



A group of Iranian clerics during a meeting with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (not seen) on July 12, 2023

Iran's Hardliners Want An Election Without The Elites, Say Politicians

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Iran Politics



A moderate-conservative news website in Tehran has expressed concern over the absence of Iran's political elite in the upcoming March 2024 parliamentary elections.

The traditional political elite of the Islamic Republic expecting an engineered vote next year are not inclined to get involved. The hardliners have an open field to perpetuate and even strengthen their monopoly over power.

Khabar Online website's columnist Rasoul Salimi said that the absence of the elite not only from electoral politics but also in popular protests since 2018 has brought the government face to face with the masses. The political elite have evacuated the buffer zone between the people and the government.

Feeling side-lined as their warnings about looming crises and economic and political upheavals have been ignored by populist governments, the elite has withdrawn, the article said.

The result is that the masses move toward "essential social changes," the author said carefully weighing his choice of words, avoiding phrases such as unrest and upheaval. The only thing governments have done was delaying

social change by engineering political developments and using propaganda to make an impact on the public opinion, he said.

The absence of the elite, he argued, is likely to adversely affect the political system's legitimacy and people's trust in the government as the parliamentary elections approach.

The head of the state television, Payman Jebelli

In the meantime, **the head of the state television Payman Jebelli told Entekhab** News on Sunday: "The result of the elections has no significance for us. The most important thing for us is to ensure a high turnout in the election by encouraging maximum participation." For months many analysts and former officials have been criticizing the state TV for its deep bias in favor of hardliners in power.

Jebelli said that based on the guidelines offered by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the state television's main concerns will be "participation, competition, security and a healthy election." He added that the state television will play a direct role in securing a high voter turnout and competitiveness.

Many Iranian politicians have expressed concern in recent weeks that the government's unilateral and discriminatory approach to elections, and the disqualification of moderate and reformist candidates will lead to one of the lowest turnouts in the Islamic Republic's history.

During the past week, the Interior Ministry has been sending text messages to millions of Iranians calling on them to nominate themselves as candidates for parliament.

Political activist Khalilollah Balouchi wrote on Twitter on Saturday: "In the past, if there were not so many voters, at least there were enough candidates. Now, the government is calling on everyone to become a candidate."

Conservative politician and **Expediency Council member Mohammad Javad Bahonar told Entekhab News** on Sunday that in the March elections, "the turnout is more important than the election itself."

Expediency Council member Mohammad Javad Bahonar

He said that despite calls for a high turnout, "Some politicians are looking for their own victory in a low-turnout election without officially saying so." This, Bahonar said, is against what Khamenei has called for.

Hardliners, particularly the ultraconservative Paydari Party, who advocate purification to limit the election to their likeminded comrades, see everyone else including experienced conservative politicians such as himself as "outsiders," Bahonar complained.

The "outsiders" and political "elites" are jargons used by the officially tolerated opposition in the Islamic Republic to refer to individuals in the conservative camp such as Bahonar, others in the centrist and moderate camp such as the members of Executives of Construction Party and former President Hassan Rouhani's aides, as well as reformists such as those like jailed Mostafa Tajzadeh who believe in minimal changes within the current structure of the Islamic Republic.

Iran Protests



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