



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER

CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL

Maxwell AFB, Alabama

Issue No. 733, 28 July 2009

Articles & Other Documents:

[CHINA SEIZES SMUGGLED METAL BOUND FOR NORTH KOREA](#)

[THREATS AGAINST IRAN FEED OFF MODERN MYTHS](#)

[NORTH KOREA READY FOR TALKS OVER NUCLEAR WEAPONS](#)

[IRAN, ISLAM AND THE RULE OF LAW](#)

[Iran Eclipses North Korea as most Unpredictable Threat, for now](#)

[STRONG WORDS FROM IRAN'S OPPOSITION](#)

[ON IRAN, BUSH AND OBAMA WERE BOTH RIGHT](#)

Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats and countermeasures. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

Established in 1998, the USAF/CPC provides education and research to present and future leaders of the Air Force, as well as to members of other branches of the armed services and Department of Defense. Our purpose is to help those agencies better prepare to counter the threat from weapons of mass destruction. Please feel free to visit our web site at <http://cpc.au.af.mil/> for in-depth information and specific points of contact. The following articles, papers or documents do not necessarily reflect official endorsement of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or other US government agencies. Reproduction for private use or commercial gain is subject to original copyright restrictions. All rights are reserved.

Reuters.com

Jul 28, 2009

CHINA SEIZES SMUGGLED METAL BOUND FOR NORTH KOREA

BEIJING (Reuters) - Chinese border police have seized 70 kg (154 lb) of the strategic metal vanadium bound for North Korea, a local newspaper said on Tuesday, foiling an attempt to smuggle a material used to make missile parts.

The U.N. Security Council has tightened restrictions on North Korea in response to its May 25 nuclear test. The sanctions are meant to cut off the North's arms trade. Although the seizure is in line with China's own export controls, Chinese analysts had predicted Beijing would step up inspections on road and rail traffic into North Korea to help enforce the tightened sanctions.

Altogether 68 bottles totaling 70 kg of vanadium worth 200,000 yuan (\$29,280) were seized at the Dandong border with North Korea, the Dandong News said. "Customs agents at the Dandong border crossing inspect six boxes of the rare metal vanadium found hidden under boxes of fruit in a truck stopped during border checks," the newspaper said in a front-page caption of a photo dated July 24.

Vanadium is a metal that strengthens steel and protects against rust. It is alloyed with steel to make missile casings, as well as high speed tools, superconducting magnets and jet engines.

China restricts the export of vanadium and other minor metals as part of a domestic policy meant to preserve strategic metals, encourage investment in processing industries and control international price fluctuations.

On Monday the chief executive of a Japan-based trading company pleaded guilty in a Japanese court to illegally exporting to North Korea two tanker trucks that could be used as missile launch pads, the Kyodo news agency said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE56R1QP20090728>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

GUARDIAN.CO.UK

27 July 2009

NORTH KOREA READY FOR TALKS OVER NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Tania Branigan

North Korea said today it was open to talks about the rising tension over its nuclear weapons programme, a marked shift in tactics after months of ratcheting up foreign anxieties with nuclear test and missile launches.

The statement appeared to be a call for direct talks with the United States, a longstanding goal of the regime. It comes days after the North Korean leadership traded jibes with the US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, at a regional summit in Thailand. It said she was "by no means intelligent" and looked like a schoolgirl or a pensioner going shopping, after she compared it to a group of "small children".

In today's announcement the foreign ministry in Pyongyang made clear its continued opposition to the six-party nuclear talks, which it said sought only to "disarm and incapacitate" the nation.

The statement from a foreign ministry spokesman, carried by state media, said that siding with those who sought their resumption "will not help to ease tension". But it said: "There is a specific and reserved form of dialogue that can address the current situation."

Analysts say North Korea has used its weapons tests to improve its technology, advertise it to potential customers and bolster support for the regime after the illness of the leader, Kim Jong-il. But they also believe it is attempting to grab the attention of the US and push it into direct negotiations.

The US has said it would hold direct talks with Pyongyang within the six-nation process if it returned to the negotiating table and took irreversible steps towards denuclearisation. North Korea quit the aid-for-disarmament discussions in April.

The talks stalled last winter as North Korea wrangled with the US over how to implement agreed measures and verify its activities.

But Washington will not want to be seen to reward North Korea's military tests, and Clinton told NBC yesterday the multinational negotiations were the appropriate way to engage with the state.

