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In the Name of the Most High Viewpoint

The Right to Vote at the Heart of Iranian Democracy

By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

On Friday, May 19, over 40 million Iranian Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians voted in the 12th presidential election. Elections were simultaneously held for City and Village Councils as well.

Voting hours were extended several times due to a high turnout in the polls, and in general, the democratic event went smoothly without any major incident. In the end, President Hassan Rouhani got a majority and secured victory over other candidates.

This is not surprising. The right to vote is at the heart of Iranian democracy. Election officials extend great efforts and care ensuring the person voters prefer in the presidential election wins the election. But ensuring the will of the people and the corresponding victory of the duly elected president is not the only consideration in the electoral process, as public confidence in the electoral system and the results it produces is of equal importance as well. In order for the Iranian democracy to flourish, public confidence in the Islamic establishment must remain strong.

This however didn't stop "fakestream" media outlets in the West to claim that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei had to play a balancing act in his calls for a large election turnout in the May 19 vote.

To support their ridiculous claims, media outlets like the BBC, VOA, CNN, Fox News and suchlike did broadcast reports about which candidate people preferred to vote for! They argued that Ayatollah Khamenei had encouraged even those who didn't accept the Islamic Republic system to show up to the ballot box because the establishment was in crisis and couldn't afford a no-show.

This is not the first time that "fakestream" media outlets are attempting to interfere in and undermine the democratic process in Iran. In the words of Ayatollah Khamenei, "The United States and Israel have attempted to discourage and prevent Iranians from voting since the early days of the 1979 revolution."

It indeed is an insult to the intelligence of the Iranian people to tell them which candidates to vote for. They know what's best for them and they need no advice from the outsiders. What Ayatollah Khamenei called for on Friday was democratic competition – not support for this or that particular individual and/or political party. Under the Constitution, no one – including the Supreme Leader – has any right to tell voters which candidate to vote for.

In democracies, election is a competition for an elected office where candidates strive and compete against one another to attain a position of power. In the Islamic Republic, however, political competition or rivalry is allowed as long as it is constructive and leads to socio-political contentment and progress. As Ayatollah Khamenei maintains, "Political aspirations must never foment sedition or discord in the society."

Into the argument, Iranian voters have confidence that the system will work as designed and without major fault. For this reason, electoral change is often slow and deliberate instead of swift and reactionary. On the other hand, modern life has recently wholeheartedly embraced technology. The accessibility, relative low cost and seemingly endless capabilities of the Internet has rapidly expanded the medium beyond our recent imagination.

The conclusion is obvious. Iran is a democracy and the next presidential election might even be in the form of digital voting. There are several advantages to this new way of voting that can all but eliminate the majority of the hassle – something the electoral officials have always been after.

Digital voting is convenient, people can vote at any hour of any day and this translates into a higher response. It is quick, easy and affords a measure of security that people want. It gives voters the privacy to speak freely about their thoughts, and it is cost-effective, and offers not chance of double voting.

Last but not the least, manual counting can result in errors and takes time away from more important tasks. Digital voting allows for automatic counting of ballots, eliminating these problems. With everything being taken care of digitally, it is all kept in a safe place and there is no chance of the ballots being lost or destroyed. Security is always a concern among voters and this is one of the greatest benefits of the system.

Turkmenistan Hands Over 27 Iranian Prisoners

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Twenty-seven Iranian prisoners were extradited from Turkmenistan on Saturday as part of a treaty between the two countries.

The convicts were handed over to Iranian judicial authorities via Bajgiran border crossing, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Consular, Parliamentary and Expatriates' Affairs Hassan Qashqavi announced.

According to the diplomat, the prisoners were the first group of Iranian inmates returning home under an extradition treaty between Tehran and Ashgabat.

The extradition took place following Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif's meetings with senior Turkmen officials and intensive talks handled by a delegation of Iranian Foreign Ministry representatives dispatched to the Central Asian country, he added.

In March 2015, Iran and Turkmenistan held a high-ranking joint session in Ashgabat, and signed 17 cooperation documents in economic, cultural, political, legal, scientific, and technological fields.

The extradition treaty was one of the documents signed in the session, attended by Iran's President Hassan Rouhani and his Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow.

Officials, Clerics Call For Unity After Polls



People line up to vote at a polling station in Tehran on May 19, 2017.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Iran's state officials and other religious personalities have called for unity after the end of presidential and city and village council elections.

"From now on, competition must turn into friendship," Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Movahedi Kermani told worshippers here.

He also advised the next president to firmly follow up on the guidelines of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and respect the lofty values of the Islamic Revolution.

