

Sunday, 18 October 2009

Closure of Khamenei's official website fuels rumors Iran's supreme leader rumored to be dead



Iran's supreme leader is said to have re-published his will a few days before his "death" (File)

DUBAI (Al Arabiya)

The closure of the official website of Iran's supreme leader fueled rumors that have been circulating for the past few days that Ali Khamenei has died after he collapsed last week.

Further fueling the rumors were the closure of the official websites of Iran's radio and television all of which were not said to have been closed due to technical problems, the London-based Asharq al-Awsat reported Saturday.

The 70-year-old supreme leader reportedly collapsed last Monday and drifted into a coma but the Iranian media has stayed mum on the issue, which analysts say is because officials are waiting to resolve internal matters and chose a successor.

Several Iranian websites, mostly affiliated to Khamenei's close aides, said the rumor was believed by a large portion of Iranians because the supreme leader re-published his will a few days ago, years after he originally wrote it in Iranian papers.

According to Asharq al-Awsat, the will is not a personal document but is a political one that includes recommendations for protecting the Islamic Republic from its internal and external enemies and a reminder of the principles of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, laid by the Ayatollah Khomeini.

The will made no mention of a potential successor in the case of Khamenei's death.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is reported to have met with Mojtaba Khamenei, a hard-line cleric and son of Khamenei, to discuss potential successors and speculate on who the Assembly of Experts, the body in charge of electing the Supreme Leader, would choose.

(Translated from Arabic by Sonia Farid)