The other nations involved in the discussions – China, Japan, South Korea and Russia – would be reluctant to see bilateral talks. Beijing is concerned that a direct relationship between Pyongyang and Washington would damage its own long-term interests.

On Friday, North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations, Sin Son Ho, said the country was "not against a dialogue", according to Japan's Kyodo news agency.

North Korea's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper said the country's envoy told an Asian security conference last week the nuclear standoff was a matter between Pyongyang and Washington.

In yesterday's interview, Clinton repeated her warning that North Korea does not have any friends left after the UN security council's toughening of sanctions last month.

She praised China, the North's main ally, for being "extremely positive and productive" in pressuring Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear programme.

"We've been extremely gratified by their forward-leaning commitment to sanctions and the private messages that they have conveyed to the North Koreans," Clinton said.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/27/north-korea-nuclear-weapons-talks>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Examiner.com

July 28, 2009

Iran Eclipses North Korea as most Unpredictable Threat, for now

Van Jackson - DC Asia Policy Examiner

For decades, media commentators have characterized North Korea's totalitarian regime and eccentric leadership as "unpredictable". In historical terms, such a label is not exactly unwarranted. Few of the economic and diplomatic constraints facing other nations face the North Korean regime. And unlike most small nations, North Korea has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to risk starting a war over issues involving political negotiation and symbolism.

North Korea's appearance of unpredictability, in short, contributes to its appearance as a threat to national security. Will North Korea test a nuclear weapon? Will it export nuclear technology or sell it to terrorists? Will North Korea continue as the world's only hereditary communist dynasty? Or will it initiate a war with the United States or its neighbors?

These questions reflect a historically informed concern that North Korea's behavior cannot always be predicted by assuming a rational actor calculus. Most small nations would be unwilling to risk war with a larger nation; most small nations would seek to integrate with or exploit a global economy; and most small nations would find it in their best interest to abide by treaties and laws to which it has previously acceded.

An appreciation of just how unpredictable North Korea can be is essential for understanding the gravity of the argument that, currently, Iran is far more unpredictable. Such a claim may seem preposterous given that North Korea already possesses a nuclear capability, while Iran has yet to confirm that it is even seeking nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the potential for deviation from social and political equilibrium is far greater in Iran than in North Korea; the number of unknown variables is also greater in Iran.

For the first time since Iran's theocratic revolution in 1979, Iranian citizens have taken to the street en masse in open opposition to its political leadership. Iran's June presidential election results are widely seen as illegitimate, if not by all Iranians then at least by the protestors. Historical observations of democracy also tell us that Iranian society is ripe for democratic development. As a literate society with a middle class, a large urban population, and an awareness of global trends and norms, Iranian society demonstrates many of the characteristics required to promote and sustain democracy.

Creating uncertainty in the face of widespread political protests is the institutional robustness of Iran's ruling regime, which comes into direct conflict with the demands of Iran's protestors. Iran's political structure has established longstanding domestic legitimacy by, among other things, instituting patterns and processes of political decision making that have become familiar and reliable over time. Because Iran has such an elaborate, firmly entrenched state, grassroots political demands like those of the ongoing protests can be suppressed. Rather than make concessions to seemingly reasonable demands from society, the state can simply use the state apparatus to take oppressive and coercive measures to reinstitute order in the short term. Such draconian tactics, of course, only serve to perpetuate disorder in the long term, until the conditions giving rise to society's grievances are addressed.

Complicating matters beyond a simple society vs. state conflict are the unprecedented declarations of support coming from some of the most legitimate corners of Iran's ruling elite. It may be unsurprising that Mir Hossein Mousavi, the losing presidential candidate backed by most of Iran's protestors, is calling for the release of protestors and journalists. More surprising are similar declarations coming from Mohammad Khatami and Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, both former presidents of Iran's Islamic Republic.

In addition, several highly influential Iranian religious figures have publicly criticized Iran's political regime. Newsweek's Fareed Zakaria has interpreted these criticisms as signifying a potentially dangerous split between the theocratic elements and the more secular-bureaucratic elements of the Islamic Republic.

All this turmoil—between democratic conditions and a robust state apparatus, between the state and society, between influential political elites and the state, and between influential religious figures and the state—is significant because of Iran's immense geopolitical importance. Aside from exporting large amounts of oil itself, Iran also has the capability of choking off the Strait of Hormuz, a sea lane used to transport much of the world's oil. Iran's Shiite-dominated state also shares a border with Iraq, another state with a Shiite majority. The potential will always exist for Iran to exercise a certain amount of influence in Iraq because of religious similarity. And lest we forget, every day that passes puts Iran a little closer to achieving a nuclear capability sufficient to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's gradual march toward nuclear capability in itself risks triggering a conflict with Israel, which could in turn ignite a region-wide conflagration.

