



The Iranian parliament

## Reformists In Iran Doubt March Elections To Be Free And Fair

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The main issue around Iran's parliamentary elections in March is whether relatively moderate politicians will run, and if this can bring out disillusioned voters.

Many moderates have signaled their unwillingness to register as candidates, given their fear that hardliners using their political power will disqualify them, similar to what took place in 2020 and 2021.

However, a former speaker of the Parliament who is a close relative of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei says reformists will take part in the election despite playing coy.

**Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel** told **Young Journalist Club** conservative website that "Some reformists are serious about what they say, but some are more realistic. They will act coquettishly, but they will take part in the elections anyway."

Whether he is right in his prediction, many Iranians see the elections as a ruse and will not go to vote for any regime faction. They have lost hope that the Islamic Republic can improve and solve their multiple grievances.

This is why Haddad-Adel called on Iranians to take part in the elections as a high turnout will lend the Islamic Republic authority and political leverage.

#### **Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel, a former parliament speaker**

Also speaking to the press this week, former lawmaker **Tayebeh Siavashi, a reformist political figure, said:** "The Islamic Republic's existence depends on the people's participation in the elections. If the people refuse, the Islamic Republic will no longer exist, or its survival will be endangered."

However, she added that the current Majles (parliament) has disappointed the people as legislation that lawmakers approve is far from what voters are demanding. As evidence she pointed to recent amendments the lawmakers passed to the Election Law, which were mainly meant to ensure their re-election.

She further argued that the changes in the election law are unlikely to lead to economic progress or strengthening democracy and creating welfare for the nation. Siavashi reiterated that the amended election law simply serves the interests of one particular political group, presumably the ultraconservatives in Paydari Party who hold the majority of seats in the Iranian parliament. This, she said, threatens the regime's legitimacy.

Siavashi added that what is currently taking place regarding the upcoming elections is mainly meant to ensure the ultraconservatives' control of the government even at the expense of considerably lowering the turnout.

### Former lawmaker Tayebah Siavashi

She said some of the bills recently approved or being discussed at the parliament such as the laws about restricting Internet access or harsh regulations to impose the compulsory hijab on Iranian women have caused a lot of protests, but the government does not pay any attention to the people's demands or even their protests.

Contrary to the reluctance of moderates and reformists, some conservatives such as Asadollah Badamchian, the leader of the Islamic Coalition Party are keen to take part in the elections, although his traditional conservative party has little chance of winning more than a few seats in the parliament.

**Badamchian has said his party will nominate 400 candidates** for the 290 seats in the parliament. This will effectively mean that some 110 of his party members have to compete against other members, even if the party wins all the seats of the parliament.

However, not all the conservatives are determined to take part in the elections. **Ahmad Alirezabeigi, a lawmaker close to former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** told the press on Wednesday that the former President is not planning to take part in the March 2024 elections either as a candidate or as a kingmaker to promote other candidates.

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