

Iran: The Week in Review

August 8, 2013

- August 2: During the annual Quds Rally (Jerusalem Day), President-elect Hassan Rouhani made comments regarding Israel that were [misquoted](#) in Iran's own media (Rouhani never used the words "Zionist regime" in these specific comments, nor did he say "Israel needs to be removed"), which, in turn, was reported by Western media. Rouhani's actual quote was: "Today is a day when people come out and display the unity of the Islamic world against any form of oppression and aggression and that (this conflict) is an old wound that has been in the heart of the Islamic world for years, that has occupied the holy land of Palestine, and today is a reminder of that that Muslims will not forget this historical right, and will always resist aggression and oppression," said Rouhani. His exact comments on Israel were [videotaped](#) as well. *New York Times* Tehran-based correspondent, Thomas Erdbrink, also [reported](#) on the controversy, and on his Twitter account, he [tweeted](#): "Rouhani is actually remarkably mild, compared to others in Iran. Local media should be more careful with how they quote their leaders..."
- August 2: ISNA posted multiple sets of photos of the Quds Day rally, with outgoing President Mahmoud [Ahmadinejad](#), with President-elect Hassan [Rouhani](#), and with multiple sets of the rally in general: set [one](#), set [two](#), set [three](#), set [four](#), set [five](#), set [six](#), set [seven](#), set [eight](#).
- August 2: In his latest interview, outgoing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad defended his tenure during his two administrations as well as his officials and [declared](#), "I testify that all of my colleagues were committed to me (and never deviated)... I am a humble public servant. I have never signed any document of legislation that was against the interest of the nation."
- August 5: Prominent political analyst and Tehran University political science professor Sadegh Zibakalam [spoke](#) about President Hassan Rouhani's cabinet nominee Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli as Minister of the Interior, and said, "Under the current conditions, he is the best choice as Interior Minister for the country." Zibakalam also criticized the lack of women in Rouhani's cabinet by saying, "(Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad's cabinet had a female minister, which was good, but with no depth. It cannot be said that women's participation in social development was initiated during these past eight years because this is a very complex problem that is deeper than just a female cabinet minister, so Rouhani should not be faulted for this."
- August 5: Hossain Kamali, General Secretary of the Islamic Party of Iran, expressed his opinion about Hassan Rouhani's base of power and [said](#), "The new president has come to power because he had the benefit of having all the moderate groups support him." He continued, "I don't think one (political) group can say that they brought Mr. Rouhani to power or that Mr. Rouhani has a particular set of ideas. The reformists played a role (in electing him), and Mr. Rafsanjani, Mr. Khatmai, Mr. Nateq-Noori, and Mr. Hassan Khomeini, as well as labor groups and community groups." ISNA posted a set of [photos](#) of the Islamic Party of Iran Student Organization's Iftar banquet in which Mr. Kamali was present, as well as the head of the National Religious Group (Melli-Mazhabi) Ebrahim Yazdi, former reformist presidential candidate Mohammed Aref, and a number of human rights and political activists.
- August 5: The daughter of former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, Faezeh Hashemi, who until recently has been serving a jail sentence for her participation in political and female activism, was summoned to the Revolutionary Court today on the charge of disturbing public order. When asked what she was doing there, she [replied](#), "The criminal case against me has been modified," and "I cannot comment specifically about the case."