With so much potential for absolute devastation on a regional and even global level, it is little wonder that Iran foreign policy experts are lauding the Obama administration for essentially doing nothing in the wake of Iran's electoral protests. The ruling regime is strong but seems to be losing legitimacy; there is an increasingly apparent divide between the theocratic and the secular powers ruling the country; and at first glance, one could be forgiven for interpreting Iran's protestors as pushing for a democratic revolution. In the face of so much tenuous unpredictability, what is a U.S. president to do?

For now, doing nothing appears to be an appropriate response. There is little sense in making an already complicated, nearly chaotic situation any more complicated.

With North Korea, we know the unknown variables and they are relatively few in number. North Korea is predictably unpredictable. The security threat from North Korea has remained relatively constant for decades. With Iran, just about anything could happen and the repercussions would impact both regional security and the global economy. But anything could change. It will be important to watch both countries in the coming months as circumstances could become radically different in a very short period of time.

<http://www.examiner.com/x-16317-DC-Asia-Policy-Examiner~y2009m7d28-Iran-eclipses-North-Korea-as-most-unpredictable-threat-for-now>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

CSMONITOR.COM

July 27, 2009

ON IRAN, BUSH AND OBAMA WERE BOTH RIGHT

By Dashiell Shapiro

There are two fallacies about American policy toward Iran. The first, subscribed to by many liberals, is that the Bush administration's black-and-white, "Axis of Evil" approach to Iran only strengthened the country's hard-line forces. The second, which many conservatives proffer, is that Obama's "naive," blame-America-first foreign policy weakens our credibility and empowers our adversaries.

Both of these simplistic understandings are wrong. Rather it appears that both Bush and Obama applied the right policy toward Iran at the right time, and that the combination of both administrations' policies undermined the stability of one of the world's most dangerous regimes.

In a recent Salon.com article, Gary Kamiya decries that neoconservative pundits "have the gall to talk about Iran at all" when "it was their own policies that were largely responsible for the rise of hard-liners in Iran." This is a common misreading of history.

While the hard-liners in Iran did "rise" during the Bush years, it is now clear that this rise was largely illusory, and Bush deserves some credit if they ultimately fall.

Recent events, including popular unrest and dissension within Iran's clerical and political elite, show that Iran's increasingly hard-line approach in past years, both in defiant foreign policy and in crackdowns on civil liberties, was largely an attempt to mask and control a growing popular legitimacy crisis. And this legitimacy crisis can be traced in no small part to Bush's policies.

Bush's invasion of Iraq, which brought democracy and placed large numbers of American troops on Iran's border, combined with his "Axis of Evil" rhetoric, rightfully made Iranian leaders fearful of a US mission to "liberate" Iran or at the very least destroy its nuclear program.

In attempting to counter this perceived threat from the United States, Iran substantially increased funding for its military and nuclear program, supported pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, and financed two proxy wars against Israel in 2006 and 2008.

Iran also increased funding for food subsidies and other handouts targeted primarily at core supporters of Iran's President Ahmadinejad, further damaging the economy and alienating large segments of the population. These expenditures were not cheap, and they coincided with the Bush administration's increasing financial pressure on Iran, thereby weakening the regime.

The combination of Bush's sharpened rhetoric, credible military threat, and economic pressure, may have helped to undermine the Iranian regime in many of the same ways that President Reagan undermined the

Soviet regime in the 1980s. Yet many on the left seem oblivious to Bush's contribution, as they were to Reagan's.

But while Bush softened up the regime with these jabs, Obama may have delivered the knockout punch. His extension of a firm but open hand to Iran, the Naruz holiday greeting, and the Cairo speech, all helped to destroy the regime's narrative of America as the "Great Satan."

To a regime that had just spent itself into financial disaster, and recently faced a significant drop in oil prices, the Obama approach was perfectly timed to threaten the Iranian government's legitimacy, coming right before a pivotal election.

While Bush directed his rhetoric to the hard-liners in power, and scared them into adopting policies that would ultimately weaken their own legitimacy, Obama spoke directly to the people of Iran, letting them know that America was ready to begin a new relationship with them if they seized the opportunity.

This bad-cop/good-cop combination appears to have worked remarkably well, both among ordinary Iranians and among potential reform agents within the Iranian power structure. Yet many conservative pundits fail to acknowledge the wisdom of Obama's approach.

