

Iran: The Week in Review

August 16, 2013

- August 9: During the Friday prayer ceremony at Tehran University, which also marked the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr), Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [told](#) worshipers, “Today, the world of Islam is faced with great problems. Unfortunately, we are located in a region in which there are certain problems in countries around us. Many of these problems have been injected and imposed by foreigners. If it was not for the intervention of foreigners, if it was not for the hostile policies of global powers, the events that are taking place in West Asia and North Africa today would definitely not be as complex as they are at the present time. Today, the cure for these problems lies in the fact that nations should make a decision on their own. Others should not intervene. This is the only cure for the events that occur in the region today. The same cure can be used for Egypt, Libya, and Syria. If foreigners do not intervene and if they do not inject discord, nations can find the way out of such conditions with the wisdom of their own and with the guidance of their own leaders and wise personalities.” Iranian state-run English news PressTV reported on the event with a short [video clip](#) in English, and Mehr News posted [photographs](#) of the Friday prayer ceremony at Tehran University. Photos reveal many of the top government and military officials who were in attendance.
- August 9: Dissident cleric Ayatollah Dastgheib made a public statement [urging](#) the powerful officials of the country to work hard for the release of opposition leaders Mir Hussein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi as well as other political prisoners. Opposition website Kalame reports: “There are some powerful figures in the country who do not have an official government position or title but their words can be very effective. Why don’t they step up and try to do something good for their friends (release Mousavi and Karroubi) and voice their discontent?”
- August 9: Former president and head of the Expediency Council Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani described what he thinks is the future of “moderation” and [said](#), “Extremism and hypocrisy lead to isolation.” Rafsanjani explained, “The goal is moderation, Islamic realism. Extremist rhetoric is loud but it does not get anything accomplished. Society has moved toward the path of moderation and people are more educated. There is an increase of knowledge and information. Slogans do help somewhat in mobilizing the masses toward a specific purpose, but this is not an easy task. The future of Iran, based on a clear and transparent flow of information, is the only way to convince and satisfy the majority of the people.”
- August 11: President Hassan Rouhani [appointed](#) Elham Aminzadeh as the first woman in his cabinet. She will take on the position of Vice President for Legal Affairs. Women’s rights activists have been vocal since Rouhani’s election to include female cabinet members in his administration. Aminzadeh studied political science while at the University of Tehran and, like Rouhani, she earned her Ph.D. from the University in Glasgow in Scotland. She is also a former parliamentarian having served in the 7th parliament.
- August 11: ISNA posted [photos](#) of mass arrests of drug addicts and drug dealers in Tehran, including men and women.
- August 12: President Hassan Rouhani went to Parliament in order to formally defend his proposed cabinet. In what was at times a tense back and forth between the newly inaugurated president and members of parliament, Mehr News [published](#) what it calls “The 19 most important arguments (from parliamentarians) in favor of and opposed to President Rouhani’s suggested cabinet picks.” Iranian state English news service PressTV provided [video](#) and English translation of Rouhani’s full introductory speech on the first day of his speech in parliament and a few responses from parliamentarians.

