

Tuesday, 09 June 2009

Rafsanjani writes open letter after Ahmadinejad attacks Iran's ex-premier calls for "clean" elections



Rafsanjani (on poster) heads the Assembly of Experts that chooses Iran's supreme leader

DUBAI (AlArabiya.net)

Former Iranian president Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani called for a "clean and glorious" election after incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad verbally attacked him during an electoral debate, Iranian news agencies reported on Tuesday.

"In the time left, it seems necessary that the nation's and your demand to hold clean and glorious elections with high turnout be met," Rafsanjani said in an open letter to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei three days before the upcoming elections.

"This can save the country from dangers and create national trust and unity," he added.

Rafsanjani's letter came after Ahmadinejad accused the former president and his family of corruption and embezzlement during last week's live televised debate against moderate challenger Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Ahmadinejad went on to charge that some of Mousavi's supporters, especially sons of Rafsanjani, had received financial privileges in the past.

"I am expecting you to resolve this position in order to extinguish the fire, whose smoke can be seen in the atmosphere, and to foil dangerous plots," Rafsanjani said in the letter to Khamenei.

The incumbent, who is seeking a second four-year term, also said he and his government had come under sustained attack from Mousavi and his supporters, who include Rafsanjani and reformist former president Mohammad Khatami.

"It is unfortunate that such irresponsible remarks devoid of any truth would come from Ahmadinejad

during his latest debate with Mir Hussein Mousavi," Rafsanjani said.

"The events preceding and following the debate conjured bitter memories and baseless discourse of the hypocrites and those groups against the Islamic revolution," the letter said, referring to previous charges fired against the Islamic Revolution's vanguards in the 2005 presidential elections.

Rafsanjani accused Ahmadinejad of using slander as a tactic to cover up for the recent one billion dollar loss in last year's budget.

Clerics agree

On Sunday, Rafsanjani's office complained over the refusal of state television head Ezzatollah Zarghami, who rejected a request by the influential cleric to respond to the allegations on his station.

Fourteen high-ranking clerics from the holy Shiite city of Qom echoed Rafsanjani's remarks, expressing "deep concern and regret" that Iran's image had been harmed in the debate.

"Accusing those who were not present at that debate and could not defend themselves is against our religion," they said in a statement published by Mehr news agency.

However Ayatollah Khamenei, who has millions of loyalists, has implicitly voiced support for Ahmadinejad, urging the nation to vote for anti-Western candidates who live in a simple and modest way -- traits attributed to the president.

Rafsanjani, who served as president of the Islamic Republic from 1989-1997, is the chairman of the Assembly of Experts, the body that is charged with electing the Supreme Leader of Iran, giving him influence over Khamenei.

He is also the chairman of the Expediency Discernment Council of Iran, tasked with resolving legislative conflicts between the parliament and Council of Guardians.