- August 6: The new president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, conducted his first official press [conference](#) as president. His newly launched presidential website posted the video of the event and an in-depth summary of his speech. ISNA posted [photos](#) of the event as well. Some of the many topics he discussed are as follows: on Syria, "Political solution in Syria requires no foreign involvement;" on women, "I'm still committed to creating equal opportunities for women; women will be in my team. Inequalities will not be resolved even if a woman is appointed as minister;" on U.S. relations, "We are looking to see if the U.S. shows good will. We never liked this carrot and stick policy. It won't work. The U.S.-led sanctions have only just made life hard for people of Iran."
- August 6: Reports [indicate](#) that Mir Hossein Mousavi returned home from the hospital after days of medical tests. This is the fourth time that Mousavi has been hospitalized in the past two years. Mousavi returned home after a few days of treatment. There were no specific details on his condition.
- August 6: The newspaper Kayhan, which is known to be close to the Supreme Leader's office, has apologized in a [side note](#) for bad mouthing President Hassan Rouhani's nominee for the Ministry for Industry and Mines, Mohammad Reza Ne'matzadeh. The note apologizes and says that "we (the newspaper) have respect for him." The newspaper has been critical of some of the ministerial appointments of President Rouhani.
- August 6: Speaking in front of a group of academics and university officials, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [said](#), "Our universities should not be influenced by political views or groups," and "the enemy (the west) is trying to infiltrate our universities classrooms."
- August 6: ISNA posted a series of profile [photographs](#) of all the former "president's men," including Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and all of his ministers and advisers.
- August 7: The Secretary General of the Islamic Coalition Party, Habibollah Asgaroladi, [said](#) that President Hassan Rouhani's cabinet is well proportioned as it is comprised of principalists and conservatives who are pro-reform. He continued, "President Rouhani's cabinet is sufficient and complete and the choices he has made for nominees are correct."
- August 7: Former reformist female parliamentarian Jamileh Kadivar [criticized](#) President Hassan Rouhani's lack of a female presence in his newly announced cabinet. Kadivar took her critique further and said, "(Mr. Rouhani's) campaign slogan of equality and equal opportunity does not create opportunities for women. Equality is an approach and an attitude, and the practice of such should be apparent on the first day of the administration. When the president doesn't even nominate a woman for his cabinet, then how are we expected to believe he will create a ministry for women's affairs?"
- August 7: British Prime Minister David Cameron [expressed](#) hope that the presidency of Hassan Rouhani will present an opportunity to improve long-strained relations between Great Britain and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In a congratulatory letter to the new Iranian president, Cameron writes, "I wanted to write to express the hope that your election will present an opportunity to improve relations between our countries." The Prime Minister also urged the Rouhani administration to "engage constructively and seriously with the international community to resolve the disputes over Iran's nuclear program." The letter also touched on Iran's role and its support in finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Syria.

- August 7: ISNA posted a series of [photos](#) of Faezeh Hashami, the daughter of former president Hashemi Rafsanjani, making her way to the front of Tehran's Revolutionary Courts in order to attend her hearing on the charge of "disturbing public order."
- August 7: In a wide-ranging interview with the Young Journalists Club, a prominent member of the Islamic Coalition Party (Islamic Front), Mohammed Nabi-Habibi, [said](#) that President Hassan Rouhani is a principalist and that the idea of "certain principalists forming an inclusive coalition of a range of conservatives is not feasible." Habibi also took time to criticize former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by saying, "The 9th and 10th administrations were limited in the sense that those administrations managers lacked managerial experience. Another weakness was the dismissal of cabinet ministers by the president himself."
- August 8: A group of Iranian political prisoners wrote a [letter](#) to President Obama asking him to end U.S. sanctions. The letter is meant to highlight "the devastating effects of crippling economic sanctions and the intensified efforts to diplomatically isolate Iran in the international community. These efforts are adversely affecting the lives of Iranian people and have resulted in severe constraints in the political life of our country." The letter, signed by 55 current and former Iranian political prisoners, concludes by saying, "We hope the opportunity created by the Iranian people and reflected in the electoral victory of President Rouhani will be seized appropriately by the United States. We also hope reciprocal good will and adoption of appropriate measures by the new government in Iran will open a new window of understanding and constructive engagement between Iran and the United States in a way that the interests of both nations will be better served."
- August 8: In an outspoken critique of the government, Grand Ayatollah Mousavi Ardebili, [said](#), "The demands of the people with regard to political and security issues needs to be seriously examined and settled. This issue demands attention because if a resolution is not reached, the people will remain unconvinced." Ardebili also criticized the status quo and said, "One of the main problems in society today is the absentmindedness of authorities and the partisanship displayed among the political elite."
- August 8: Prominent Tehran representative in parliament Ali Motahari spoke about the increasing pressure on President Hassan Rouhani's cabinet nominees to speak out against the events following the 2009 presidential election. "It is illogical and irrational to force ministers to take sides regarding this issue," [said](#) Motahari. He continued, "Currently, I have the opportunity to make my position clear (regarding this issue), which is why I do so."
- August 8: Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said that Madrid is ready to cooperate with the new Iranian administration to further expand mutual ties. Rajoy wrote a congratulatory letter to Rouhani [saying](#) he was "confident that the ties will further expand during the tenure of President Hassan Rouhani." In addition, German chancellor Angela Merkel expressed hope to see an opportunity arise during in Rouhani's administration that could further build on Iran and Germany's previous relationship. In her message, Merkel [stated](#) that "Rouhani's election raises the hope for a new phase in constructive cooperation to help promote regional and international peace and security."

By Hanif Zarrabi-Kashani



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