

Decisions Iranians Must Make and Others Should Support

Written by Jamsheed K. Choksy

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JAMSHEED K. CHOKSY, JUN 25 2009

Only Iranians can choose their future, but the world must encourage their efforts.

It is absolutely accurate that Iran's presidential elections began as a matter of that nation's sovereignty. So did disputes over elections results. Management of public protests in a judicious manner was Iran's internal affair as well. None warranted involvement, other than reporting, by outsiders. The citizens of Iran had engaged in a generally transparent and relatively free election campaign for their presidency-one more vigorously contested than any election that country has experienced. The Iranian government was expected by its citizens to work toward full and fair implementation of their electoral will.

Election results are challenged and protested the world over. Nothing is new in that regard. Official reactions to electoral questions make the difference between results being accepted as legitimate or rejected as illegitimate. When Iran's government failed to investigate fully and resolve fairly the alleged election discrepancies, in accordance with the nation's own constitution and law, and particularly after the regime in Tehran and Qom resorted to threats and violence against its own public, that administration lost its claim to legitimacy.

Even the Council of Guardians of the Constitution acknowledged that the number of votes collected in at least 50 Iranian cities surpassed the number of those eligible to cast ballots in those areas and that such discrepancies totaled more than 3 million. Perhaps this was the "miracle" to which Iran's supreme leader had referred earlier in proclaiming the incumbent as returning to office, and in so doing turned voters' focus from the election results toward the root of the problem which is theocratic governance of a nation state. Perhaps Ahmadinejad did win the election, but dismissing summarily the people's concerns made a mockery of the outcome.

Issues even more vital for Iran's long-term social vibrancy spring from the recent presidential election. Iran has a very long history of authoritarianism, usually in the form of monarchy. But, given the monumental transformations that human societies have experienced during the past one hundred years, the question can be asked if that tradition is still appropriate. Many Iranians have raised very publically the issue of whether autocratic governance-now reincarnated in clerical garb-is really necessary. They want justification for why religion should dictate all political, legal, and social regulations. They seek clear, rational, answers to why clerics should hold official and powerful leadership positions in their country's politics. They wish to reconsider carefully why any single individual, whether elected or appointed, secular or religious, should wield absolute authority over their nation's entire populace. Most unfortunately, Iranians questioning and protesting the status quo have been met with repression.

It is appropriate, at this juncture, for people outside Iran to voice their support most vocally for those engaged in a struggle for legitimate governance, whatever form that administration eventually may take. Nations should no longer hesitate to exert maximum diplomatic and economic pressures upon the illegitimate regime in Iran-illegitimate because it has chosen force over discourse to resolve how it came to power and holds on to authority. The time is fitting, too, given the brutality that Iranians are experiencing at the hands of their own government, to refer the matter to the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly for the strongest possible action. With the images of terror available for all to see around the globe via the Internet, it would be more difficult-although by no means unlikely-for

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Russia and China to veto a UN Security Council resolution against Iran's government.

Likewise the world's nations cannot be seen as consenting to work with Iran's tyrannical administration, in the hope of dissuading it from nuclear weaponization and/or terrorism, at the expense of the suffering of Iran's people. Britain and the United States have made similar mistakes on previous occasions. Every freedom-loving person will benefit if the US and British administrations engaged the Iranian people directly, while isolating further the leadership of the morally-defunct regime based at Tehran and Qom. Iran's people when free of the current fundamentalist xenophobia that regulates their lives are likely to endeavor to mitigate the world's geopolitical concerns.

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