- August 12: ISNA posted a series of [photographs](#) of the first parliamentary debate of President Rouhani's proposed cabinet.
- August 12: During the parliamentary discussion of President Rouhani's proposed cabinet, reformist parliamentarian Ali Motahari [said](#), "Some of these excuses (made by parliamentarians) should not be used in order to reject some of the proposed candidates. I am in full support of the entire proposed cabinet's expertise and experience." Motahari also addressed allegations made by some conservative lawmakers that some of the president's nominees were part of the sedition and had a role in the riots after the 2009 presidential election. "It is clear that none of the proposed ministers had a role in the sedition, and this shouldn't be justification to reject their nomination. If anyone can claim this, please show us the evidence," stated Motahari.
- August 12: One of the sons of former President Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mehdi Hashemi, [wrote](#) a public letter to the Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani in which he criticizes lawmakers and even Larijani himself for publicly criticizing the Rafsanjani family in parliament and outside a court of law. Mehr News posted the full text of the letter in which Mehdi Hashemi questions why none of his letters of appeal have been read in Parliament. He explains, "Although I do have some (criminal) charges pending against me, I still have the same constitutional rights as any other citizen of Iran. You are a top legislator but maybe I should invite you to study the rights of the people in the third chapter of the constitution."
- August 13: On the second day of parliamentary vetting of President Rouhani's proposed cabinet, the nominee for the Education Ministry, Mohammad Ali Najafi, [responded](#) to his conservative critics and defended himself by denying any involvement in the post-2009 presidential election events, also known as the sedition. "If there is a photo, or even a witness that can prove that I was in the rallies in 1388 (2009), I will accept it, but even those would be lies and slander. We even tried to throw water on the fire that was the sedition while there were those individuals who wanted to throw gasoline on it," said Najafi.
- August 13: President Rouhani's proposed Minister of Culture, Ali Jannati, publicly stated his position regarding the controversial topic of the closure of Iran's independent cinema organization "The House of Cinema." He [said](#), "The House of Cinema is a place that should be strengthened. Unfortunately in the past there were some issues that led to the closure of the center, and this has disappointed and raised concerns for many film directors. If I receive a vote of confidence from Parliament, I will take the first opportunity to review the problems the House of Cinema faces and facilitate the legal conditions necessary to reopen it."
- August 13: Mohammed Javad Zarif, President Rouhani's nominee for Foreign Minister, used day two of parliamentary deliberations on Rouhani's cabinet nominees to defend himself from critics in Parliament who accused him of a weak and passive foreign policy plan for the foreign ministry. Zarif outlined his plan in front of the Parliament and [said](#), "Iran's strategic power should be based on the goal of advancing and improving government policies so that from a position of independence we can develop closer cooperation with other governments and institutions around the world, which in turn will improve the lives of the people." Zarif also took a moment to defend himself from accusations that he tried to obtain a U.S. green card this past year during the Persian New Year holiday. "During the entire year of 1392, there hasn't been a single moment that I left the country (Iran)," said Zarif. He continued, "At the age of 47 I decided to retire and stay home. Despite several foreign universities offering me teaching positions over the past six years, I stayed in Iran." Iranian state English news service PressTV also provided a short [video](#) report with English translations of parliamentarians discussing Zarif's qualifications and his future agenda as a Foreign Minister nominee.
- August 13: Mehr News posted two sets of photos of day two of Parliament's deliberation of President Rouhani's proposed cabinet nominees. Set [one](#) and set [two](#) provide a glimpse into the deliberations and political jockeying of members of parliament.

