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Lawmakers, officials absent as Ahmadinejad sworn in

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Most Reformist lawmakers have refrained from attending the swearing-in ceremony of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad amid continuing dissension among Iran's ruling system.

"Out of 70 members of the Reformist faction of Majlis, only 13 lawmakers attended the [swearing-in] ceremony," the *Parleman News* website said Wednesday.

The report added that a number of the attending lawmakers staged a walk out once President Ahmadinejad began his speech.

On Wednesday, Ahmadinejad took the oath of office as the country's president for a second term before Parliament after he was declared victor of the June 12 presidential election with almost two-thirds of the vote.

The president's disputed re-election was met with opposition from other presidential candidates and an outpouring of anger demonstrated in mass rallies across the country with protestors dubbing the poll as rigged.

However, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Monday threw his weight behind the president and formally endorsed him for his second term in office.

Head of the Expediency Council and influential cleric Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, former President Mohammad Khatami and Secretary of the Expediency Council and defeated candidate Mohsen Rezaei did not attend Ahmadinejad's swearing-in ceremony.

There were also no representatives present from the family of the founder of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Tehran Mayor Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf was also absent in the ceremony.

During a speech after his swearing-in ceremony, President Ahmadinejad struck a tone of unity and called on the Iranian nation to help him guide the country to its deserved place in the international arena.

Relations between Iran and the West suffered setbacks during the first term of Ahmadinejad in office.

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