



Iran's ruler Ali Khamenei during a religious ceremony on July 26, 2023

Hardliners In Iran Planning For Elections, With Next Leader In Mind

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Iran Politics



Reformists In Iran warn that the ultraconservative Paydari party wants to manipulate the election of a council that is tasked with selecting the next Supreme Leader.

Amid concerns about Paydari's attempts to engineer the upcoming parliamentary elections, a leading reformist party in Tehran reported on Saturday that the hardliner group also aims to extend its "purification" project to the Assembly of Experts (AoE), the constitutional body that would select Ali Khamenei's successor.

Etemad newspaper wrote that radical conservatives have started garnering support for their own hardline conservative candidates for the next election of the Assembly of Experts which is to be held alongside the parliamentary elections in March 2024.

The purification project, referring to hardliners monopolizing government institutions, began with the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2021 and 2020, when relatively moderate candidates were barred from competing. Now there are suspicions that hardliners plan to repeat the same tactic in 2024, to make sure that all the members of the parliament come from the same political faction and appoint their men to the Assembly of experts.

Currently, two seminary associations, as well as moderates and Paydari are likely to compete in the AoE elections, but the influential Paydari's intervention could potentially change the number and combination of the contestants.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei during a meeting with members of the Assembly of Experts (AoE), the constitutional body that would select Ali Khamenei's successor, in Tehran on February 23, 2023

At the same time, centrist politician Gholamhossein Karbaschi, the former leader of the Executives of Construction Party, **warned that hardliners** are likely to arrange the disqualification of moderates and reformists in the parliamentary election in a bid to form an all-conservative parliament.

Karbaschi further warned that this might substantially curtail participation in the upcoming elections as it effectively restricts competition to candidates affiliated to the same hardline faction. Voters will have little interest or incentive to go to the polls when they know the outcome.

Karbaschi said: "It looks like that hardliners have not been quite happy with the current conservative dominated Majles and wish to introduce more 'revolutionary' candidates." In the new jargon of Iranian reformists and moderate conservatives, the term "revolutionary" is used to characterize reckless ultraconservatives with little if any political experience.

He reiterated that the situation will not change dramatically if the future parliament is more "revolutionary" than the current one. "It is all down to the

Guardian Council not to reject candidates and to the Interior Ministry to hold a timely and healthy election," Karbaschi said and added, "We cannot predict the future, but what hardliners are saying is not promising."

Meanwhile, **conservative political analyst Javad Aryamanesh told reporters** in Tehran that some reformist groups are likely to form a coalition with former Majles Speaker Ali Larijani, a relatively moderate conservative. Aryamanesh reiterated that Larijani is also willing to work with moderate reformists.

However, he noted that some reformist politicians might not take part in the upcoming elections. Aryamanesh argued that the expected low turnout in March is not related only to a lack of political choice for voters, but is partly due to profound dissatisfaction with the current economic crisis and hyperinflation.

"The masses of Iranians are unhappy about the current situation which is marked by poverty, corruption, discrimination and injustice, and this is far more important in determining the fate of the elections than the combination of the political parties," Aryamanesh stressed.

Iran Protests



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