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## Foreign Ministry claims employee played "remarkable role" UK embassy staff secretly managing unrest: Iran



Presidential candidate Karroubi calls Ahmadinejad's government "illegitimate" (File)

DUBAI (Al Arabiya)

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that one of three local British embassy staff still in detention had had a "remarkable role" in last month's post-election unrest in the Islamic Republic, according to a semi-official news agency.

Five of the detained Iranian staff at the British embassy in Tehran were freed while four were still being held for questioning, according to British officials. Wednesday's Fars news agency report suggested that one more person had also been freed.

"Among the three detained British embassy staff there was one who ... had a remarkable role during the recent unrest in managing it behind the scenes," Fars said, without giving a source.

It said another embassy employee had been a "main element behind the riots" but that she had been freed because she enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

The same news agency first revealed the detentions of what it said was eight British embassy staff on Sunday, saying they were accused of stirring unrest after Iran's disputed June 12 election, which moderate opponents of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad say was rigged in his favor.

Iran has accused Western powers, but especially Britain, of inciting street protests and violence and the two countries have exchanged tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions. Britain has rejected the accusations.

### Ahmadinejad cancels trip

Also on Wednesday, President Ahmadinejad's office announced his trip to an African Union summit in Libya has been cancelled without giving any reason.

"The president's visit to the summit that was supposed to start on Wednesday has been cancelled," said a presidential office spokesman.

Ahmadinejad was scheduled to join the summit of African leaders, which is set to get underway in Libya, to investigate Agricultural investment in Africa.

### **Karroubi says government not "legitimate"**

Meanwhile defeated Iranian candidate Mehdi Karroubi refused to recognize the Ahmadinejad's re-election after an electoral watchdog confirmed the results despite allegations of fraud, a statement on his Etemad Melli party website said on Wednesday.

The statement prompted authorities to halt the publication of the party newspaper.

"Last night, after Karroubi's statement was released, representatives of the Tehran prosecutor and the culture ministry prevented the publication of Etemad Melli newspaper," the party said on its website.

"They wanted the statement censored and not published -- so the newspaper will not be published today."

The newspaper is one of the few reformist publications to have survived a crackdown under Ahmadinejad's rule.

However, its chief editor Mohammad Ghoochani is among scores of reformist leaders and journalists detained in a crackdown by the authorities on opposition activists and protesters in the wake of the disputed election.

### **Protests not tolerated**

On Tuesday Iran warned the opposition that it will tolerate no further protests after the official poll watchdog upheld the re-election of Ahmadinejad over complaints of fraud.

Defeated reformist candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi's camp remained defiant, reiterating a demand for the cancellation of the June 12 vote which unleashed the worst crisis in Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"We believe that the damaged confidence of people will not be restored about the election with the opinion of a body the majority of whose members has earlier expressed their open support to one candidate," said the reformist Combatant Clerics' Assembly.

Another pro-reform group, the Islamic Revolution Mujahedeen Organisation (IMRO) said it considered that the election had "no legitimacy" and that it would "use all legal means to peacefully combat the illegal government."

### **Calls for crackdown**

But opposition to Ahmadinejad's victory appeared to be waning as the massive street protests seen in the immediate aftermath of the election become sporadic gatherings easily dispersed by riot police and the Basij militia.

The head of the seminary in Qom -- Iran's clerical nerve center -- called for a sustained crackdown on

protests, saying demonstrators were "treading the path of the world's arrogance", a term Iranian leaders use to describe the United States. "The regime must confront them," said Ayatollah Morteza Moghtadai.

Ahmadinejad himself said: "We must use all the capacities to break the monopoly of the global powers."

And the official electoral watchdog, the Guardians Council, warned defeated candidates that its decision on Monday evening to uphold official results giving the hard-line incumbent a landslide first-round victory were no longer subject to challenge.

"They cannot object or protest in any other way," council spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodai told reporters.

"The Guardians Council is the final authority on the election and we announced our decision unanimously."

The watchdog had recounted 10 percent of the ballot boxes in what it described as a "thorough and comprehensive investigation" but the opposition boycotted the process.

The watchdog's deputy head, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, told the Fars news agency: "If people like me remain in the Guardians Council and if Mousavi is a candidate in the next election, we will not approve him."

(With Agencies)