



Former president Hassan Rouhani during a religious ceremony in Tehran

## Iranians Indifferent To Rouhani's Political Demise

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Politics Iran

A day after former president Hassan Rouhani was barred from running in the upcoming March 1 election, the Iranian public remained indifferent to his situation.

Iranian hardliners controlling a conspicuous vetting mechanism told the former president that **he was barred for running for re-election** at Assembly of experts that will elect the next Supreme Leader after Ali Khamenei's death.

Most Iranian analysts attributed the indifference to Rouhani's political positions and performance during his presidency, especially in his second term from 2017-2021.

Iranian **social media researcher Mohammad Rahbari has found** that based on Google Trends metrics application, during the past day, the majority of Iran-based queries on the Google search engine were related to **the execution of 23-year-old** political prisoner Mohammad Ghobadlou. The number of searches about Rouhani were significantly less than those about **the rising dollar rate**, Ghobadlou and even Raisi.

Meanwhile, Iran International TV analyst Mehdi Mahdavi Azad argued that the people could not care less about Rouhani's disqualification as he has disappointed Iranians after over 20 million of them voted for him in 2013 and 2017 by taking side with Khamenei and his hardline supporters.



Former president Hassan Rouhani during a press conference to announce his candidacy for the Assembly of Experts for Leadership (November 2023)

A similar viewpoint was expressed by investigative reporter Mojtaba Pourmohsen in a report on Iran International TV on January 25. Pourmohsen further suggested that Rouhani's disqualification signaled Khamenei's intention to nominate his son, Mojtaba, as the next Supreme Leader.

Ali Hossein Ghazizadeh, another Iran International analyst, attributed the people's indifference to Rouhani's disqualification to his inability to address the people's demands during his presidency. Ghazizadeh said that Rouhani led the people to believe that change was impossible in the Islamic Republic, regardless of who was the head of the executive branch of the government. He added that even those who support the regime no longer believe in the possibility of any positive change in Iran by voting in the elections.

Morad Veisi a senior Iran analyst told Iran International TV that the development marks the end of the moderate camp in Iran which was led by Rouhani.

In another analytical comment, **Iran-based reformist commentator Abbas Abdi suggested** that Rouhani's disqualification was more about what he could do in the future than about his past actions or inactions. Abdi was likely referring to Rouhani's potential role in determining Iran's next leader at the Assembly of Experts.

Other Iranian analysts questioned what Rouhani had accomplished during his 24 years as a member of the Assembly of Experts, the body tasked with choosing the Islamic Republic's next leader. They also raised concerns about his continued presence within the Assembly, where most members were political rivals or even adversaries.

Rasoul Montajabnia, the Secretary-General of the Reformist Jomhouriat Party, **expressed concern** that Rouhani's absence could lead to low voter turnout in the upcoming elections on March 1, as even those who had intended to participate might be discouraged after Rouhani's disqualification.

Meanwhile, an adviser to former Expediency Council Chief Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, **Gholam Ali Rajai said that Rouhani's disqualification will entail other developments**. Rajai said that conservative figure and former intelligence operative and Justice Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi has also been disqualified and barred from taking part as an Assembly of Experts election candidate. He said this was a source for concern, but did not explain why.

Former Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi, another former intelligence chief, was also barred from both Majles and Assembly of Experts elections, leading observers to speculate that political purification might be occurring within Iran's intelligence community.

Some analysts speculated that an unlikely decree by Khamenei could reinstate Rouhani in the Assembly of Experts election, but a defeat in that election would be a significant setback for the former President.

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