

Doc Number: EU000302

The New York Times

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
SPONSORED BY

September 16, 2009

Iran Arrests Children of Dissident Clerics

By NAZILA FATHI

TORONTO — Authorities in [Iran](#) have arrested at least seven children and grandchildren of senior clerics in the religious city of Qum and threatened to arrest the son of [Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani](#), the powerful cleric and a former president, in what appeared to be fresh pressure on religious leaders who sympathize with the opposition.

The arrests, reported by several opposition Web sites on Tuesday but apparently carried out on Monday, coincided with a harsh rebuke of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah [Ali Khamenei](#), from a senior cleric who is an outspoken dissident, [Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri](#), who urged colleagues to support the opposition movement.

Ayatollah Khamenei has the final say on state matters and has issued [fierce warnings](#) against Iranians who have challenged the June 12 election, which the incumbent, [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#), officially won by a landslide.

The opposition, which includes Mr. Ahmadinejad's two main challengers in the election, [Mehdi Karroubi](#) and [Mir Hussein Moussavi](#), has called the election a fraud and has sharply criticized the government's violent suppression of postelection protests.

The latest arrests appeared to be part of efforts to intimidate senior clerics and silence the younger generation in Qum who have been instrumental in reporting the use of violence in the capital, Tehran, and other large cities to traditional clerics. Such clerics ordinarily pay little attention to the news and some were unaware of the events.

Mr. Karroubi and Mr. Moussavi have called on their supporters to attend the annual pro-[Palestinian](#) rally on Friday, known as Quds Day, to stage protests against the government. Mr. Moussavi announced Tuesday that he would participate.

Ayatollah Montazeri's three grandchildren, 18 to 22 years old, were arrested Monday evening in Qum, at the home of his son and their father, Ahmad Montazeri, who runs the ayatollah's office, the opposition Web site mowjcamp.com reported.

The Web site also reported that Mehdi Moussavi Tabrizi, the son of Hussein Moussavi Tabrizi, who heads the Association of Teachers and Researchers of Qum and has issued statements supporting the opposition, was arrested, as were the son of Ayatollah Asghar Nazemzadeh and two sons of another member of the association.

In another development, Hamid Rassai, a conservative member of Parliament, called Monday before his

fellow legislators for the arrest of Mehdi Hashemi Rafsanjani, the son of Mr. Rafsanjani, the Fars news agency reported. Many senior officials have accused the son of orchestrating the antigovernment unrest.

The senior Mr. Rafsanjani leads the influential Council of Experts, which has the power to dismiss Ayatollah Khamenei.

Mr. Rafsanjani sided with the opposition last month, but has behaved cautiously. He enjoys support among traditional clerics who have not sided with the opposition leaders. However, there are no indications that the Council of Experts would challenge Ayatollah Khamenei.

Mohsen Kadivar, a senior cleric and visiting professor at [Duke University](#), said it was unlikely that the Council of Experts would try to dismiss the ayatollah. He said that members “would not stand against Mr. Khamenei and easily give in to pressure.”

In what appeared to be another sign that loyal conservatives are upset, a conservative filmmaker and activist wrote an unusual letter to Ayatollah Khamenei on Monday blaming him for the postelection violence.

“As a commander in chief of the armed forces, you did not treat people well after the election,” wrote the filmmaker, Mohammad Nourizad, in the letter posted on several Web sites including [his blog](#).

“Your agents opened fire, killed the people, beat them and destroyed and burnt their property. Your role in this cannot be ignored.”

[Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)
