

# Iran's Presidential Election:

## The Candidates Speak

Jun 23, 2005



### Brief Analysis

Iranians will head back to the polls on June 24 to decide an unprecedented presidential runoff pitting Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad against Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Ahmadinezhad, mayor of Tehran, defied pre-election forecasts by reportedly finishing with 5,710,354 (19.5 percent) of the 29,317,042 ballots cast in the original election on June 17. Rafsanjani, president from 1989 to 1997 and current chairman of the Expediency Council, reportedly received 6,159,452 votes (21 percent). The following is a survey of each candidate's recent statements on a range of domestic and foreign policy issues. It should be noted that their past statements on some of these issues may differ with what they have said in the past few weeks.

#### MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD

Democracy. "We did not have a revolution in order to have democracy." —United Press International, May 18

"We must expand freedoms quantitatively and qualitatively, and determine ways in which freedoms could be used. The way we have been dealing with the youth on the streets does not solve anything." —Iran Daily, May 30

Attitude toward the United States. "America's unilateral move to sever its ties with the Islamic Republic was aimed at destroying the Islamic revolution. And it is for the same reason that America is trying to re-establish relations with Iran. America was free to sever its ties with Iran. But it remains Iran's decision to re-establish relations with America. And such a decision must be made after carefully considering the national interest. . . . The Islamic Republic does not fear the prospect of renewing its relations with America. But we must carefully weigh the pros and cons of such a decision and the way to implement it to avoid harming the nation's independence, dignity, and integrity." —Remarks posted on [www.mardomyar.ir](http://www.mardomyar.ir) (<http://www.mardomyar.ir/>) (translation provided by BBC Monitoring)

Nuclear Activities. "Nuclear energy is the scientific achievement of the Iranian nation. Our youth have crowned themselves with this achievement, via domestic technology and by reliance on their own knowledge. The energy belongs to the Iranian nation. Definitely, the progress of a nation cannot be obstructed. Scientific, medical, and technical development of our nation is necessary. . . . The technology is at the disposal of the Iranian nation. Certain powers do not want to believe this. They resist a bit against accepting such a right, such an achievement of the Iranian nation. Their scientists and experts have admitted that the Iranian nation is entitled to this right. I believe the problem can be solved with prudence and wisdom, by utilizing opportunity and relying on the endless power of the Iranian nation, through our self-confidence." —Interview with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, June 8

The Economy. "The sort of work they do in the [Tehran] stock exchange is like gambling, so it has got to be closed." —Washington Post, June 22

#### ALI AKBAR HASHEMI RAFSANJANI

Democracy. "I certainly believe in democracy, but I believe we have to take this course step by step. But in Iran after

the revolution we have always had true democracy. Our constitution was also approved by the overwhelming vote of the people. Everything in Iran relies on the vote of the people. What else would be your definition of democracy besides this?" —Time, June 13

"Our press is in a good situation and their freedom can develop. We cannot fight against satellite television and the internet. But there are bad things that all people have to fight against, including the Europeans. We need a global method so this very useful tool does not destroy the culture and values of people." —Agence France Presse, June 10

Attitude toward the United States. "[America] is a giant and angry country which may cause some annoyance. When I say that if the Islamic world unites, it will be able to ask for its rights, I do not want to say that we should go and fight or take violent measures. I am just saying that the other side also has serious problems. If we act in a united manner, we can at least secure our rights." —Friday prayer sermon broadcast by the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, April 29 (translation provided by BBC Monitoring)

"[The United States] should show signs and indications of goodwill so our society can trust them. And if that happens, I don't see any problem with talking to the United States and reaching the goals, the shared goals of the two nations. . . . I am going for a policy of relaxation of tension and détente, and this is a policy that I will apply to the United States as well. And if Americans are sincere in the cooperation, working with Iran, I think the time is right to open [a] new chapter in our relations with the United States. But if the United States wants to continue its obstructions and hostility, then the previous, the past conditions will persist." —CNN, June 14

"[The Americans] should move more quickly to hand over the running of Iraq to the Iraqis and try to leave Iraq as soon as possible. Of course, with the wishes of the Iraqi people this path is being pursued. "We view the creation of the Iraqi parliament as a positive step and in fact the Iraqi people elected it. The formation of the government we view positively too." Apart from certain areas the Americans have not interfered too much, but while they are in Iraq they should not oppress the Iraqi people. Now in Iraq they are abusing the rights of the people in a terrible way in the streets, in prisons, in their homes, they are creating a state of terror." —Newsnight (BBC 2), June 15

Nuclear Activities. "One of the motives I became a candidate for the ninth presidential elections was to solve the nuclear problem for myself and the world because of my knowledge of global diplomacy. I believe we should try to allay the concerns of Europe and even the U.S. in this respect. We should assure them that they are not right in their concern that Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons. . . . Any compromise on the nuclear issue will mean offering a piece of Iranian soil to foreigners. How can we compromise on the general right of nations to attain nuclear technology? The issue is the right of the nation. I think no government will allow itself to give up the right of the nation or deny them the right—the right that is in conformity with international regulations." —Interview with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, June 13

Terrorism. "This allegation of support for terrorism, this allegation against Iran, is really a brutal judgment. In Iran, we are really victims of terrorism. . . . [Recently] there have been explosions, bombings in Iran, and you do not have these sort of bombings in [the] United States. This shows that Iran is really a target of terrorism, and Iran, more than any other country, has campaigned and fought terrorism." —CNN, June 14

"When al-Qaeda was on the run from Afghanistan crossing through Iran, some were arrested and they are imprisoned. Some of them are charged with some actions in Iran. . . . Several have been repatriated to related countries. Those who have remained are those who have committed crimes here and are awaiting trial." —USA Today, February 6

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