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Ahmadinejad sworn in as police 'block' protestors

Wed, 05 Aug 2009 15:19:35 GMT

REPORTS



After his inauguration, President Ahmadinejad will have two weeks to introduce his new Cabinet.

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Amid a heavy security presence around Parliament blocking out opposition protests as Iran's president takes the oath of office, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad begins his second term.

Nearly two months after the election that sparked mass protests in Iran over its official result, President Ahmadinejad was sworn in on Wednesday.

According to a Press TV correspondent, thousands of security and Basij forces with their motorcycles were present in the areas around Baharestan square, near the Iranian Parliament.

Parliament News reported that more than 5,000 security forces were guarding the downtown block while other reports said officers with sniffer dogs patrolled the area searching for possible bombs.

All shops and businesses in the area were ordered to close. Security forces had cordoned off the neighboring areas near the Majlis hours before the ceremony began, reports said.

In a separate move, Head of Tehran's metro company Jafar Rabiyi said the authorities ordered the trains not to stop at two stops near Parliament -- Baharestan and Mellat stations -- until the end of the inauguration ceremony.

Rabiyi stressed that the move was not due to any technical problems and was only because of the swearing-in ceremony, announcing that the trains would stop at regular stations after the event.

Despite the heavy security presence, opposition supporters held sporadic demonstrations in protest at the inauguration of President Ahmadinejad, who garnered almost two-thirds of the vote, repots said.

Several people were arrested and police used tear gas to disperse demonstrators, according to the reports.

However, Iranian deputy police chief Ahmad-Reza Radan said the inauguration ceremony was held in a peaceful environment.

"Despite mass propaganda by satellite TV channels and foreign media calling on the people to gather in front of Majlis, no illegal protests were held [in the area]," Radan said.

Ahmadinejad's inauguration comes as the opposition continues to reject the election result, maintaining that the vote was "rigged".

Ever since the official announcement of the poll result, Iran has witnessed widespread protests as supporters of defeated presidential candidates Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi take to the streets to protest "fraud" in the June 12 election.

Meanwhile, Iran's Guardian Council, the body responsible for overseeing the election, has disputed all allegations against the validity of the vote.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, on Monday formally endorsed the president for a second term.

CS/MD

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