Henry Kissinger once reminded us that "most foreign policies that history has marked highly, in whatever country, have been originated by leaders who were opposed by experts."

This appears to be the case with American policy towards Iran. The possible success of the Bush/Obama combination highlights an advantage America sometimes has in foreign policy over autocratic adversaries as a result of its democratic system. This advantage should be recognized and harnessed, rather than ignored amid partisan bickering.

While it is possible to overstate America's effect on domestic situations abroad, Iran shows how such influence can also be understated or distorted. When reacting to future events in Iran, Obama should be wary of believing either the "conservative" or the "liberal" narrative regarding past American policy towards Iran. Instead, he should choose his policy based on what will best confront the situations that develop.

The world could soon see a less brutal and belligerent leadership in Iran, for which both Bush and Obama will deserve a share of the credit.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0727/p09s03-coop.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The Japan Times
July 27, 2009

THREATS AGAINST IRAN FEED OFF MODERN MYTHS

By CESAR CHELALA

NEW YORK — Several myths regarding Iran stand in the way of the United States and other nations reaching a peaceful relationship with that country. Much of the concern that Iran may attack Israel, if Iran successfully develops nuclear weapons, rests on the statement by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that "Israel must be wiped off the map."

However, Juan Cole, a University of Michigan professor of modern Middle East and South Asian history, says no such idiom exists in the Persian language: "Ahmadinejad did not say he was going to 'wipe Israel

off the map' . . . Instead, he said he 'hoped the regime, a Jewish-Zionist state occupying Jerusalem, would collapse.' "

This is consistent with statements by Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki. Speaking at a news conference, he denied that Tehran wanted to see Israel "wiped off the map." "Nobody can remove a country from the map. How is it possible to remove a country from the map? (Ahmadinejad) was talking about the regime," Mottaki said.

It has been stated repeatedly that an aggressive Iranian government represents a danger for the region and for the United States. Facts, however, do not substantiate such an interpretation. More frequently than not, Iran has been on the receiving end of aggressive acts, particularly by the U.S. Iranians cannot forget that it was foreign intervention, particularly by the British and the U.S., that destroyed democracy in Iran, the effects of which linger today.

In 1953, the CIA was instrumental in overthrowing the democratically elected government of Iran's prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes shot down an Iranian civilian airliner over the Strait of Hormuz toward the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Two hundred ninety passengers were killed, including 66 children, ranking it seventh among the deadliest airliner fatalities. According to the U.S. government, the Vincennes crew misidentified the Iranian Airbus A300 as an attacking F-14 Tomcat fighter.

The U.S. staunchly supported the shah of Iran's regime, despite its brutal repression of the Iranian people. According to Stephen Kinzer, author of "All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," fears by the Iranians of more U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of their country led to their taking American diplomats as hostages.

Both the U.S. and Israel have repeatedly threatened military action against Tehran, in flagrant violation of the U.N. Charter whose Article 2 states, "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

Iran's alleged intention to develop nuclear weapons has also been given as a justification for an attack on Iran's nuclear sites. However, Yukiya Amano, the incoming head of the International Atomic Energy Agency declared to Reuters that he hadn't seen any hard evidence that Iran was trying to gain the ability to develop nuclear arms. Developing a civilian nuclear program is Iran's inalienable right and, if some predictions are true, it may also become a need in the near future.

There are indications that Iran's oil resources are fast depleting and Iran may become a net importer of oil a decade from now, according to the Campaign against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran.

As U.S. President Barack Obama has repeatedly stated, diplomacy should be pursued in dealing with the Iranian government. Such an approach should include security assurances to the Iranian government that it will not be attacked and that the U.S. will not undermine that country's leadership.

A linguistic equivalent to the Gulf of Tonkin incident should not be the excuse for attacking Iran and unleashing chaos in the region, if not in the whole world.

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/eo20090727cc.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The Wall Street Journal

July 27, 2009

IRAN, ISLAM AND THE RULE OF LAW

By FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

When Columbia University President Lee Bollinger introduced Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at his school in September 2007, he denounced him as a “petty tyrant.”

Ahmadinejad is many bad things, including a Holocaust denier and a strong proponent of a nuclear Iran. But as recent events have underlined, Iran is not quite a tyranny, petty or grand, and the office Ahmadinejad occupies does not give him final say in Iranian affairs. That role is more truly occupied by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, head of the Council of Guardians and Iran’s supreme leader.

