

Chronology of Events in Iran, January 2004*

January 2

Freedom Movement to take action against Guardian Council's election ruling. (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA).

Ebrahim Yazdi, leader of the Freedom Movement, has protested that his eligibility for election and those of his associates have been rejected.

Khomeini's grandson returns to Iran (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty *Iran Report*).

Hojatolislam Seyyed Hussein Khomeini, the grandson of Ayatollah Khomeini, has returned to Iran. In late July and early August 2003, Khomeini gave several interviews from Iraq in which he criticized the Iranian regime, prompting allegations that assassins from the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps were after him. In late September, Khomeini reiterated his comments at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, D.C. However, Khomeini "crossed the border without any problems and has not been exposed to any interrogation or harassment by the Iranian authorities."

January 3

More than 1,000 students sign letter in defence of imprisoned activists. (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA).

In protest to the continued detention of three national-religious activists more than 1,000 young students and graduates from various universities of the country have published an open letter. The letter says that the Front for Freedom and Awakening has three affiliates, Taghi Rahmani, Hoda Saber and Reza Alijani imprisoned for more than 6 months in the pretext of protest activities last Khordad [month ending on 21 June]." The signatories call on all activists and human rights organizations to remember the clear article of the human rights declaration and to act conclusively to what the signatories call the violation of the rights of the aforementioned individuals and other political prisoners.

* *Disclaimer: Reports contained in this document are selected from publicly available resources and edited by country experts. The information provided here is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country of origin surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim. Further information may be obtained from BO Ankara*

January 4**Relatives meet members of Iranian opposition group in Iraq. (Iranian Fars News Agency / IFNA).**

The families of members of the People's Mojahedin Organization (PMOI) returned to Iran after seeing their relatives in Iraq. About 200 relatives of the group's members were supported by Iran's Rescue Association [Persian: Anjoman-e Nejat-e Iran] to see their children by going to the Ashraf base in Iraq.

Police detain 140 declared as "looters" in Iran quake city. (Agence France – Presse / AFP)

Iranian security forces have arrested 140 looters since a massive earthquake hit the southeastern city of Bam on December 26. The looters have been transferred to the nearby city of Kerman and "will be tried quickly", provincial justice chief Gholamhossein Heydari said.

Two persons executed in Iran (AFP)

Two drug traffickers have been executed by hanging in the northeastern Iranian town of Ghonbad. It was reported that the two, identified only as Mohammad M., 54, and Hamid Reza A., 34, had been condemned to death for trafficking 34 kilos of heroin and 10 kilos of opium respectively.

January 5**Iranian Women's Party receives licence. (ILNA).**

The Iranian Women's Party has received a licence to begin political activities, as the first independent party of women after the Revolution. The secretary-general of the Iranian Women's Party, Fariba Davudi-Mohajer said that the Iranian Women's Party will begin its activities soon with the objective of enlightening public opinion and pursuing the forgotten demands of women. She added that men can also enroll as members of this party and there is no obstacle against the involvement of non-Muslim women.

January 7**Reformist web site banned in Iran. (Iranian newspaper *Entekhab*).**

It was reported that the *Emrooz* web site has been filtered by the Information and Communications Technology Ministry and closed on the orders of judicial authorities.

[Editor's note: This site was accessible in Turkey on January 7, 2004.]

January 8**Political group changes its name to Islamic Coalition Party. (ISNA).**

The 7th general assembly of the Islamic Coalition Society was held at the Alzahra Mosque affiliated to the Islamic Communication and Culture Organization. The press office of the society said that on the basis of a proposal for changes in the charter of

the society, there was a majority vote to change the society's name from Islamic Coalition Society to Islamic Coalition Party.

Pro-Republican Iranians meet in Berlin. (Iran Press Service / IPS)

More than five hundreds political activists took part at the first session of the largest ever meeting of Iranian republicans that started in Berlin. Aimed at giving the dispersed and often antagonistic Iranians supporting parliamentary democracy for Iran, the three days meeting brought together several veteran Iranian political like Mehdi Khanbaba Tehrani, one of the leaders of a former Maoist group, Babak Amirkhosravi, the leader of the banned Iranian left-wing Tudeh Party, Manoochehr Sabetian, a founder of now defunct Confederation of Iranian Students and Rahmat Khosravi, having one point in common: Their staunch opposition to Monarchy, particularly the deposed Pahlavi dynasty. In a manifesto to be approved by the Berlin meeting, the participants calls for a secular, parliamentary republic for Iran open to all nations without distinction. Observers said some points of the manifesto, like the clause that calls for secularism can not be endorsed openly by the delegates who came from Tehran.

