

Thursday, July 30, 2009

## Whither Iran? Keeping the Green Revolution non-violent

**Editor's Note:** Today's law page is consecrated to Iran, which remains the center of a Middle East in transition. The Iranian presidential elections of June 12 triggered the ongoing Green Revolution, bringing the crisis of the regime to new depths. According to official figures, over 20 civilians were killed. Over 250 people are in jail whose names are known, including Saeed Hajjarian and former Vice President Mohammad Ali Abtahi. The clerical circles in Qom are unhappy, and several leading clerics have expressed their dismay at the way the government has handled the elections and their aftermath. The confidence of strong classical adherents in the system has been shaken beyond recognition.

A break has no doubt taken place. How it will develop is impossible to predict, but people will fight for their loved ones, whether they have been killed, jailed or silenced. Events in Iran since June 12 created blatant human-rights violations, which violate the spirit of both universal charters and the Iranian Constitution, itself the result of a massive revolt of the Iranians against the dictatorship of the Shah. Marchers last Saturday in over 80 cities across the globe, including Beirut, demonstrated a sympathy that can hardly be opposed, so long as the revolution is non-violent.

Three texts are offered to the reader's attention: a presentation of the plight of Hajjarian, a leading dissident who remains in jail since his arrest three days after the elections. Veteran journalist and leading observer of modern Iran, Gareth Smyth, provides a short, personal profile of this prisoner of opinion, the first in a series of portraits for a category that is no longer acceptable in the 21st century: people who are arrested for their non-violent opinion.

The second text is an excerpt from presidential candidate Mirhossein Muosavi's groundbreaking statement on electoral fraud. It comes from a translation of the excellent BBC Monitoring Services, reduced from the original 18,000 words to just over 2,000. The third article is a comment on getting to the bottom of what happened on June 12 in the wake of Mousavi's grave conclusion that "there has been organized cheating throughout the country."