

Dear friends,

It appears for now the Guardian Council has rejected Rafsanjani's candidacy for President, but the election show is the same, no matter which "smiley face" is put on the regime.

Read how this farce continues to delude U.S. Policy-makers in Wednesday's Washington Times:

Every four years, the **Islamic Republic of Iran** engages in a closely choreographed farce of elections, aimed at maintaining the illusion that the Iranian people have a say in how their country is governed.

By all accounts, the farce has been successful — with Americans, if not with Iranians themselves. On June 14, the election show is set for another replay.

TIMMERMAN: Iran's free-election farce

Rafsanjani would reclaim the presidency to finish a Persian bomb



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In February 2003, Deputy Secretary of State **Richard Armitage** famously called **Iran** a "democracy." During his confirmation hearing this March, Secretary of Defense **Chuck Hagel** repeated the error, called the Islamist government in **Iran** "an elected, legitimate government, whether we agree or not," before he was forcefully corrected by **Sen. Carl Levin**, Michigan Democrat.

The **State Department** has consistently gotten this wrong as well. During the run-up to the last "election show" in 2009, it instructed the Voice of America's Persian service to support former Prime Minister **Mir Hossein Mousavi** in the hopes he could put a better face on the regime and make it more palatable to the rest of the world.

Until massive demonstrations erupted following what most Iranians believe was systematic fraud in the June 2009 balloting, **Mr. Mousavi** had no intention of making fundamental changes in the Islamic system. Indeed, he pledged loyalty to the system of absolute clerical rule that has denied the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people for the past 34 years.

A similar loyalty pledge to the system and its core ideology is required of all candidates selected by the **Council of Guardians**, a body of clerics hand-picked by the supreme leader that gets to decide who is “qualified” to run for president.

In other words, no one who does not pledge loyalty to the mullahs and their supremacy will even be allowed to run for president. That is why I call this an election “show.”

Enter former President **Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani**, a wily cleric reputed to be the wealthiest person in **Iran**, who has long been the darling of the **State Department** and the pro-Tehran lobby as someone with whom they can “do business.”

At the apparent urging of the supreme leader, whom **Mr. Rafsanjani** said had “blessed” his candidacy, **Mr. Rafsanjani** announced on May 11 that he would seek another term as president. The Voice of America and the **BBC’s** Persian service broadcasts immediately amplified the news as if **Mr. Rafsanjani’s** election were already a fait accompli.

Mr. Rafsanjani has been a key player in the Islamic republic’s leadership from the beginning, first as an aide to **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**, then as parliament speaker and de facto commander in chief during the 1981-1988 **Iran-Iraq** war, then as president from 1989 to 1997.

Widely credited with having persuaded **Ayatollah Khomeini** to revive **Iran’s** nuclear-weapons program in 1985, **Mr. Rafsanjani** has long been its biggest supporter. In 2001, after he left the presidency but continued to play a leading role as chairman of a shadowy body called the **Expediency Council**, he said that Muslim nations should acquire nuclear weapons as a counterweight to **Israel’s** alleged nuclear arsenal.

“The use of an atomic bomb against **Israel** would destroy **Israel** completely, while [use] against the world of Islam only would cause damages. Such a scenario is not inconceivable,” he told a gathering dedicated to “liberating” Jerusalem from **Israel**.

Like his colleagues in the ruling elite, **Mr. Rafsanjani** views terrorism as the enforcement arm of foreign policy. Argentinian prosecutors indicted him as one of the key decision-makers behind the 1994 bombing in Buenos Aires that killed 86 persons. A National Security Agency intercept revealed that the terrorist team that attacked Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in July 1996 and killed 19 U.S. airmen reported directly back to **Mr. Rafsanjani** himself.

Mr. Rafsanjani also has a strong track record of quashing individual freedoms. As Majlis speaker and president, he directed the intelligence services to track down dissidents and assassinate them overseas in the mid-1980s. As head of the **Expediency Council**, he backed the crackdown against the student rebellion in 1999, and remained silent during the crackdown following the 2009 elections.

Make no mistake about it: **Mr. Rafsanjani’s** goal in running for president again is to help the Islamic regime slip the noose of international sanctions and diplomatic pressures, by putting a smiley face on the regime’s domestic and international reign of terror.

Read more: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/may/22/irans-free-election-farce/#ixzz2U6ngCjAU>

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