

# The Great Iranian Election Fiasco

What actually happened; what we must do.

by Michael A. Ledeen

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**E**ven for a regime that excels in deception, the announcement by the Iranian government that nearly half the eligible voters cast their ballots in Friday's election is an extraordinary bit of effrontery. And even those Western "news" outlets that decided to pronounce the turnout "low" (the BBC, of course, echoed the party line by talking about a large turnout), did so by comparing the official numbers with those of the last parliamentary election, when more than 60 percent voted for the toothless "reformers."

The real numbers are a tiny fragment of the official ones. The overall turnout came in at about twelve percent, with Tehran a bit lower, and places like Isfahan and Qom (of all places, the headquarters of the Shiite religious elite) closer to five percent. The only major city with a substantially higher turnout was Kerman, due to a local factor: A widely hated hardliner was running, and many people judged it more important to demonstrate their contempt for him personally by voting for others than to show their rejection of the regime en bloc by abstaining.

It shouldn't have been hard to get this story right, at least in its broad outlines. A leading member of the old parliament, Mehdi Karoubi, was asked why he did badly, and he replied, publicly: "because the people boycotted the election."

Keep in mind that the reporters knew full well that all but a handful of polling sites in Tehran — the only place they were able to observe, thanks to the usual clampdown on information — were virtually dead. They knew, or should have known, that the regime had trotted out more than 10,000 "mobile voting booths," that is to say, trucks driving around inviting people to vote. They surely heard the stories — widely repeated on Iranian web sites — of thousands of phony ballots, and of citizens being forced to turn over their identity cards, thus making it possible for others to pose as legitimate voters. They must also have heard that high-school students were warned that if they did not vote they would never get into the universities.

But they did not report any of this. The *Washington Post's* Karl Vick wrote an upbeat report, as if the hardliners had won a normal election, and CNN's legendary Ms. Amanpour stressed that Iran was changing for the better since the dress code for women had loosened a bit in the past few years. Neither seemed to know that there were violent protests throughout the country, that several people had been killed and scores wounded by the regime's thugs, and that highways were blocked because the regime was afraid the protests would spread. There was enough electoral fraud to fill any Western news report, had the correspondents wished to do so. As the website [www.iranvajahan.net](http://www.iranvajahan.net) reported, "In Firoozabad, Fars, people clashed with the Law Enforcement Forces when a cleric by the name of Yunesi-Sarcheshmeyi was declared the winner. In Miando-ab, West

Azerbaijan, some of the cheaters have publicly confessed how they were taught by a cleric to remove the voting stamp from their ID cards and vote again. In Malekan in East Azerbaijan, people were told that 45,000 are eligible to vote, yet the number of declared votes for candidates totaled 50,000! Everyone including children and old people have poured into the streets of Malekan and there is non-stop running battles with the Law Enforcement Forces." The Student Movement Coordinating Committee for Democracy in Iran recorded violent clashes in Izeh, a southern city where a local politician was murdered by security forces when he protested his exclusion from the electoral list. Other protests were reported from Khorram-Abad, Firoozabad, and Dehdasht in the south, in Isfahan, and near the Afghan border in Mashad, Sabze-war, Nelshaboor, and Tchenaran.

Instead of this important information, we get the usual election-day analysis, as if a real election had been conducted, and one could understand something important about Iranian public opinion from the official numbers.

Oddly, the wild distortion of the real results does show something that the mullahs do not want us to know. They fear the Iranian people, knowing how deeply the people hate them, and they believe they must continue to tell a big lie about popular support for the regime. But the people know better. Thus, the demonstrations.

The regime clearly intends to clamp down even harder in the immediate future. Hints of this were seen in the run-up to the election, when Internet sites and foreign broadcasts were jammed, the few remaining opposition newspapers shut down, and thousands of security forces poured into the major cities. One wonders whether any Western government is prepared to speak the truth about Iran, or whether they are so determined to arrive at make-believe deals — for terrorists that are never delivered, for promises to stop the nuclear program, that are broken within minutes of their announcement, or for help fighting terrorism while the regime does everything in its power to support the terrorists — that they will play along and pretend, as Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has put it, that "Iran is a democracy."

For those interested in exposing hypocrisy, it is hard to find a better example than all those noble souls who denounced Operation Iraqi Freedom as a callous operation to gain control over Iraqi oil, but who remain silent as country after country, from Europe to Japan, appeases the Iranian tyrants precisely in order to win oil concessions.

Meanwhile, the only Western leader who consistently speaks the truth about Iran is President George W. Bush, and the phony intellectuals of the West continue to call him a fool and a fascist. Meanwhile, his most likely Democrat opponent, Senator John Kerry, sends an e-mail to *Tehran Times*, Iran's official English-language newspaper, promising that relations between the United States and Iran would improve enormously if Kerry were to be elected next November.

Finally, perhaps our enterprising journalists could ask the administration how it can be, three years after inauguration, that we still have no Iran policy. Yes, Virginia, there is still no National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) on Iran, even though Iran is the

world's leading sponsor of terrorism, and we claim to be in a war against the terror masters.

Faster, please.

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