

Doc Number: EU000172

**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](http://www.nytreprints.com) for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT  
SPONSORED BY



August 11, 2009

## Iranian Lawmakers Demand Say on Cabinet, Hinting at a Rift Among Hard-Liners

By [ROBERT F. WORTH](#) and NAZILA FATHI

BEIRUT, Lebanon — About 200 conservative Iranian lawmakers signed a letter on Monday calling on President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) to consult them about cabinet appointments, the latest sign of a struggle among hard-liners that may limit the president's political clout as he moves to form a new government in the coming week.

The lawmakers' demands followed reports that Mr. Ahmadinejad had fired as many as 20 officials in [Iran's](#) Intelligence Ministry. The purge appeared to be aimed at those who disagreed with the handling of the harsh crackdown on opposition protests in the wake of the disputed June 12 presidential election.

The firings have exposed sharp differences among conservatives over how to deal with Iran's still defiant opposition movement. Last month, Mr. Ahmadinejad fired the intelligence minister, Gholam-Hussein Mohseni-Ejei, provoking furious criticism from many conservative lawmakers and senior clerics. Mr. Mohseni-Ejei had objected to using televised confessions of jailed protesters — widely believed even in Iran to be coerced — and since his removal, those confessions have been used in a mass trial of reformist figures.

Other conservatives have spoken out against the torture and abuse of protesters who were detained after the election, including several who died in custody. The issue has also galvanized opposition figures, and on Sunday a new and explosive accusation emerged: male and female prisoners are said to have been raped at one detention center, according to a letter by a reformist cleric and presidential candidate, Mehdi Karroubi.

At the same time, there were signs that some opposition leaders might be choosing silence, at least for the moment, in the face of renewed threats. [Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani](#), the former president who provided crucial support to the opposition last month in a Friday Prayer sermon at Tehran University, indicated on his Web site on Monday that he might not deliver this Friday's sermon, though it is his turn.

The divisions among conservatives go well beyond the handling of the crackdown. Many lawmakers and high-ranking clerics have said they are concerned that Mr. Ahmadinejad has not shown sufficient respect for senior figures or for Parliament. They were especially disturbed by his flouting last month of a command from Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah [Ali Khamenei](#), to drop a deputy, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei.

On Monday, the speaker of the Parliament, [Ali Larijani](#), one of Mr. Ahmadinejad's most powerful critics, met with the president to discuss the lawmakers' petition. Afterward, a junior lawmaker who attended the meeting said Mr. Ahmadinejad turned the question around, saying he had been waiting to hear from the lawmakers before completing his short list of cabinet nominees.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's purge of the Intelligence Ministry appeared to be part of a long-expected bid for control by the president and his allies in the [Revolutionary Guard](#), analysts said. Officials deemed insufficiently loyal were swept aside, including some with long experience in the counterintelligence, security and technical departments.

With the purge, "Ahmadinejad is, in effect, taking over the management of the most important security institution in the country," wrote Hassan Younesi, the son of a former intelligence minister, Ali Younesi, on his blog. He added that the ministry had never seen such a boldly political purge in its history.

At the same time, opposition Web sites have reported that Ahmad Salek, a cleric rumored to be under consideration for intelligence minister, is operating an unofficial intelligence-gathering service run by Ahmadinejad loyalists. Opposition sites have implicated him, along with Hussein Taeb, chief of the [Basij](#) militia, in the torture of detainees.

Mr. Salek and Mr. Taeb were among a number of high-ranking officials and clerics who have fiercely criticized opposition leaders in recent days, leading many in Iran to suspect that [Mir Hussein Moussavi](#), the leading presidential challenger, could soon be arrested. Mr. Taeb said Sunday that Mr. Moussavi and his followers were guilty of an "evil plot" and did not want to see the Islamic Revolution succeed, according to the semiofficial Fars news agency.

Arresting Mr. Moussavi, a former prime minister who was close to Ayatollah [Ruhollah Khomeini](#), the leader of Iran's 1979 revolution, would be a bold and divisive gesture that could backfire, some Iran experts say. But others say the threats are merely aimed at silencing Mr. Moussavi and his supporters.

If so, they may have succeeded, at least temporarily. Mr. Moussavi, who maintains that the election was rigged, has not been heard from in several days.

Even as some hard-line figures pushed for a more aggressive approach, others continued to make more conciliatory gestures. On Sunday, Iran's national police chief, Brig. Gen. Ismail Ahmadi Moqaddam, said abuses had taken place in at least one detention facility. On Saturday, Iran's chief prosecutor became the first senior official to acknowledge that jailed protesters had been tortured.

But Mr. Karroubi's assertions that detained protesters had been raped were anything but conciliatory. The accusations were detailed in a letter sent to Mr. Rafsanjani dated July 29, but were first published Sunday on the Web site of Mr. Karroubi's political party.

*Robert F. Worth reported from Beirut, Lebanon, and Nazila Fathi from Toronto.*

[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](#)