Weather Forecast Edition: U.S. I Arabic I Set Pref

# Thousands gather to hear, cheer Iran's Michelle Obama

Hot Topics » China • South Africa 2010 • Afghanistan • Connect The World • Amanpour • more topics »

May 24, 2009 -- Updated 0813 GMT (1613 HKT)

- Wife of presidential hopeful Mir Hossein Mousavi generates huge crowds
- Never in the history of Iranian presidential elections has a wife been in the forefront
- 'This is the first time after the Revolution we see a lady behind the president'
- Could draw young voters in Iran, where median age is 27

Next Article in World »

TEXT SIZE 🛑 👩



TEHRAN, Iran (CNN) -- Dancing in public is not allowed in Iran, but thousands could hardly contain



Supportershope Zahra Rahnavard will become Iran's future first lady

On this day, the deafening cheers were not for presidential hopeful Mir Hossein Mousavi, but rather for his wife -- a woman some are calling Iran's Michelle Obama.

The comparisons to the first lady of the United States stem from the role Zahra Rahnavard is playing in her husband's quest for the presidency.

Never in the history of Iranian presidential elections has a candidate put his wife in the forefront of his campaign.

Wherever Mousavi -- a centrist candidate -- goes, Rahnavard is usually nearby.

Watch more about Zahra Rahnav ard »

"We look at her and we say, 'we want to be like her in the future, '"said Shakiba Shakerhosseie, one of 12,000 people who packed into Tehran's indoor

Azadi (Freedom) sports stadium to hear Rahnavard speak.

Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after the ruling monarchy was overthrown and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was forced into exile

The revolution also ended the ceremonial role of first lady that the last queen, Farah, enjoyed.

At this rally, Rahnavard -- a writer and art professor -- spoke for her husband, who was campaigning

Wearing a floral headscarf and a traditional black chador -- a full-length loose robe that women in Iran wear like a cloak -- Rahnavard called for freedoms she says were lost during President Mahmoud Ahmadijenad's term

"I hope freedom of speech, freedom of the pen and freedom of thought will not be forgotten," she said

## **Don't Miss**

- Iran blocks Facebook before election
- . Iran tests new surface-tosurface missile

The crowd, which was clad in Mousavi's trademark color green cheered wildly. It waved placards with his picture and swayed from side to side, chanting and beating drums

The women sat on one side; the men on the other.

The overwhelming majority were young voters, many of whom said they

attended because of Mousavi's wife, a mother of three

Iran's population -- estimated at more than 66 million -- has a median age of 27

"I am really angry here in Iran with the position of women," said Saghar Kouhestani, adding that she supports Mousavi because of his wife

Mousavi, a former prime minister, is considered a threat to Ahmadinejad, a hard-liner, in the June 12 elections. He is credited for successfully navigating the Iranian economy during a bloody eight-year war with Irag in the 1980s

Over the weekend, the Iranian government blocked access to the social networking site Facebook, where Mousavi has a page with more than 5,000 supporters, the semi-official Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA)

Those attempting to visit Facebook received a message in Farsi saying, "Access to this site is not possible

Political science professor Mohammad Marandi downplays Rahnavard's impact. She may win over



# Most Popular on CNN

51	ORIES  Most Viewed	Most Emailed
1	Naom i Campbell ex-agent accused of lying	
2	Ex-NASA chief in Alaska crash, firm says	
3	Ex-Mexican president favors legalizing drugs	
4	Fast fame for cursing flight attendant	
5	Joke on boat leads to four deaths	
6	BP well could be finally sealed by week's end	
7	Florida church plans to burn Qurans	
8	Brazil formalizes asylum offer to Iran woman	
9	Barrino: I didn't break	up a marriage
10	Groom kills three gue	sts at Turkish wedding
mor	e most popular »	
VIE	DEOS	
TOPICS		

Ads by Google

## The 9mm Won't Save You

Discover What Self Defense Masters & The Army Don' www.CloseCombatTraining.com

## Stop Irans Nuclear Threat

Thank Congress for their support of new Iran sanctions www.aipac.org

### Official Obama Website

Barack Obama Needs Your Help to Change Washingto www.BarackObama.com

### Thousands gather to hear, cheer Iran'...

reformists and women, he says, but what will win the election is a solution to the floundering economy and a strong performance in the debates.

"If Ahmadinejad does well in the debates, I don't think anyone will be able to defeat him," Marandi said.

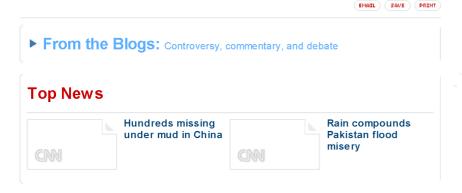
CONNECTOR OF THE DAY WHO'S NEXT? CHECK HERE

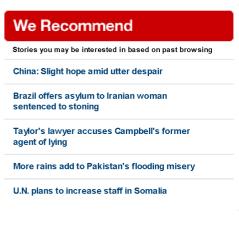
But try selling that to Rahnavard's enthusiastic supporters

"This is the first time after the Revolution we see a lady behind the president," said Farhad Mahmoudi. "And this is why we're so happy because we can have a first lady."

E-mail to a friend [Some | Mixx it | Share

All About Mahmoud Ahmadinejad • Iran





Home | Asia | Europe | U.S. | World | World Business | Technology | Entertainment | World Sport | Travel

Podcasts | Blogs | CNN Mobile | RSS Feeds | Email Alerts | CNN Radio | Site Map



© 2009 Cable News Network. A Time Wamer Company. All Rights Reserved.

Terms of service | Privacy guidelines | Advertise with us | About us | Contact us | Help

CNN Arabic | CNN en Español | CNN Chile | CNNExpansión | Japanese | Korean | Turkish

CNN U.S.  $\mid$  CNN U.S. TV  $\mid$  CNN International TV  $\mid$  HLN  $\mid$  Transcripts