January 9

Revolution court summons student. (ISNA).

Bench 26 of the Islamic Revolution Court has summoned Peyman Aref, a student in Tehran University. He has reportedly been charged with taking action against national security.

Demonstrators protest against changing of Tehran street name. (ISNA)

A group of people gathered outside Tehran University and demonstrated along *Enqelab* [Revolution] Street following today's Tehran Friday prayers. They were protesting against the changing of the name of Khalid Islambuli street to Intifadah. Demonstrators chanted slogans and a resolution was read out by Ansar-e Hezbollah at the end of the rally.

January 11

Iran MPs walk out over poll candidate bans. (Reuters)

Most reformist Iranian MPs walked out of parliament to protest at the high number of candidates barred by a conservative supervisory body from competing in February 2004 parliamentary election.

Arabic news site *Al-Bawaba* report on the same news: The bulk of disqualified MPs were found by the Guardians' Council to have been in violation of an article in the electoral law which stipulates candidates for public office must show their commitment to Islam and respect the revolutionary principle that gives Ayatollah Ali Khamenei his position of supreme leader of the Islamic republic.

Assyrian patriarch lauds approval of equal blood-money law. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Leader of the Assyrian Church of the East Patriarch Mar Dinha IV in an open letter to President Mohammad Khatami lauded the approval of a law on equal blood-money, *diyeh*, for Muslim and non-Muslim Iranian nationals. Under a state verdict by the supreme leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, Iran's religious minorities now enjoy a blood-money equal to that of Muslim nationals. The bill had been earlier rejected by the supervisory Guardian Council, arguing that it contradicted the *Shari'ah* law (Islamic law).

Some 200-300 people try to close Bazaar in Khomeyn in protest to disqualifications. (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)

The governor of Khomeyn said that the extensive disqualification of Majlis nominees in Khomeyn has made the town pregnant with incidents. Amir Haqiqi said: "Once people in the town learnt about the disqualification of 21 out of the 34 Majlis nominees in Khomeyn, a group of 200-300 people tried to hold a gathering and close the Bazaar, but they changed their mind after talks were held with their representatives."

January 12

Two convicted persons hanged in public in Iran. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

An alleged child abuser in Mashhad known as "the Black Vulture" was hanged in public in *Edalat* [Justice] Square in Mashhad. The deputy head of Khorasan Province's Justice Department said that the death sentence on Hasan Reza Moqarreb, known as the Black Vulture, was carried out after being upheld by the State Supreme Court. He had been sentenced to 15 years in jail for kidnapping, to 10 years in jail for burglary and to death for rape.

It was also reported that the convicted killer of eight pilgrims to the holy sites in Iraq was hanged in Koran Square in Ilam in the presence of the families of the victims. Kheydan Gholamipur killed eight Iranian pilgrims on 13 September 2003. The death sentence was carried out after being upheld by the State Supreme Court and on the insistence of the families of the victims that the law of talion (vengeance) be implemented, the report said.

Iranian provincial governors threaten to quit over election bans. (Iranian Interior Ministry web site)

While protesting against the massive disqualification of candidates by the supervisory boards, the governors of 27 provinces announced in a letter to Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, the president, that acceptance of the supervisory boards' decision about the disqualification of a large number of candidates for the seventh Majlis elections was overlooking the citizens' legal rights and asked the president to investigate this issue quickly and seriously. The letter was signed by Mohammad Ali Sobhanollahi, Jamshid Ansari, Javad Negarandeh, Seyyed Mahmoud Hoseyni, Karim Shourangiz, Esma'il Tabadar, Ali Akbar Rahmani, Mahmoud Zamani-Qomi, Seyyed Hasan Rasuli, Fathollah Mo'in, Ja'far Rahmanzadeh, Mohammad Ali Panje-Fouladgaran,

Hossein Amini, Mohammad Ebrahim Ansari-Lari, Mas'oud Emami, Seyyed Hamid Taha'i, Assadollah Razani, Mohammad Ali Karimi-Abarqu'i, Ahmad Torknejad, Esma'il Dousti, Mohammad Hashem Mohaymani, Mas'oud Soltani-far, Qorbanali Sa'adat, `Abdolmohammad Zahedi, `Abdolhossein Moqtada'i, ali Asghar Zebardast, Hamid Kalantari.

January 13

Iraqi embassy in Tehran occupied by former staff. (Iranian *Baztab* web site)

The Iraqi embassy in Tehran has been occupied by former employees of the embassy. In the wake of the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, the embassy was evacuated and its gates were locked. This week, two former employees of the embassy illegally broke the locks once more and now live in the premises as squatters. The motive of these individuals is not clear.

