shi'i Imam, to be resurrected at some point in the future] and submission to the leader is one of the conditions of the belief in the absence of the Lord of the Age."
- Masha'i was asked if he and President Ahmadinezhad regarded obedience to leadership and justice-seeking states as being in contrast to one another. He responded: "guardianship and justice are two inseparable and intertwined pillars of the Islamic system, whose flag-bearer is the supreme leader."
- Masha'i denied that there was "duality" in the ruling system and said it was something the enemies of the system wished for. He said: "Some people within the government raised the issue of a rift in the ruling system to meet their own petty group and factional objectives." He said the enemies suggested a rift in the leadership to weaken the government for their own gains and ambitions.

(Source: Press TV website, Tehran, in English 0401 GMT, 13 May 2011)

- A senior Iranian official has criticized the West for politicizing human rights issues, insisting that human rights regulations must be protected against such manipulation.
- The Head of Iran's Supreme Council for Human Rights Mohammad-Javad Larijani, who is in Pretoria for a week-long visit, made the remark in a meeting with South African officials on the promotion of human rights at the international stage, a Press TV correspondent reported on Thursday [12 May].
- "We believe human rights should be shielded from misuse and politicization, as well as the manipulation of human rights mechanism in imposing unilateral values on the world," Larijani told reporters in a joint press conference with South African Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim.

12 MAY 2011

STATE-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCES

(Source: Fars News Agency website, Tehran, in Persian 0900 GMT, 12 May 2011)

- Vice-president for Planning and Strategic Supervision Ebrahim Azizi, praised the role of the Velayat-e Faqih (Supreme Leader) in the Islamic system saying that Velayat-e Faqih is "a guarantor for implementing the Islamic rules", Fars reported.
- "Having the opportunity to be at the service of the Islamic system has such a lofty value that one cannot describe", Azizi said.

- Azizi stressed that "orders by the Velayat-e Faqih are the orders of the prophet of Islam and the first Shi'i imam", and stressed: "Velayat-e Faqih is against oppression and obeying the orders of the Velayat-e Faqih will be the pinnacle of freedom".

11 MAY 2011

STATE-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCES

(Source: Fars News Agency website, Tehran, in Persian 0946 GMT, 11 May 2011)

- Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad has said that Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani shouldn't think that he is equal to the law.
- Ahmadinezhad, who was speaking on the fringes of today's cabinet meeting, added that some people think that they can determine how the law should be implemented. But this in itself is a breach of and undermines the laws.
- The president said: "Some people think that they are an employer and the government is their worker. But it will be better if the honorable Majlis sees to its own duties and allows the executive branch to carry out its own duties which have been enshrined in the constitution."

(Source: Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1, Tehran, in Persian 0930 GMT, 11 May 2011)

- The president defended the cabinet action related to Article 53 of the Fifth Development Plan as completely legal. According to this Article the numbers of ministries should be decreased from 21 to 17. The government merged four ministries with four other ministries this week and announced that it had implemented Article 53. But, yesterday the Majlis stressed that the bill for merging these ministries should be discussed at the Majlis. So, in the current situation these [merged] eight ministries' ministers should continue their work. Regarding this issue, at today's cabinet meeting the president said:
- [Ahmadinezhad]: Article 53 is clear. This article obliges the government to merge several ministries, based on its [government] judgment. After that if a new ministry is established, the government should send its job description to the Majlis. This is what the law says clearly.

