

Doc Number: EU000251

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

August 23, 2009

Iranian Authorities Are Accused of Secret Burials

By [MICHAEL SLACKMAN](#)

CAIRO — As Iranians celebrated the first day of the holy month of Ramadan, they were confronted Saturday with new charges of reform movement supporters being tortured in prison and of bodies being secretly buried in a cemetery on the outskirts of Tehran.

The accusations, filed on Web sites affiliated with the reform movement, added to the push and pull between an opposition movement struggling to keep itself from being silenced and a government that has tried to move past the crisis over the country's disputed presidential elections in June.

[Iran's](#) political crisis smolders on at least two levels, political analysts said: in the hostility nursed by the millions of people who feel that President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's](#) victory was fraudulent, and in the behind-the-scenes fighting within the institutions of power among political and clerical insiders.

On Saturday the internal battle appeared to be on display again when Mr. Ahmadinejad broke with tradition and skipped a meeting of the Expediency Council, according to the Web site Parleman News, which is affiliated with a parliamentary faction that has opposed the president. The council, an influential government body, is run by a rival of Mr. Ahmadinejad's, the former vice president [Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani](#).

Mr. Rafsanjani, who has fueled the political dispute over the election while also trying to position himself publicly as above the fray, opened the meeting by calling for "unity and empathy to get through internal problems."

His speech offered a prescription for healing that called for obeying the law, and subtly cast some blame on all sides. Mr. Rafsanjani has challenged the election results and the government response but has been careful not to seriously imperil the stability of the system.

"The current situation requires that we follow the guidance of the supreme leader, create an environment conducive to a nonpartisan approach to constitutional law and dealing with lawbreakers," he said Saturday.

But settling the dispute has been beyond reach, and recent charges of torture, rape and killing appear to be the primary reason public anger has not subsided, political analysts said.

"This targets the heart of the state claim to morality," said Rasool Nafisi, an academic in Virginia who has studied the Islamic republic for years, referring especially to the rape charges.

The government has rejected the claims of rape, but the current speaker of Parliament, [Ali Larijani](#), having first dismissed the accusations, has agreed to review evidence if it is provided.

Iran has closed the country to foreign reporters and has jailed many journalists, making it difficult to corroborate or refute the many accusations.

Officially, the government says that about 30 people died in the protests and government crackdown, while the opposition says the number is closer to 70.

On Saturday, Norooz News, a reformist Web site, published a report that said workers in Behesht-e Zahra municipal cemetery in Tehran [buried 28 bodies](#) from July 12 to 15 in Plot 302. If confirmed, the news of the burials would suggest a higher death toll than the government has acknowledged.

With accompanying photographs, the report said that in other cases, bodies returned by the authorities to family members appeared to have been frozen solid, suggesting that corpses were kept in industrial facilities.

Several other new reports, including one on a Web site associated with the reform movement leader [Mir Hussein Mousavi](#), said prominent leaders of the movement appeared to have been abused, possibly even tortured, in prison, including being subjected to long periods of total isolation. Earlier reports of torture focused on street protesters, not opposition leaders.

The postings included several that said the trials of two detained reformers — Ahmad Zeidabadi and Feyzollah Arabsorkhi — had been postponed because the men had been hospitalized, fueling speculation that they had been tortured while in custody.

[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](#)
