

Doc\_Number: EU000277

# The Washington Post

## Iran Canceling Major Ramadan Events in Wake of Election Protests

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Monday, September 7, 2009

TEHRAN, Sept. 6 -- Iranian officials have canceled or downgraded major Shiite religious events during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, suggesting fear that the opposition might use them to stage protests.

A typically massive evening celebration scheduled for next weekend at the South Tehran mausoleum of the Islamic republic's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, was canceled "due to problems," the site's public relations department said in a statement.

A traditional speech by [Iran's](#) supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, marking the end of Ramadan, meanwhile, was changed from a large venue to one that is much smaller, the Ettemaad newspaper, which is critical of the government, reported Sunday.

And in Qom, the nation's center for religious education, several famous clerics who silently support the opposition were told they had been barred from speaking at an event Wednesday in the city's most important shrine, the semiofficial Mehr News Agency reported.

Although there have been no mass demonstrations since July, the cancellations and venue changes show that Iranian leaders are still worried about protests by followers of the defeated presidential candidates Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi.

The two men and their supporters say President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's landslide victory in the June 12 election was rigged, an allegation the government denies. Protests in June and July badly shook the government, but a massive crackdown has kept streets relatively quiet for more than a month.

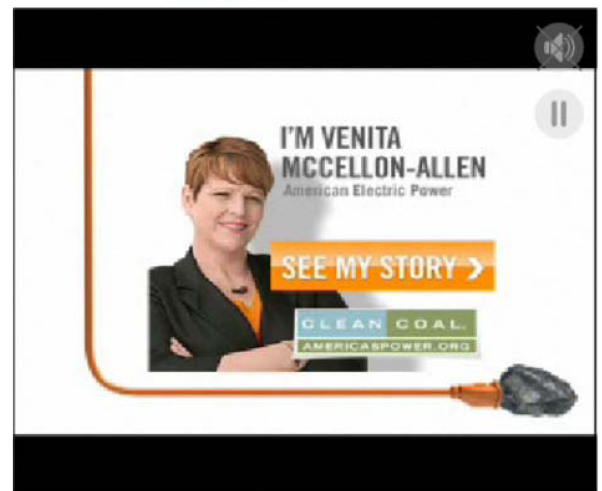
In a statement released Saturday, Mousavi urged his followers to take on the "cheaters," while Karroubi has called for Iranians to protest on Sept. 18, when official demonstrations against [Israel](#) are planned.

"On Quds Day you will once again see the power of the people and realize which side the people support," he said last week, invoking the official name of the yearly demonstration, according to the Sarmayeh newspaper.

Former president Mohammad Khatami, a supporter of Mousavi, was scheduled to speak during religious ceremonies starting Wednesday at Khomeini's tomb, but has been barred from doing so. According to Ettemaad, millions of people were planning to attend. The event is organized annually by Khomeini's grandson Hassan, a 37-year-old cleric who supports Mousavi. He is the official custodian of the shrine.

Ahmadinejad's supporters among Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders, prayer leaders and hard-line lawmakers have repeatedly called for the arrest of Mousavi, Karroubi and Khatami, who they say are the leaders in a foreign-backed plot to bring down the government.

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On Wednesday, in the most direct attack on Khatami to date, the commander in chief of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, Mohammad Ali Jafari, accused the former president of being one of the organizers of the protests and said they were targeted at Khamenei, the supreme leader. Jafari quoted what he said was the transcript of a phone conversation involving Khatami. "If we win," Jafari quoted Khatami as saying, "we reach a regime with a weakened, or without, a supreme leader." Jafari also said his forces had had information about a plot six months before the election.

On Sunday, Khatami struck back. "We are against those who, in the name of opposing Western liberalism, are trying to force people down their own preferred path with fascist methods and totalitarian ideas," Khatami said, according to Parlemannews, which is affiliated with the parliament faction controlled by his supporters. "I warn all the system's supporters to rebuild public trust before all chances are completely lost."

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