

Doc\_Number: EU00261

**guardian.co.uk**

# Ahmadinejad calls for prosecution of opposition leaders

Iranian president urges 'serious confrontation against leaders and  
key elements' after demonstrations following disputed election

**A** [larger](#) | [smaller](#)



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has stepped up pressure on reformists. Photograph: Reuters

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad today called for the prosecution of opposition leaders over the turmoil that followed the country's disputed presidential elections, saying senior opposition activists currently on trial should not be the only ones punished.

Ahmadinejad stepped up the pressure on reformists in the unrest that has gripped Iran since the 12 June presidential election and provided the strongest challenge to the hardline regime since its inception in 1979.

"Serious confrontation has to be against the leaders and key elements, against those who organised and provoked [protests] and carried out the enemy's plan," Ahmadinejad told a crowd of thousands in the capital, Tehran. "They have to be dealt with seriously."

The president said prominent activists currently standing trial had to be treated with "Islamic mercy", suggesting that they had been "deceived" into taking part in the unrest.

"Don't give immunity and protection to the main elements and punish the deceived and second-hand elements," he said.

More than 100 pro-reform activists and politicians, including many who have made public confessions, are currently on trial in Tehran.

Human rights and opposition groups say the public confessions were coerced by threats and abuses in custody.

Ahmadinejad did not specifically name the opposition leaders. However, many hardliners and members of the Revolutionary Guard have publicly called for the arrest of the defeated presidential candidates, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahdi Karroubi, as well as the former president Mohammad Khatami.

For the first time, Ahmadinejad admitted that detained protesters had been abused in custody but denied any government involvement, claiming instead that it had been the work of Iran's enemies and the opposition.

"These actions that were carried out in custody ... were part of the enemy's scenario," he said. "Security, military and intelligence forces are free from these shameful acts."

The Iranian government has been struggling to contain outrage among many Iranians over persistent accusations that protesters were abused while in prison.

The opposition says a state crackdown on the demonstrations killed at least 69 people, while the government says 30 died.

Hundreds have been arrested since the election, and opposition activists say some died in prison from beatings and other abuse.

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2009