

Iran: The Week in Review

August 22, 2013

- August 17: Faezeh Hashemi, the daughter of former president and current head of Iran's Expediency Council Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, was [acquitted](#) of charges of disorderly conduct in Tehran's Revolutionary Court.
- August 17: Iran's new Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Mahmoud Vaezi, [announced](#) that one of his main priorities as minister is to increase the speed and scope of Internet services in the country by means of infrastructure development, research, and development services as they are "rights of the citizens." Khabar Online posted a [list of popular demands](#) by its readers of what they would like to see the new minister take on. A few of the top demands of the people include: increasing the speed of the national Internet, reducing the cost of Internet service providers, allowing the use of Facebook and Twitter, and removing satellite signal jamming.
- August 17: President Hassan Rouhani held the first meeting with his cabinet members in Tehran where the president [thanked](#) the Iranian people for their vote for his government of "prudence and hope" and vowed that the government will make every effort to improve people's lives. The first cabinet meeting dealt specifically with the economy. Rouhani [announced](#) the first legislation of his administration would relate to the economy to improve the urgent situation regarding the rising costs of basic commodities in the second half of the Iranian calendar year (which ends in the third week of March) as this immediately affects people's livelihoods. The president also stated that his economic cabinet and team will meet two times per week due to the urgency of the economic situation. Mehr News posted a series of [photos](#) of the first photo-op of Rouhani and his full cabinet after the recent four-day nomination process in Parliament.
- August 17: During his valediction ceremony and alongside his replacement, Ali Akbar Salehi, the former head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Fereydoun Abbasi [said](#), "Iran has a total of 18,000 centrifuges, 10,000 of which are currently running. More than 10,000 centrifuges are operational and another 7,000 are ready to be installed." ISNA posted a series of [photographs](#) of the ceremony.
- August 18: Ali Rabi'i, the new Labor Minister of Iran, made a dramatic first decision as minister as he [dismissed](#) controversial ex-judge Saeed Mortazavi and current director of Iran's Social Security Organization. Former President Ahmadinejad had instilled him as caretaker of the organization after Mortazavi was not confirmed by Parliament for a different ministerial position due to his role in the Kahrizak detention center during the post-presidential election protests of 2009 where a number of inmates were murdered. Rabi'i has appointed Samadollah Firuzi as the caretaker of the Social Security Organization.
- August 18: Ismail Haniyeh, the Palestinian Prime Minister of Hamas, sent a letter to Iran's new Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, [congratulating](#) him on his new position and Iran's strong support of the Palestinian state. "I'd like to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to you and the Iranian government, and I pray for your success and victory in progress for our allied and brotherly nation of Iran," said Haniyeh.
- August 19: Former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad [appointed](#) several of his close allies who served in his previous administration to head senior posts at his international university, tentatively named "Iranian University." Ahmadinejad's Former Economy Minister, Shamseddin Hosseini, was appointed head of the economics and finance department; Mohammad Reza Sham-Ardakani, senior adviser to Iran's Academy of Sciences, as head of the medical department; Hamid Baqa'i, former vice president for executive affairs, as deputy head of logistics; and Behrouz Moradi, former vice president for planning and strategic supervision, as deputy head of planning and programming. It has been [reported](#) that Ahmadinejad's close confidant and former presidential candidate Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaie will also work at the university in some capacity.

