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Iran's opposition will keep up government protest: Karoubi

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MADRID (Reuters) - Defeated Iranian presidential candidates Mehdi Karoubi and Mirhossein Mousavi will keep up protests against the government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Karoubi was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

Karoubi, the most liberal of Ahmadinejad's three opponents in the disputed June 12 election, has been vocal in his complaints of irregularities in the process.

"Neither Mousavi nor I have withdrawn. We will continue to protest and we will never collaborate with this government. We will not harm it, but we will criticize what it does," Karoubi said in an interview with the El Pais Spanish daily.

He attributed recent unrest and street protests in the country squarely on the way authorities handled the election.

"Quite honestly, if the authorities had acted in a different way, we would never have had these problems, because the majority of those protesting only did so for that reason," Karoubi said.

The Iranian people want a solution to the unrest and stability as soon as possible, he said, adding that both he and Mousavi are concerned about the killing of street protesters.

Karoubi is in favor of negotiations with the United States and other Western governments to attempt to open up the channels of communication with Iran.

"The most beneficial thing for the Iranians is negotiations. Nobody benefits from our ongoing problems with the United States," he said.

(Reporting by Judy MacInnes)

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