10 MAY 2011

STATE-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCES

(Source: Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA), Tehran, in Persian 1138 GMT, 10 May 2011)

- Ahmad Tavakkoli, a conservative MP, in reaction to the government's decision to merge a few ministries and appoint current ministers to manage two ministries has warned the government that the act is against the law and the ministers are not allowed to gain access to the credits of the ministries' before gaining the vote of confidence from the Majlis to take up their new positions.
- Ahmad Tavakkoli, in the open session of the Majlis today 10 May, referred to Article 53 of the Fifth Development Plan and said: "According to this Article the government is obliged to reduce the number of ministries from 21 to 17 by the end of the first year of the fifth development plan. The government should suggest the duties and authorities of the new ministers in the form of a bill to the Majlis and gain the vote of confidence from the Majlis."
- The MP of Tehran continued: "Unfortunately the government has confused the term annexing with merging and has decided that an important ministry such as the Oil Ministry be annexed to the Energy Ministry, but merging is different."
- Reiterating that merging the ministries in this manner is illegal, Tavakkoli added: "If anything happens regarding the management of the ministries, the new minister should be questioned by the Majlis and the MPs have the right to impeach him."

(Source: Islamic Republic of Iran News Network, Tehran, in Persian 0531 GMT, 10 May 2011)

- Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman has criticized the US plan to remove the Iraqi-based Iranian opposition group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), from the list of terrorist organizations and keep it on Iraqi soil away from the Iranian border.
- "All countries and states have legal and conventional obligations to fight terrorism, and we urge the Americans to honour their obligations," Ramin Mehmanparast said at his weekly news conference on 10 May which was broadcast live by Iran's state news channel (IRINN).
- "Any support for terrorist groups is a violation of international agreements, and the hypocrites' group [referring to the MKO] has an absolutely clear case in the issue of terrorism," he said.
- "The fact that Western countries intend to support terrorist activities in various ways and make their own countries a safe haven for their presence and activities is strongly condemned by world public opinion," he said.
- Mehmanparast also urged the Iraqi authorities to expel members of the MKO from their territory.

(Source: Iran newspaper, Tehran, in Persian 10 May 2011, p 2)

- The MPs for Qa'emat, Neyshabur, Ardabil and Torbat-e Heydariyeh have said that the Islamic Republic News Agency [IRNA] should be the mouthpiece of the system on domestic and international stages. They added that IRNA reflects the views of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the world and whatever it publishes is official for the world.
- MP for Qa'emat Hojjat ol-Eslam val-Moslemin Musa Qorbani considered the place of IRNA in the country's information supply system sublime and high as well as timely, sensitive and strong. He said that IRNA should always move towards guarding the system and that it has progressed this way up until now.
- At the meeting, the MP for Torbat-e Heydariyeh referred foreign media news attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran and said: "Although multiple agencies have been established in the country, the Islamic Republic News Agency carries a serious responsibility for media resistance against the West."
- "The world as a whole is not necessarily sufficiently aware of the leadership system, therefore, IRNA is responsible for presenting the role of the supreme leader and the guardianship of the supreme jurisconsult in the democratic and religious system of Iran to the World."

9 MAY 2011

STATE-FACILITATED MEDIA SOURCES

(Source: Islamic Republic of Iran News Network, Tehran, in Persian 1644 GMT, 9 May 2011)

- Commenting on terrorism, Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad alleged that "the Zionist regime and its actions are the highest point of terrorism in our region. They assassinate people in daylight, destroy homes, occupy countries and territories and threaten. They have even threatened me of assassination a number of times."
- Ahmadinezhad added that the terrorist groups were strengthened since the "NATO forces had entered Afghanistan and Iraq" and terrorism increased hundred times more.

(Source: Islamic Republic of Iran News Network, Tehran, in Persian 1608 GMT, 9 May 2011)

Commenting on Usamah Bin-Ladin's death Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad has said that Iran did not trust news reported by the USA.

- Speaking at a presser held in Turkey's capital city of Istanbul on 9 May, he added: "we saw how 10 years ago, using the same person's [Bin-Ladin] name, they carried out the biggest attack in our region and they have killed about one million human beings so far."

- Elsewhere, commenting on terrorism, he said: "another terrorist group, which was carrying out criminal terrorist operations in southeastern Iran, has been receiving political, intelligence and financial support by the US military forces and NATO in Afghanistan."