- August 14: ISNA posted [photos](#) of day three of Parliament's session debating President Rouhani's proposed cabinet nominees.
- August 14: Fars News reported whether members of Parliament supported or opposed the nomination of Ali Jannati as the proposed Minister of Culture and Guidance. Representative Heidarpour supported his nomination and [said](#), "The revolution was victorious in the name of religion. A main slogan of the revolution was culture, and this is something that Mr. Jannati knows well... He has been a student of the late Ayatollah Sadiqi, Ayatollah Behesti, Ayatollah Montazeri, and Ayatollah Rafsanjani as well." Representative Karim Ghoddousi was opposed to Jannati's nomination and declared, "This (nomination) is a return to the time of the (reformist period) and nonsense moderation, and look at Khatami's cabinet now? Where are they?"
- August 14: Mohammed Reza Sadegh, an adviser to President Rouhani, defended the president's pick for Oil Minister, Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, and rejected reports about Zanganeh withdrawing his nomination. "The individual that the president has nominated as the oil minister of the 11th administration is among the most competent and deserving of individuals. The president has defended him strongly and will continue to do so," [said](#) Sadegh. Even though a letter was sent to the president on behalf of a number representatives in Parliament asking for the nominee's withdrawal, Sadegh reiterated that the president's decision will not change.
- August 15: Day four of Parliament's session on President Rouhani's proposed cabinet nominees centered around the criticism on the proposed Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh. Zanganeh has been accused of economic corruption during his previous tenure as Oil Minister by parliamentarians opposed to his nomination. The former oil minister defended himself and [said](#), "Hostile Western sanctions have targeted our oil industry for years and our managers and employees in the oil industry have been in the forefront in dealing with these hostile sanctions... Wherever there is money, there is corruption, but I have never caved in or consented to corruption." Iranian state English news service PressTV also provided a short [video report](#) with English translations of parliamentary deliberations regarding Zanganeh's nomination.
- August 15: Mehr News posted a series of [photographs](#) of day four of Parliament's debate on President Rouhani's proposed cabinet nominees.
- August 15: Parliamentarian Ali Motahari [defended](#) Jafar Meyli Monfared, President Rouhani's nominee for the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, from accusations that he would promote secularism within the university system and that he was involved in the 2009 post-presidential election events. He said, "Monfared had played no role in the sedition. Why is it that anyone who is thought to have a role after the Guardian Council's announcement and the Supreme Leader's speech (in summer of 2009) after the street protests continued is labeled a seditionist? It could be true, but this is unacceptable. We cannot say that anyone who was in or around Mr. Mousavi's campaign headquarters is a seditionist. And I am not just speaking about one individual, I am speaking in relation to all of (Rouhani's) ministers that none of them had a role in the events of 1388 (2009)," said Motahari.
- August 15: In case some of President Rouhani's nominees receive a vote of no-confidence, the names of a few individuals have been [put forward](#) to be tapped as "caretaker ministers" until a permanent minister can be confirmed by Parliament. The ministries that could receive a vote of no-confidence are the Oil Ministry, Science and Education Ministry, and the Youth and Sports Ministry. Akbar Torkan, current senior advisor to President Rouhani, has been named as a substitute for the Oil Ministry. Masoumeh Ebtekar, former MP and the first female vice president under former President Khatami, has been named as a substitute for the Science and Education Ministry. Yassir Hashemi and Dr. Pournajati have been named backups for the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. In addition, another female politician, Soheila Javadzadeh, has been named as a backup for the Ministry of Social Welfare.

- August 15: Parliament will put a final vote for President Rouhani's cabinet nominees after day four's proceedings, according to Vice Speaker of Iran's Parliament Mohammad Reza Bahonar. Speaking to Parliament's official news agency, the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency, Bahonar [said](#), "Voting for nominees will be extended until 8 pm (Tehran time), and if the debate regarding the qualifications of the remaining nominees does not conclude by then, a third shift will be necessary for the voting results to be announced." He also said, "they (parliamentarians) would like to see the vote of confidence session conclude today."
- August 15: An adviser to President Rouhani, Mohammed Reza Sadegh, [said](#), "Once President Rouhani's administration and cabinet has been finalized and established, we will then set an itinerary for the president's trip to New York City" to attend the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September.
- August 15: Mehr News posted [photos](#) of the police exhibiting the interception of smuggled satellite dishes and satellite equipment at police headquarters where they are to be destroyed. The use of satellite dishes in Iran is illegal but is still popular among the general public.
- August 15: The Iranian Parliament approved the majority of President Rouhani's proposed cabinet of ministers. With the majority of nominees being approved, the Rouhani administration can officially get under way and begin its work. Mehr News posts a series of [photos](#) of the final day of vetting and the actual voting by the members of Parliament. 15 out of the 18 nominees received a vote of confidence, while 3 nominees failed to garner enough votes. Fars News provides a [chart](#) with a tally breakdown of the final results of the Parliament's votes. They are as follows:
- The Iranian parliament members gave votes of confidence to:
 1. Mahmoud Alavi-Tabar as Intelligence Minister with 227 Yes Votes, 38 Nays and 18 Abstentions; former Member of Parliament and member of the Assembly of Experts
 2. Abdol-Reza Rahmani Fazli as Interior Minister with 256 Yes Votes, 19 Nays and 9 Abstentions. Former head of the Supreme Audit Court
 3. Mohammad Javad Zarif as Foreign Affairs Minister with 232 Yes Votes, 36 Nays and 13 Abstentions; former Iranian representative to the U.N Mission in New York
 4. Bijan Namdar Zanganeh as Oil Minister with 166 Yes Votes, 104 Nays and 13 Abstentions; former Oil, Energy, and Agricultural Minister
 5. Hamid Chitchian as Energy Minister with 272 Yes Votes, 7 Nays and 5 Abstentions; former Deputy Energy Minister
 6. Abbas Akhoundi as Road and Urbanization Minister with 159 Yes Votes, 107 Nays and 18 Abstentions; former Minister of Housing and Accommodation
 7. Mahmoud Hojjati as Agricultural Jihad Minister with 177 Yes Votes, 81 Nays and 26 Abstentions; former Minister of Agriculture
 8. Hossein Dehqan as Defense Minister with 269 Yes Votes, 10 Nays and 5 Abstentions; former Deputy Defense Minister and former Commander of IRGC
 9. Mahmoud Vaezi as Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister with 218 Yes Votes, 45 Nays and 20 Abstentions; former diplomat and has held numerous deputy ministerial positions
 10. Ali Tayyebnia as Economy and Financial Affairs Minister with 274 Yes Votes, 7 Nays and 3 Abstentions; professor at Tehran University and former Deputy of Planning
 - 11- Seyed Hassan Qazizadeh Hashemi as Health, Treatment and Medical Training Minister with 260 Yes Votes, 18 Nays and 6 Abstentions; former dean of Tehran Medical School and Secretary of the Council of Medical Education under Khatami's administration
 12. Ali Rabi'ee as Cooperative, Labor and Social Welfare Minister with 163 Yes Votes, 100 Nays and 21 Abstentions; former executive committee member of the Supreme National Security Council and representative to the Intelligence Ministry under former President Khatami
 13. Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi as Justice Minister with 201 Yes Votes, 64 Nays and 19 Abstentions; former Intelligence Minister and Deputy Minister of Information
 14. Mohammad Reza Ne'matzadeh as Industry, Mining and Trade Minister with 199 Yes Votes, 60 Nays and 24 Abstentions; former Industry Minister as well as Deputy Oil Minister
 15. Ali Jannati as Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister with 234 Yes Votes, 36 Nays and 12 Abstentions; former Ambassador to Kuwait and previously worked in Ministry of Culture under Ali Larijani

