



Letter from Iran

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This is an article received from a reader of fifthinternational.org who is in Tehran, sent on the 21st June. We publish it here to provide eyewitness accounts of what is going on in Iran

The post-election turmoil in Iran has brought to the surface a political in-fighting that has been smoldering beneath the surface for quite a while. Similarly, it has revealed the extent to which the ruling theocracy has become anachronistic and totally out of touch with reality. The thinking was to draw people out in large numbers to the ballot boxes with a view to projecting an image of popular support to the government, but their plan boomeranged because the fossilized establishment failed to recognize the fact that Iranian people aren't the same as they used to be a couple of decades ago. As a consequence, the government was caught off its guard when Mousavi along with his middle class supporters rejected the results of the disputed election which has brought back the delusional incumbent president Ahmed Najat. The initial reaction of Mousavi's supporters wasn't expected by the establishment because they have always looked upon their people as obedient if not submissive. This might have been true 20 or 30 years ago but unfortunately for them the world has changed dramatically over the last thirty years. For instance, Information technology and satellite TV networks which are dominated by the corpocracy, have intoxicated the middle class in Iran (Mousavi's constituency) by the lures of American and western democracy and freedom.

Power struggle

In his speech last Friday, the supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Khomeini made it abundantly clear that there is no love lost between him and the former president Rafasanjani who heads both the expediency council and the assembly of experts which has the authority to remove the leader. Khomeini explicitly said that he has a lot more common with Ahmed Najat than with Rafasanjani. He also ruled out the possibility of any reversal in the results of the election except for a partial recount of the disputed votes clinching the victory for Ahmed Najat and dashing the hopes of the supporters of Mousavi.

On the other hand, word has it that Rafasanjani is building a case against Khomeini by pointing out his ineligibility as a leader. So, for the current situation to make any sense, it has to be viewed within the context of the ongoing power struggle within the superannuated theocratic establishment.

As it has become very clear to the whole world, Khomeini set off a chain reaction of violence by hastily congratulating the incumbent president Ahmed Najat on his winning the highly contested presidential election. In turn, this made his opponents question the legitimacy of the election. The 'defeated' Mir Hussein Mousavi has come to embody the need for change felt by mostly middle class people. His plan to open up the isolated country to the world by engaging in talks with the west and America has meant western kind of freedom to the middle class. However, the bubble burst when the fake election was allegedly stolen by Ahmed Najat and his cabal. This perception has led to a series of demonstrations and protests by Mousavi's supporters who have been brutally crushed by the paramilitary militia called Basij as well as the revolutionary guards.

The situation today

Having rejected any call for election re-run and having warned of bloody consequences should the peaceful protests continue, Khomeini took the struggle to a dangerous level. His heavy-handed approach to mishandling the highly

explosive situation again backfired and the followers of Mousavi have kept up their protests. It is reported that ten to thirteen people were killed yesterday when the ruthless Basij and the revolutionary guards who are swarming the main squares and streets of Tehran clashed with protestors. Also, a suspicious suicide bomber struck the Mausoleum of Imam Khomeini killing one person and injuring two people. Due to the heavy presence of the government forces almost everywhere in Tehran, the situation today is calm but tense. In a recent development, it is believed that the daughter of Rafsanajani has been arrested.

How might this end?

Given the complexity of the current imbroglio, it is hard to predict how it will play itself out. One thing is clear, though, that the supreme leader has taken a path from which return is impossible. In other words, the demand for a re-run is impossible to meet simply because it would constitute an implicit confession that the election was rigged. Likewise, the opposition backed by Rafsanjani is likely to keep insisting on a re-election because it drives home the point that the leader is no longer fit to hold this 'divine' position since he is incapable of being neutral. In the meantime, people will continue to pay the price of this rift.

What can people do?

'The most common way people give up power is by thinking they don't have any' Alice Walker

The biggest advantage of this ugly power struggle is that it has partially empowered and emboldened people. Despite the intimidation and unspeakable brutality of government forces, they have rallied relentlessly. However, this mass movement would have gained ultimate power if all the people were united by one common goal of overthrow of the whole system. Let's not forget that Ahmed Najat has his own supporters who are pitted against Mousavi's supporters to undermine them. The way forward is for people to become conscious that nothing short of a revolution guided by human/ socialist principles can be effective in terms of bringing about meaningful changes to their lives.

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