



25th Anniversary of Iran's Revolution

By **Alireza Jafarzadeh**

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Today, February 11, marks the silver anniversary of the popular revolution that toppled the dictatorship in Iran, but turned into a nightmare when Ayatollah Khomeini and his firebrand clerics erected a fundamentalist theocracy.

Exploiting the anti-Western sentiments, Khomeini perverted the revolution as an Islamic crusade against the “Great Satan” and brutally crushed the democratic opposition.

Having eliminated all voices of dissent by sending tens of thousands to the gallows, the ruling clerics, as desperate as ever, have now turned on their partners of the past twenty-five years by disqualifying thousands of rival candidates in the parliamentary elections set for February 20.

While some in the West continue to paint the recent row as a “hard-line” vs. “moderate” showdown, the impasse reflects the dire state of a ruthless, incompetent and corrupt regime that has run aground, to the point where it can no longer tolerate its accomplices in a quarter of a century of bloody rule.

To run for office, all candidates must declare their “heart-felt” and “practical” allegiance to the principle of *velayat-e faqih* (absolute clerical supremacy). In all these years, Mohammad Khatami and his camp have gone out of their way to assure the rival faction and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei of that loyalty.

That the watchdog vetting body, the Guardian Council, disqualified out of nearly 8,200 candidates some 3,000, including dozens of incumbent deputies, underlines the undemocratic and illegitimate nature of this election.

The Iranian public’s widespread apathy toward the developments in recent weeks, including the sit-in in the Parliament building by dozens of disqualified deputies, makes it clear that for the vast majority of Iranians elections is a sham. No more than 10 percent of the electorate cast their ballots in the “Islamic” councils’ elections last year that pitted the so-called reformers against the hard-liners. Even more so, most observers believe, the upcoming parliamentary elections will be shunned by the vast majority of the Iranians.

The Supreme Leader insisted that the election must go ahead as planned, and not a day later. He warned his rivals not to play into the hands of “foreign” enemies and those bent on toppling the Islamic Republic. “Elections will be held on time on the basis of your order,” obeyed the lame duck president in a letter. Once again Khatami did not live up to his promise when he had earlier vowed to only hold elections that were “competitive, free and fair.”

“Khatami should not turn into an instrument in the hands of hard-liners,” an angry prominent supporter of Khatami told the Associated Press.

In addition to proving the “reformist” faction a total travesty, this has further exposed the vulnerability and the fragile state of the ruling theocracy to the point where it cannot tolerate even those who have helped this fundamentalist regime remain in power since its inception. It has also shown to the outside world what millions in Iran have already opined: The mullahcracy is illegitimate and must be removed in its entirety.

Where does this leave the international community and the United States?

To be sure, the Europeans, in hot pursuit of business, continue to promote engagement with Tehran, reflected in the French President’s receiving last month of Hassan Rowhani, one of the most hard-line pro-Khamenei clerics. They appear to have found some allies among traditional Iran appeasers in Washington who are still in search of illusory moderates in Iran.

Others argue, as did former Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, in his address to some 5,000 Iranian Americans in Washington last month, that “there is no question where the power lies in Iran today; it isn’t through the electoral process... It’s a hand full of self appointed dictators. And to believe that we can do business with them is to fail to completely understand what we are up against.”

“What the mullahs fear the most is the expression of the people of Iran. That is why they would do everything they can to resist a referendum and that is why there must be a referendum,” added Mr. Perle.

The United States has now the historic opportunity to side with the millions in Iran in their call for a United Nations supervised referendum as the last peaceful recourse to regime change in Iran.

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