U.N. refugee agency takes Afghans home after Bam earthquake. (Associated Press / AP)

The United Nations refugee agency said it has helped hundreds of Afghan refugees return to their homeland after they survived the deadly earthquake in the Iranian city of Bam. Iranian authorities waived the "repatriation fee" of about US\$4 per person that they usually charge returning refugees, UNHCR said. Most of the refugees were traveling to the province of Parwan, north of the capital, Kabul.

Iranian clerics in Qom protest over MPs' sit-in. (IRNA)

A group of clerics and students of religious schools in the holy city of Qom took part in a gathering on the evening of 13 January to protest against the sit-in strike by a number of members of the Iranian parliament who have been announced disqualified for the seventh Majlis.

January 14

Senior security official says Iran handed over Al-Qa'idah members to Saudi Arabia. (Iranian TV station *Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1*)

Iran has handed a number of Al-Qa'idah members to Saudi Arabia in the past few months, Secretary of Iranian Supreme National Security Council Hasan Rowhani said.

January 16

Friday prayer participants chant slogan against Majlis deputies. (ISNA)

After the Tehran Friday prayers participants chanted slogans against the reformist deputies of the Majlis and in favour of the Hezbollah. The publications *Ya Lesarat ol-Hoseyn* and *Ebrat-Haye Ashura* were distributed in front the university among the participants.

Qom protesters threaten to march to Tehran (ISNA)

After the Friday prayer sermon a number of participants were invited by theological students of the Qom Seminary to take part in a rally from the holy shrine to Qom Martyrs Square in protest to the Majlis sit-in. It was reported that 2,000 theological students and people of Qom have registered to go to Tehran and stage a sit-in in front of the Majlis.

January 17

Governors of Tehran Province resign. (IRNA)

Governors of the constituencies in Tehran Province resigned in protest at the Guardian Council's extensive ban on applicants to run for parliament seat.

Political activists back sit-in MPs. (IRNA)

Over 350 political activists, celebrated cultural figures and academics backed the MPs democratic demands from the Guardian Council to declare null and void the extensive ban on applicants to run in the parliamentary elections. About 115 incumbent MPs have gone on hunger strike in protest against violation of the constitutional rights of the people through the wholesale ban on applicants. The political activists declared their support to the MPs in a statement to the people calling the electoral ban 'illegal and extensive'.

University of Tehran students issue statement about elections. (ISNA)

The Islamic Students Union of the University of Tehran and Tehran's Medical Sciences University issued its Statement No 1 about the seventh-term Majlis elections. The statement said that "the position of the constitution and the *Sharia'h* has been degraded" by some actions of the Guardians Council.

Qom theologians issue statement backing protesting Iranian MPs. (Iranian newspaper *Mardom Salari*)

In a statement, the Society of Lecturers and Scholars of Qom Theological School called the disqualification of a group of Islamic Consultative Majlis deputies by the Guardian Council's supervisory boards as a cause of concern for parties and political, social, and popular groups. The statement said: "Charges such as membership in illegal parties, being contaminated with social corruption, a lack of commitment to Islam, not believing or being bound to Islam and the Islamic Republic system, a lack of allegiance to the constitution and the principle of the guardianship of the supreme jurisconsult, are each a form of accusation against public servants who have in the past and are at present the source of services and influence in society." The statement added: "While supporting the serving government, the cabinet, the esteemed provincial governors, and the groups that have expressed concern and while calling for unity and avoiding scandal-mongering, which are sought by oppressive groups and enemies of the system, we point out the need to insist on the people's basic rights in the course of the implementation of the law."

January 19

Students in northeast Iran support MPs' sit-in. (ILNA)

The Islamic Students Union of Ferdowsi and Mashhad's Medical Sciences Universities has issued a statement protesting against the disqualification of candidates for the Majlis.

Teachers protest non-payment of their salaries. (RFE/RL *Iran Report*)

A group of Iranian teachers staged a protest from 17-19 January by being present in the schools but not teaching. Shahabeddin Etedali, the Education Ministry's deputy for logistics, reportedly said the teachers are due about 4 billion rials (about \$506,000) in overdue salaries, but if everything goes according to plan the teachers should be paid by the end of the month. In November, teachers from Gilan, Hamedan, Isfahan, Kerman, Kermanshah, Khorasan, Shiraz, Tehran, Urumiyeh, Yazd, and Zanjan provinces held demonstrations in front of provincial Management and Planning Organization (MPO) offices. However, the MPO has not fulfilled the promises it made then. The MPO was supposed to submit legislation making teachers' salaries more uniform with those of other civil servants.