The next president should serve the Iranian people, have great management capabilities, fully abide by the Constitution, stand up to the enemies and implement the policies of the economy of resistance, he said.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said the high turnout of the Iranian people in the elections would thwart the enemies' plots.

"In this insecure region, Iran enjoys good security, and the massive participation of the people in the elections will well support the maintenance of this security and will foil the enemies' plots," Larijani told reporters in the holy city

of Qom.

He added that elections have always been important in Iran and are among the main pillars of religious democracy.

The top Iranian parliamentarian said a high turnout of the nation in the elections would result in good achievements for the country and boost national security.

Larijani further expressed hope that after the polls, presidential competition would turn into friendship with the purpose of achieving a developed and advanced Iran.

Iran's Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani said the Iranian people are definitely the real winners of the elections.

Speaking to reporters here, Amoli Larijani added that the Iranian people's participation in the elections displayed national solidarity and unity and would reinforce the country's security and power.

It would also thwart plots of the enemies in the region and across the world, he added.

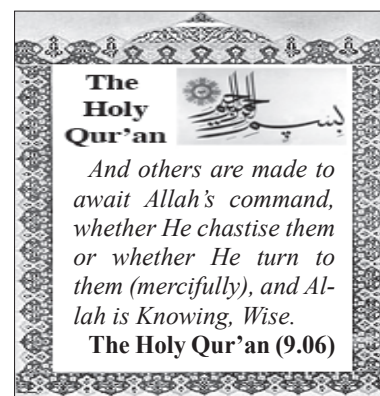
Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior adviser to Ayatollah Khamenei on international affairs, said elections would reinforce national unity and display the power of the country

and the Islamic establishment.

"Undoubtedly, the religious democracy system in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the most independent country in the region, will advance all the objectives of Islamic Iran through the public support," the official added.

Despite the enemies' plots, the nation's massive turnout will result in their failure, he said. Velayati added that the Iranian people were playing a role in determining their future by turning out in the elections.

Iran's Petroleum Minister Bijan Zangeneh said elections are a symbol of the Iranian people's power and convey the Islamic Republic's



PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	13:01
Evening (Maghreb)	20:07
Dawn (Fajr) "Tomorrow"	04:15
Sunrise "Tomorrow"	05:55

message of pride and freedom to the world.

"Today is a big day for the Iranian people because they are choosing not only their president, but they are marking another phase of their political development," Zangeneh added.

He emphasized that the Islamic Republic is experiencing the "deepest democracy in the region."

Muhammad Nahavandian, the chief of staff of President Hassan Rouhani, said the Islamic Republic enjoys exemplary security at a time that the region is experiencing a precarious situation.

"We must be able to contribute to regional security through an active diplomacy," Nahavandian added.

The Iranian official stressed the importance of adopting necessary measures to safeguard the country's security.

Tehran's Prosecutor Abbas Ja'afari Dolatabadi said the Iranian nation's turnout in the elections conveys this message to the U.S. and all enemies that it is standing by the country and supporting its objectives.

He added that the Iranians' presence in the election would strengthen the Islamic establishment.



High Turnout

KAYHAN: People participated en masse in the presidential and city council elections on Friday. According to interior ministry, over 40 million votes were cast – far bigger than expected. This led to several hours of extension in the amount of time the polls were open to accommodate everyone. There have been some irregularities as well which are still being investigated by the officials in charge.

Unprecedented Numbers

JAVAN: According to international media reports, millions of Iranians took part in the Friday vote. The vote came after the nuclear deal with the West, which made it more than ever crucial for people to turn out to ballot boxes. Voting hours had to be extended in over 63,000 polling stations. Iranian media outlets have thanked the nation for the high turnout and for this "historic victory for Iranians." Some foreign outlets have reported that this will offer a great advantage to the new administration of President Rouhani.

A Blessing in Disguise

JOMHOURI ESLAMI: The Friday vote ended in calm and tranquility with no major incidents reported. This is laudable and indeed one of the greatest blessings of the revolution and the Islamic Republic. We must express our gratitude to those who made this achievable, including the electoral officials and the people. Those who have won the presidential and city council elections should realize that the main winner is the Iranian nation. It is because of their high turnout and their much-needed trust in the establishment that this was possible after all.

History in the Making

DONYAYE EQTESAD: The high turnout in the Friday vote was unprecedented. Despite the scorching heat, people had to wait in lines for hours to cast their ballots – over 40 million. Over 25 million votes were cast in major cities alone. All polling stations were packed with voters even in the middle of the day, including politicians, artists and celebrities. The vote made history, bolstered national unity and resolve, and reinforced national security and power. No matter who won the majority of the votes, people are still the only winners of this historic event.