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### IRAN: Ahmadinejad aide says president only got '4 million' votes

August 13, 2009 | 6:47 am

Iranian opposition figures living abroad have long insisted that the majority of those living in the country were opposed to the Islamic Republic. They've found an unlikely ally in a top aide to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Efsandiar Rahim Mashaei, who made some curious statements to supporters.



According to the hard-line Panjereh weekly, published by the former head of the hard-line Basiji Students Organization, Mashaei said Ahmadinejad received only 4 million votes from his supporters in the June 12 presidential election. In total, Ahmadinejad received about 24 million of the 40 million votes cast in the heavily disputed election.

"The remaining 20 million [who voted for Ahmadinejad] were in fact critical of the regime and they are more serious than the 13 million" who voted for Mousavi, the weekly quoted Mashaei as saying in its Sunday edition, according to an account on the news website [Ayanadenews.com](http://www.Ayanadenews.com).

"These 13 million voters only questioned the four-year performance of Ahmadinejad," he continued. "But the 20 million were critical of all the years before Ahmadinejad took office." His comment suggests that Mashaei believes the vast majority of those who voted for Ahmadinejad rejected the performance of the government from 1981 to 1989, when Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was president, as well as the subsequent 16 years, when Khamenei gave his blessing to the presidencies of Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami.

Mashaei, Ahmadinejad's controversial chief of staff as well as an in-law, has emerged as Ahmadinejad's [Billy Carter](#), former President Carter's beer-guzzling brother whose gaffes caused the president endless grief.

Mashaei enraged conservatives last year when he said Iran was hostile only toward the Israeli government, not its people. He later disavowed his remarks, saying they were only meant as "psychological warfare" against Israel.

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[Hard-liners demanded that Ahmadinejad dump him](#) as his first vice president, in line to succeed him as president. After defying them for weeks, he named him his chief of staff.

But Mashaei's mystical, messianic fervor has also raised eyebrows among the senior clergy.

In the same interview with Panjereh, Mashaei said that the day of reckoning when the 12th Shiite Imam, Mahdi, would reappear would soon be upon us:

For Imam Mahdi to reappear, every one on the globe is not required to convert to Islam. We have concluded that we cannot use religious literature for the second coming of [Mahdi] because it cannot create any common language. We have to focus on a literature to be understandable to all like justice, kindness, monotheism and the fight against tyranny. We are living in the age of reappearance because we hear the name of Imam Mahdi everywhere.

-- [Borzou Daragahi](#) in Beirut

*Photo: President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, background, and Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei. Credit: Yalda Moayyeri / Associated Press*

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