A real tyranny would never permit elections in the first place—North Korea never does—nor would it allow demonstrations contesting the election results to spiral out of control. Yet Iran is no liberal democracy. So what kind of beast is it? And in what ways should we want its regime to evolve?

Political scientists categorize the Islamic Republic of Iran as an “electoral authoritarian” regime of a new sort. They put it in the same basket as Hugo Chávez’s Venezuela or Vladimir Putin’s Russia. By this view, Iran is fundamentally an authoritarian regime run by a small circle of clerics and military officials who use elections to legitimate themselves.

Others think of Iran as a medieval theocracy. Its 1979 constitution vests sovereignty not in the people, but in God, and establishes Islam and the Quran as the supreme sources of law.

The Iranian Constitution is a curious hybrid of authoritarian, theocratic and democratic elements. Articles One and Two do vest sovereignty in God, but Article Six mandates popular elections for the presidency and the Majlis, or parliament. Articles 19-42 are a bill of rights, guaranteeing, among other things, freedom of expression, public gatherings and marches, women’s equality, protection of ethnic minorities, due process and private property, as well as some “second generation” social rights like social security and health care.

The truly problematic part of the constitution is Section Eight (Articles 107-112) on the Guardian Council and the “Leader.” All the democratic procedures and rights in the earlier sections of the constitution are qualified by certain powers reserved to a council of senior clerics.

These powers, specified in Article 110, include control over the armed forces, the ability to declare war, and appointment powers over the judiciary, heads of media, army and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Another article lays out conditions under which the Supreme Leader can be removed by the Guardian Council. But that procedure is hardly democratic or transparent.

One does not have to go back to the Middle Ages to find historical precedents for this type of constitution. The clearest parallel would be the German Constitution adopted after the country was unified in the 1870s. Pre-World War I Germany had an elected parliament, or Reichstag, but reserved important powers for an unelected Kaiser, particularly in foreign policy and defense. This constitution got Germany into big trouble. The unelected part of the leadership controlled the armed forces. Eventually, though, it came to be controlled by the armed forces. This seems to be what’s unfolding in Iran today.

Compared to Section Eight, the references in the Iranian Constitution to God and religion as the sources of law are much less problematic. They could, under the right circumstances, be the basis for Iran’s eventual evolution into a moderate, law-governed country.

The rule of law was originally rooted in religion in all societies where it came to prevail, including the West. The great economist Friedrich Hayek noted that law should be prior to legislation. That is, the law should reflect a broad social consensus on the rules of justice. In Europe, it was the church that originally defined the law and acted as its custodian. European monarchs respected the rule of law because it was written by an authority higher and more legitimate than themselves.

Something similar happened in the pre-modern Middle East. There was a functional separation of church and state. The ulama were legal scholars and custodians of Shariah law while the sultans exercised political authority. The sultans conceded they were not the ultimate source of law but had to live within rules established by Muslim case law. There was no democracy, but there was something resembling a rule of law.

This traditional, religiously based rule of law was destroyed in the Middle East's transition to modernity. Replacing it, particularly in the Arab world, was untrammelled executive authority: Presidents and other dictators accepted no constraints, either legislative or judicial, on their power.

The legal scholar Noah Feldman has argued that the widespread demand for a return to Shariah in many Muslim countries does not necessarily reflect a desire to impose harsh, Taliban-style punishments and oppress women. Rather, it reflects a nostalgia for a dimly remembered historical time when Muslim rulers were not all-powerful autocrats, but respected Islamic rules of justice—Islamic rule of law.

So what kind of future should we wish for Iran, in light of the massive demonstrations? My own preference would be for Iran to some day adopt a new, Western-style constitution guaranteeing religious freedom, a secular state, and sovereignty vested firmly in the people, rather than God.

But a considerable amount of anecdotal evidence (we don't have anything better) suggests this is not necessarily the agenda of the protesters. Many of them, including opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, say they want Iran to remain an Islamic Republic. They look at the radical regime change that occurred in next door Iraq and don't want that for themselves. What they seem to wish for is that the democratic features of the constitution be better respected, and that the executive authorities, including the Guardian Council, and the military and paramilitary organizations, stop manipulating elections and respect the law.

Iran could evolve towards a genuine rule-of-law democracy within the broad parameters of the 1979 constitution. It would be necessary to abolish Article 110, which gives the Guardian Council control over the armed forces and the media, and to shift its function to something more like a supreme court that could pass judgment on the consistency of legislation with Shariah. In time, the Council might be subject to some form of democratic control, like the U.S. Supreme Court, even if its members needed religious credentials.