- August 19: Ali Akbar Velayati, former presidential candidate, foreign minister, and current senior foreign advisor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, spoke about the nuclear issue and direct talks with the United States. He [said](#) that the onus was on the West to reach out to Iran, but pledged that Iran would respond with a "different language" from the language used by Iran's previous administration. Velayati, who advises the Supreme Leader on key matters including the nuclear issue, also [warned](#) that halting uranium enrichment failed to yield results in the past and Tehran should not repeat such experiences. Velayati continued, "We stopped all enrichment for two years. What was the result? Nothing. Every day they used to put an extra claim on their former claims. Why must we repeat this experience?"
- August 20: Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, Iran's new Interior Minister, [said](#) that his bedroom was bugged with a listening device before he became Minister of the Interior this past week. He discovered the devices in the process of moving to another home while he was head of Iran's Supreme Audit Court. During his tenure at the Supreme Audit Court, Fazli investigated Ahmadinejad at times during his presidency. Last month Tehran representative of Parliament Ali Motahari, a critic of former president Ahmadinejad, also found bugging devices in his office.
- August 20: Iran's new Minister of Culture, Ali Jannati made a surprise [declaration](#). The son of the conservative head of Iran's Guardian Council used his new ministerial position to declare that publishers will now be able to publish prior to receiving a publishing permit. "The regulatory framework for publishing should be clearly stated and provided to the publishers so they can self-regulate themselves. This action of 'permission after publication' will allow publishers to realize whether their book is consistent with the rules or not," said Jannati. He continued, "Artists and cultural figures have suffered under this prevailing security environment, and whoever hasn't done anything wrong should be able to return to their work."
- August 20: Seyed Ali Yazdikha, the education director of Tehran's school system, [said](#), "450 schools in the capital are currently on leased land and 45 of those schools are on the verge of being closed, and ten schools have already shut their doors for good." The director also spoke about a gender problem among teachers because, according to him, "More than two-thirds of teachers in Tehran are women and not having enough male teachers has become a problem. Hiring male teachers has become a priority in order to establish a proportionate rate of teachers."
- August 21: Elham Aminzadeh, Vice President for Legal Affairs and the only female cabinet member in President Rouhani's administration, was asked during a cabinet meeting whether the legislative bill regarding an increase in maternity leave from six months to nine months had been canceled or not. Aminzadeh [said](#) the matter is still pending and that the Department of Health and Center for Women is still discussing it. Rouhani's only female government representative also touched on the topic of women in government and said, "During a cabinet meeting, the president recommended that we take full advantage of women in various fields to use their abilities and potential."
- August 21: Mojtaba Shakeri, a conservative Tehran City Council member, [discussed](#) potential people who could fill the position of mayor of Tehran. Among the names he mentioned were former Oil Minister Rostam Ghassemi, former presidential candidate and secretary of the Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaie, and former presidential candidate and most recent Mayor of Tehran Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf. According to Shakeri, "Qalibaf has the best chance to win the most votes among the 31-person council." Shakeri also put to rest rumors of Mohsen Hashemi, the son of Ayatollah Rafsanjani, being able to win enough votes to become mayor. "Recently some reformist members of the council have been giving interviews with news outlets saying that Mohsen (Hashemi) has 20 votes out of 31, which is enough votes to become mayor of Tehran. Their goal was to wage a media war. The reformists alone can only put together 14 votes. Mohsen Hashemi was disqualified from running in the city council elections so how can he even become mayor? This distraction of such news deserves to be investigated," explained Shakeri.

- August 21: The president of the Iran-China Chamber of Commerce, Asadollah Asgar-Oladi, discussed economic issues during a conference on Iran's raisin production and export and [said](#), "Iran is the fourth largest raisin producer in the world, and the third largest exporter in the world behind the United States and Turkey." Asgar-Oladi also discussed unemployment and inflation and stated, "In order to fulfill this economic epic we must give attention to the young generation as they suffer from unemployment. During the presidency of (Mohammad-Ali) Rajai, Iran's population (in 1981) was 32 million. Today the population has reached 76 million, in which 40 million of them are under the age of 32, and one million of them have reached the age of 20 (which should be noted when calculating unemployment). If 700,000-800,000 jobs are not created this year, we will be facing even more problems."
 - August 21: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad-Zarif [answered](#) questions from reporters after a government meeting and reiterated, "President Rouhani still has not made a decision as to who will be leading the nuclear negotiations." There have been reports all week claiming that the negotiating responsibilities have been transferred from Iran's National Security Council to the Foreign Ministry in which Zarif would be the lead negotiator. Zarif also responded to a question about President Rouhani attending the UN General Assembly in September to which he said, "Some plans have been made regarding this trip, but it is still not clear whether or not the President will travel to New York to attend the UN General Assembly." In addition, Zarif responded to a question about Iran's envoy to the UN and said, "There still has not been a decision made as to who this will be."
 - August 21: Mehr News published [photos](#) of the funeral procession in Tehran of Iranian documentary filmmaker Hadi Baghbani. It was reported that Baghbani and his film crew were killed this week in the suburbs of Damascus while filming alongside Syrian government forces.
 - August 22: During a meeting with religious scholars in Mashhad, Mahmoud Alavi, Iran's new Intelligence Minister [said](#), "After the past four years (Ahmadinejad's 2nd term), the Ministry of Intelligence will act accordingly and serve the system and the people," and that "We will overcome our problems with tact."
 - August 22: Speaking to students in Qazvin, Basiji Commander Mohammad Reza Naqdi referred to the events after the 2009 presidential election and [said](#), "The acts of the 2009 sedition were comparably less than the acts of the 1953 Coup that re-instilled the Shah of Iran because the Shah was against the Prime Minister, but (in 2009) the seditionists went against the people the votes of the people (the system)."
- August 22: Fars News posted [photographs](#) of a female battalion receiving military weapons training as well as tactical classroom training at a Military base of Martyr Anaraki.

By Hanif Zarrabi-Kashani



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