At an October 2003 protest, teachers called for greater attention to their salaries and pensions as well as a greater focus on education in the fourth five-year plan, which will start in 2005. Hard-line vigilantes attacked a December 2002 teachers demonstration because of low salaries and poor working conditions and, in January 2002, teachers across the country staged demonstrations.

January 21

Most Iranian vice presidents, ministers resign as election crisis deepens. (AP)

Most of Iran's Cabinet ministers and vice presidents have submitted their resignations, officials said, accusing conservatives of trying to engineer a sympathetic parliament by disqualifying thousands of prospective candidates. The disqualifications of more than a third of the 8,200 candidates in February 20 legislative elections were made by Iran's Guardian Council. Those disqualified include 80 sitting reformist lawmakers, who have been holding sit-ins and dawn-to-dusk fasts to protest the decision. The council reinstated 200 of the disqualified candidates and said it would reconsider the rest. Interior Minister Abdolvahed Mousavi Lari presented a report during the Cabinet session saying the conservatives want to secure at least 180 seats in the 290-seat parliament.

The president had threatened to resign himself if the disqualifications are not reversed. However, he refused to take that step. "Because of my position, I have the responsibility to show that I serve the people," he said.

Conservatives attack pro-reform gathering in Hamedan. (Reuters)

Scores of conservatives attacked a reformist gathering in central Iran, injuring at least five people in the first outbreak of violence of a tense build-up to parliamentary elections. The violence erupted when a speaker at a pro-reform gathering in the central city of Hamedan accused the Guardian Council of disregarding Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's advice for the disqualifications to be reviewed. An

MP said that some 200 conservatives attacked the podium, broke the microphone and punched people. At least five people, including Hamedan MP Hossein Loqmanian, were injured, and one person was hospitalised.

The Society of Hezbollah in Golestan province declares solidarity with Majlis sit-in. (Iranian newspaper *Nasim-e Saba*)

The Society of Hezbollah in Golestan province declared their solidarity with the protest action of the reformist Majlis deputies against the Guardians' Council, accusing the latter of resisting popular will.

January 23

12 al-Qaida suspects to face trial in Iran. (AP)

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazmi said that his government planned to put 12 al-Qaida suspects being held in the country on trial. Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi confirmed for the first time in July that Iran was holding "a large number of small and big-time elements of al-Qaida" who had illegally crossed the border. In September, Iran gave the U.N. Security Council the names of 225 suspected al-Qaida operatives it detained and returned to their home countries.

January 25

Four dead, dozens injured during unrest in Shahr-Babak town. (Iranian Fars News Agency / FNA)

The Majlis deputy for Shahr-Babak, in a speech at the Majlis, reported that four residents of the Qasemabad village have been killed in recent clashes in his constituency. Mansur Soleymani Meymandi, the deputy for Shahr-Babak [in the southern Kerman Province] said that a group of Qasemabad residents had brought a project being run by contractors to a standstill in protest to their employment problems last week. He said that the Law Enforcement Force, which was dealing with the protesters and trying to arrest them, attacked the Qasemabad village, and as a consequence the crisis extended to Shahr-Babak and led to the death of four people and the injury of dozens more.

Reuters report on the same news: At least four Iranians were killed in the southeast province of Kerman when police fought a crowd of factory workers who were staging a sit-in at a copper plant. He said the men were killed in the town of Khatunabad in the west of Kerman province. Motorcycle gangs had roared into town during the dispute and attacked the governor's office and banks, but it was not clear whether the bikers were malcontent factory workers.

Iran's Guardians Council rejects election reform bill. (AFP)

The Guardians Council rejected an electoral reform bill designed to curb its powers of vetting candidates for parliamentary polls. The council ruled that the law was "contrary to Islam and certain articles of the constitution" of the Islamic Republic. Parliament voted earlier for an emergency reform of Iran's electoral law aimed at forcing the conservative rivals to reinstate thousands of reformist candidates barred from next month's election. MPs backed amendments aimed at making it easier for

candidates to stand, in a direct challenge to the powerful Guardians Council whose election blacklist has triggered a bitter political crisis.

January 26

Tehran university lecturers hold political fast to support Majlis sit-in. (ILNA)

Tehran University lecturers held a political fast at the technical department of the university.

Brothel madame, male murderer hanged in Iran. (AFP)

In the first case, the woman - who was not named - was given 80 lashes and then hanged in prison after being convicted of luring young girls and women to work in a brothel in the northern city of Qazvin. She allegedly made pornographic films involving her staff and clients while a search of her brothel also turned up alcoholic beverages. It was reported that her husband and accomplice had also been condemned to death, but his sentence has yet to be confirmed by Iran's Supreme Court.