Eliminating religion altogether from the Iranian Constitution is more problematic. The rule of law prevails not because of its formal and procedural qualities, but because it reflects broadly held social norms. If future Iranian rulers are ever to respect the rule of law as traditional Muslim rulers once did, it will have to be a law that comes from the hearts of the Iranian people. Perhaps that will one day be a completely secular law. That is unlikely to be the case today.

Unfortunately, Iranians may never get to make the choice for themselves. The clerical-military clique currently exercising power is likely to drag Iran into conflict with other countries in the region. This could easily consolidate its legitimacy and power. Let us hope that the country's internal forces push for an evolution of the political system towards genuine rule of law and democracy first.

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times
July 28, 2009

STRONG WORDS FROM IRAN'S OPPOSITION

By ROBERT F. WORTH and NAZILA FATHI

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The Iranian opposition leader Mir Hussein Moussavi spoke out more strongly than ever before on Monday against the arrests and killings of protesters, hours before Iran's supreme leader ordered the closing of a "nonstandard" prison apparently in an effort to deflect rising criticism over the issue.

"How can it be that the leaders of our country do not cry out and shed tears about these tragedies?" Mr. Moussavi said, in comments to a teachers' association that were posted on his Web site. "Can they not see it, feel it? These things are blackening our country, blackening all our hearts. If we remain silent, it will destroy us all and take us to hell."

Mr. Moussavi's angry tone appeared to reflect the steadily rising toll of those killed — some after being beaten in prison — in the crackdown that followed the disputed June 12 presidential election. A funeral was held in Tehran on Monday for Amir Javadi-Far, a student activist who died in prison after being arrested, and reports emerged of still more deaths.

Mr. Moussavi and other opposition leaders have asked permission to hold a public mourning ceremony for the dead on Thursday. That day has great symbolic importance, because it is 40 days after the shooting of Neda Agha-Soltan, the young woman whose death ignited widespread outrage in Iran and beyond.

Commemorating the 40th day after a person's death is an important mourning ritual in Shiite Islam; similar anniversaries for dead protesters were essential in the demonstrations that led to the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Mr. Moussavi and other opposition figures have called for the hundreds of remaining detainees to be released, and there were signs Monday that the government was feeling pressure on the issue. The secretary of Iran's National Security Council said that the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had taken steps to prevent abuses, including closing a "nonstandard" prison, the state-run Press TV reported. He did not identify the prison further.

"In the course of recent events, the leader has ordered officials (to take measures) so that no one, God forbid, suffers injustice," said Saeed Jalili, the secretary of the National Security Council, Press TV reported.

A spokesman for Iran's judiciary said Monday that the judiciary chief, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi, had ordered that criminal investigations of the detainees be expedited, and that all those innocent or guilty of only minor offenses be released within a week, Iranian news agencies reported.

It was the first time Ayatollah Shahroudi has addressed the detentions, though opposition figures have repeatedly made personal appeals to him to intervene.

The circle of those touched by the killings widened last week when Mohsen Ruholamini, the son of an adviser to conservative presidential candidate Mohsen Rezai, was reported by his family to have died in prison after a severe beating. Some senior members of Parliament have complained about the case. On

Monday, Saeed Mortazavi, the prosecutor general of Tehran, said a special judge had been appointed to investigate the death, Iranian news agencies reported.

Repercussions continued from the political dispute over President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's promotion of a controversial ally, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, who made friendly comments about Israel last year. The issue has underscored persistent divisions among Iran's conservatives.

More than 200 of Iran's 290 members of Parliament signed a letter on Monday chastising Mr. Ahmadinejad, who ignored for almost a week a directive from Ayatollah Khamenei to drop Mr. Mashaei. Mr. Mashaei finally withdrew from the position as top presidential deputy on Friday, and the president promptly appointed him chief of staff.

In the letter, the lawmakers reminded Mr. Ahmadinejad of their support for him but urged him to "rectify his conduct" toward Ayatollah Khamenei, Press TV reported.

Members of Mr. Ahmadinejad's cabinet have feuded with him over the Mashaei affair, and on Sunday he fired one of them, Intelligence Minister Gholam-Hussein Mohseni-Ejei.

The dispute may fuel further dissension this week, with some legislators warning that the president's actions could trigger a confidence vote on his cabinet, despite the fact that only a week remains before Mr. Ahmadinejad is sworn in for a second term and must submit a new cabinet to Parliament for approval.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/28/world/middleeast/28iran.html?ref=world>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)