- The Parliamentarians did not give votes of confidence to:
 1. Jafar Mili-Monfared as Science, Research and Technology Minister with 105 Yes Votes, 162 Nays and 15 Abstentions; was disqualified for being too sympathetic to reformists and the Green Movement
 2. Mohammad Ali Najafi as Education and Training Minister with 142 Yes Votes, 133 Nays and 9 Abstentions; was disqualified for being too close to Mehdi Karroubi as he was a senior advisor during his 2009 presidential campaign
 3. Massoud Soltani-Far as Sports and Youths Minister with 117 Yes Votes, 148 Nays and 18 Abstentions
- August 16: President Rouhani [named](#) former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi as the new head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). Salehi will be replacing nuclear scientist Fereydoun Abbasi who in 2010 survived an assassination attempt on his life. Salehi [expressed](#) hope that he would be able to "successfully continue the path of his predecessors and fulfill the heavy responsibility of serving the country's national interests by further boosting the achievements of the AEOI."
- August 16: Newly approved Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke about his new position and [said](#), "I will use my power (as Foreign Minister) to raise the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I will do whatever I can in my capacity to help decrease the pressure on the people." Zarif also said that his first order of diplomatic business as Foreign Minister of Iran is to deal with the on-going crisis in Egypt, and that his first foreign trip as minister will be to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Kyrgyzstan.
- August 16: Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani [said](#) that as early as next week, he along with the head of the Judiciary, Sadegh Larijani, as well as the head of the executive branch Hassan Rouhani will all come together to conduct their first meeting as heads of all three branches of government. Larijani also [stated](#) that the heated and solemn parliamentary debates on the credentials of proposed ministers proved the democratic nature of the political system in the Islamic Republic. "Such discussions in the Parliament are proof of the high position of democracy in Iran and show that the three branches of government are independent from each other," the speaker said.

By Hanif Zarrabi-Kashani



Additional updates of "Iran: The Week in Review" are available [here](#).