In the second execution, a man convicted of killing a 65-year-old five years ago had been hanged. The killer, Mohammad Mohammadzadeh, who was 17 when he murdered Mousa Azadi by hammer blows, had argued that he was defending the honour of his family.

Khatami rejects officials' resignation. (RFE/RL Iran Report)

President Khatami rejected the mass resignation of his top officials. Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Hojatolislam Mohammad Ali Abtahi spoke to reporters after the 21 January cabinet meeting. When asked about the possible reaction to a failure to resolve the current crisis over the massive rejection of prospective parliamentary candidates, he said: "In such a case, we shall proceed with mass resignation. A number of ministers and vice presidents who have submitted their resignations are obviously awaiting the response to their move".

Militia commander and several officers allegedly executed in Iran. (Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran / SMCCDI)*

The Islamic Republic authorities reportedly executed Brigadier-General Mohamad-Mehdi Dozdoozani following a speedy trial. Dozdoozani, a hero of war and one of the high commander of the Pasdaran Corps, was allegedly executed along with several other officers in the Heshmatie Military facilities. Dozdoozani became an open critic of the regime following the endorsement of a famous public letter entitled "We're Combatants". In this letter signed by tens of officers of the Pasdaran Corps, the regime's leaders were attacked for corruption and injustices. Arrested in 2003 summer for disobedience and promotion of rebellion, Dozdoozani and several of his officers were reported finally executed on the request of the Supreme Leader.

* *Editor's note: This report has not been confirmed by any major information source.*

January 27**Iranian student group joins election protest. (AFP)**

Iran's main pro-democracy student group announced that it was joining protests by reformist MPs over the widespread barring of mainly reformist candidates from February 2004 parliament elections. The head of the Office to Consolidate Unity (OCU), Abdollah Momeni, said at least 50 student activists from his group were joining a 17-day-old sit-in by disgruntled pro-reform deputies seeking to reverse the disqualifications ordered by powerful conservatives.

Tehran University says candidate disqualification "mockery" of elections. (IRNA)

The Council of Tehran University said that the wholesale disqualification of hopefuls for the 20 February election is ignoring the rights of the nation to elect their own representatives. The Council of Tehran University composed of deans of different faculties of the university and several university instructors said in a statement that such a code of conduct with public opinion creates an atmosphere of insecurity and social ambiguity and finally leads to brain drain.

Iranian lecturers stage sit-in at Tehran University. (ILNA)

At a sit-in which was staged by a group of Tehran University lecturers, students and members of the Islamic Association of Students, the participants expressed their views, at a free podium, on the country's current political issues.

January 28**Disqualified Majlis candidates stage protest rally in Charmahal Province. (IRNA)**

The parliamentary candidates affiliated to the 2 Khordad Front in Charmahal va Bakhtiari Province, who have been all disqualified, staged a protest rally in Shahr-e-Kord, and at the end gathered at Governorate.

January 30**Guardian Council approves additional 1,160 candidates. (Iranian radio *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)**

The Guardian Council has issued a statement after the expiration of the legal deadline for reviewing the results of the final investigation into the competencies of the candidates for the Islamic Consultative Assembly. The Council said "after reviewing the objections made by those individuals whom the executive and supervisory boards deemed to have failed to meet the legal conditions for candidates for the Islamic Consultative Assembly, [the Council] decided that another 1,160 of candidates did meet the necessary legal conditions. Therefore, out of the total number of cases submitted to the Guardian Council by the supervisory and executive boards, and by taking account of presence of the 4,291 candidates who had already been deemed as meeting the necessary legal requirements, 5,450 individuals now meet the necessary legal requirements and they will be able to take part in a free and legal competition".

January 31**Three Iranian men hanged publicly for rape. (AFP)**

Three Iranian men were publicly hanged in the northwestern town of Khoy for abducting and raping a 16-year-old girl. "Three men who forcefully kidnapped a 16-year-old girl on December 9, 2003, were publicly hanged at 5:00 am, after being convicted of abduction and rape," a judiciary official from the province of Western Azarbaijan said.

Journalist convicted. (RFE / RL *Iran Report*)

The criminal court in Tehran found Abdul Rasul Vesal, the managing director of *Iran*, which is the state news agency's Persian-language daily, guilty of press offences and barred him from public service for three months. Judge Mohammad Islami also decreed that Vesal pay a 15 million-rial (about \$1,900) fine. Vesal faced 63 complaints -- 31 from the prosecutor-general, 28 from private individuals, and five from the State Inspectorate Organization.

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Country of Origin Information Team

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