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## Reformists grieve lack of access to state media Shun pro-west candidates: Iran supreme leader



Iran's supreme leader urges Iranians to shun pro-Western candidates in a televised speech (File)

TEHRAN (Agencies)

Iran's Supreme leader urged his people on Monday not to vote for pro Western presidential candidates, while reformists complain about a lack of access to state media in the run-up to next month's election.

"Be careful in your choice. Do not let those come into office with people's votes who would want to surrender to our enemies and make the nation lose its dignity," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a televised speech in the western province of Kordestan.

Khamenei said that it would be a "catastrophe" for Iran if a candidate who "thinks about endearing himself to some Western power or an international arrogant" is elected next month.

"(Vote not for) those who would want to flatter the West and bullying Western powers in order to gain a position in the international arena. These things are of no value to the Iranian people."

### Support for Ahmadinejad

His latest remarks again indicate Khamenei's support for hard-line incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is seeking a second four-year term in office in the June 12 poll.

Ahmadinejad's presidency has seen the Islamic republic adopt an aggressive stance towards Western powers, especially the United States.

Despite gestures such as congratulating U.S. President Barack Obama on his victory and writing to world leaders including former president George W. Bush, the firebrand Ahmadinejad is famous for his opposition to Washington.

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In the presidential election he will stand against former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, ex-parliament speaker Mehdi Karroubi and former Revolutionary Guards head Mohsen Rezai.

### Reformists grieve

Supporters of Mousavi, prime minister during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, and those of reformist Karroubi, complained of lack of access to state media, which is run by conservatives, some of them close to President Ahmadinejad.

Mousavi on Monday launched a newspaper to help reformists spread their political agendas. The front page of the first issue of daily Kalemeh Sabz (Green Word) carried pictures of Mousavi and prominent backer former president Mohammad Khatami, and a banner quoting Mousavi as saying "Human rights and freedom are the ideals of the competent (candidates)."

An editorial said the newspaper aimed to be a "mirror reflecting everything...and shedding light on our future path."

In a front-page 28-point "citizen's rights charter," Mousavi said he would back basic freedoms, ban torture and censorship and increase welfare benefits for women, workers and the aged. State radio and television deny being biased.

Mousavi is considered by many moderates and even some conservatives as Ahmadinejad's strongest challenger in the election.

Many believe his experience from the war years would help him in leading Iran's economy during the global crisis.

Reformists have said trips across Iran by Ahmadinejad before the authorized campaigning period which starts on May 22 amount to illegal electioneering and should be cancelled. Ahmadinejad has denied this and refused to restrict his provincial visits.