



Members of Iran's Assembly of Experts led by Ayatollah Jannati

Iranian Hardline Cleric Says Khamenei Should Not Be Accountable

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A hardliner cleric and a loyalist to Iran's ruler Ali Khamenei has said that the Constitution does not require the Assembly of Experts to oversee his performance.

Firebrand Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami, a member of the presidium of the Assembly of Experts, made this assertion during the assembly's annual meeting. However, the Constitution's Article 111 clearly grants the Assembly of Experts the authority to supervise and even remove the Supreme Leader if he is deemed "incapable of fulfilling his responsibilities as leader." Observers have called Khatami's statement unprecedented and against the Constitution.

Meanwhile, a video clip from the 1980s showed Assembly of Experts Chairman Ahmad Jannati advocating for limiting Khamenei's powers and supervising his behavior and performance. Jannati argued that such limitations were necessary to prevent chaos and distrust among the nation. Khatami, on the other hand, claimed that the law only required Assembly members to ensure that the Supreme Leader remained consistently capable of leading the nation.





Firebrand Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami in 2021

There have been disputes over the past 30 years about what exactly the Constitutional Law says about the Assembly's role, but Khatami's unprecedented attempt to do away with the AoE's supervisory role, was an elaborate act to please Khamenei.

Obviously, no one at the Assembly meeting was brave enough to tell Khatami that he was wrong, and the leader's performance needed to be supervised by the Assembly. However, the institution has been so weakened by Khamenei during the past decades that instead of controlling Khamenei, its members have been turned into Khamenei's inferior employees whose only function is to praise him twice a year during their rare meetings while most of its elderly members are seen dozing off.

Khatami claimed that some of the AoE members wish to find faults in Khamenei's performance. This was perceived as another way of intimidating other members.



Ahmad Jannati, the 97-year-old chairman of the Assembly of Experts

A scholarly article in the Koranic Studies Journal stated in 2012 that although the word supervision has not been used in article 111 of the constitution, what the article calls for cannot be done by any means other than supervising the leader's performance and behavior.

Iranian analyst Mehdi Mahdavi Azad recalled in an interview with Iran International that while the Assembly initially was debating limiting Khamenei's powers, Khamenei himself was in favor of the limitations. At that time in 1989, Khamenei at times aligned with reformist politicians either genuinely, or to garner their support. Mahdavi Azad said that Ahmad Khatami probably was backed by other radicals at the Assembly of Experts on Wednesday. However, Khamenei said once again during a meeting with students in 2000 that he was in favor of Assembly of Experts' supervision of his performance.

Since late 2000s, however, Khamenei gradually changed from a hardline cleric to a dictator who treated even his close friends such as former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani ruthlessly.

Another **Iranian analyst, Morteza Kazemian told Iran International** that "The six clerics appointed by Khamenei to the Guardian council were handpick radicals. During the past way, Khamenei has changed the Assembly's combination to serve his own interests."

Kazemian quoted Ahmad Khatami as having said after an AoE meeting with Khamenei in 2006 that he was against the Assembly's supervision of his performance although according to Khatami, a majority of the Assembly's member believed there should be checks and balances on Khamenei and his financial conglomerate which holds a large part of the country's assets.

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