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Iran leader approves Ahmadinejad presidency

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By [Parisa Hafezi](#)

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei formally endorsed the second term presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Monday after a disputed election that plunged Iran into its worst crisis since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The results, which leading reformists and moderate defeated candidates Mirhossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi said were rigged to ensure victory for the hardline

Ahmadinejad, led to violent protests and deep schisms within Iran's clerical and political elite.

Leading opposition figures and two former presidents, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, who backed Mousavi in the vote, were not at the ceremony although they had attended such events in the past, Iranian media reported.

"The official ceremony was held and Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) approved Mr Ahmadinejad's presidency," al-Alam state television said.

Ahmadinejad will be sworn in by parliament on Wednesday.

He then faces the hard task of forming a cabinet that will be acceptable to the mostly conservative parliament, which may object if he names only members of his inner circle. Parliament has in the past rejected some of Ahmadinejad's cabinet choices.

Mousavi and Karoubi say the next government will be illegitimate.

Khamenei has endorsed the June 12 election result and demanded an end to the protests at which more than 20 people have been killed.

Iranian officials deny any fraud in the election, in which Ahmadinejad was declared to have won 63 percent of 40 million votes cast, against 34 percent for Mousavi.

Part of Iran's influential Shi'ite clerical establishment has also signaled misgivings over the aftermath of the poll, which has touched off the country's worst internal upheaval since the 1979 revolution.

ROUGH RIDE

Without Khamenei's support, any cabinet list could get a very rough ride as many lawmakers have been critical of Ahmadinejad since the vote.

The power struggle can only hamper the leadership's ability to tackle the Islamic Republic's economic problems, as well as the struggle over its nuclear program, which Iran says is only peaceful, but which the West suspects is aimed at bomb-making.

In an apparent effort to deter street protests, Iran on Saturday put 100 protesters, including several senior moderate figures, on trial. They face a range of charges, including acting against national security, which is punishable by death.

Rights groups say hundreds of people, including senior pro-reform politicians, journalists and lawyers, have been detained since the election.

The mass trial of reformists has no precedent in revolutionary Iran's 30-year history. The trial resumes on Thursday.

Leading reformers, including Khatami, have rejected what they say is a show trial and said some defendants had made confessions under duress.

Many of the defendants have spent weeks in jail without access to lawyers, Mousavi said on Sunday. He said the trial was "an awkward preparation" for the start of Ahmadinejad's new term.

Even some hardliners have criticized the trial and the official portrayal of the protesters as people determined to overthrow Iran's system of government.

Some defendants, including Khatami's vice-president Mohammad Ali Abtahi, told the court that they were wrong to have said the vote was fraudulent.

(Writing by Parisa Hafezi, Editing by Samia Nakhoul)

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