

# Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

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**Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** (Persian: محمود احمدی‌نژاد, *Mahmūd Ahmadinezhād* [mæhˈmuːd(-e) æhmædiːne ˈʒɒːd] listen<sup>ⓘ</sup> [2][3][4] English: /ɑːkməˈdɪniːʒɑːd/; born 28 October 1956<sup>[5]</sup><sup>[6]</sup>) is the sixth and current President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the main political leader of the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran, a coalition of conservative political groups in the country. An engineer and teacher from a poor background,<sup>[7]</sup> Ahmadinejad joined the Office for Strengthening Unity<sup>[8]</sup> after the Islamic Revolution. Appointed a provincial governor, he was removed after the election of President Mohammad Khatami and returned to teaching.<sup>[9]</sup> Tehran's council elected him mayor in 2003.<sup>[10]</sup> He took a religious hard line, reversing reforms of previous moderate mayors.<sup>[11]</sup> His 2005 presidential campaign, supported by the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran, garnered 62% of the runoff election votes, and he became President on 3 August 2005.<sup>[12]</sup><sup>[13]</sup> His second presidency term ends on August 3, 2013. He is not eligible to run for another term under the current Iranian constitution.

Ahmadinejad is a controversial figure both within Iran and internationally. He has been criticized domestically for his economic lapses and disregard for human rights. He launched a gas rationing plan in 2007 to reduce the country's fuel consumption, and cut the interest rates that private and public banking facilities could charge.<sup>[14]</sup><sup>[15]</sup><sup>[16]</sup> He supports Iran's nuclear energy program. His election to a second term in 2009 was widely disputed<sup>[17]</sup><sup>[18]</sup> and caused widespread protests domestically and drew significant international criticism.<sup>[19]</sup> In 2011 the presence of a so-called "deviant current" among his aides and supporters led to the arrest of several of them.<sup>[20]</sup>

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## Early life

Ahmadinejad was born near Garmsar in the village of Aradan, in Semnan province. His father, Ahmad, was an ironworker, grocer, barber, blacksmith and religious Shi'a who taught the Qur'an.<sup>[21]</sup> His mother, Khanom, was a Seyyede, an honorific title given to those believed to be direct bloodline descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.<sup>[21]</sup> Ahmadinejad's father changed his name from "Saborjhian"<sup>[22]</sup> or "Sabaghian"<sup>[23]</sup> when Ahmadinejad was four years old to avoid discrimination when the family moved to Tehran, as the rural name indicated a lowly social standing. Sabor is Persian for thread painter,<sup>[24]</sup> a once common occupation within the Semnan carpet industry. Ahmadinejad was chosen as it means from the race of Ahmad, one of the names given to Muhammad.

## Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

محمود احمدی‌نژاد



Ahmadinejad at a news conference in Brasília, November 2009

### 6th President of Iran

#### Incumbent

#### Assumed office

3 August 2005

**Vice President** Parviz Davoodi

Mohammad-Reza Rahimi

**Supreme Leader** Ali Khamenei

**Preceded by** Mohammad Khatami

#### Mayor of Tehran

##### In office

20 June 2003 – 3 August 2005

**Deputy** Ali Saeedlou

**Preceded by** Mohammad-Hassan

Malekmadani

**Succeeded by** Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf

#### Governor of Ardebil

##### In office

1 May 1993 – 28 June 1997

**Preceded by** Hossein Taheri (East Azerbaijan)

**Succeeded by** Javad Negarandeh

#### Personal details

**Born** 28 October 1956

Aradan, Iran

**Political party** Alliance of Builders

(2003–present)

**Other political affiliations** Islamic Society of Engineers

(1990–2005)

**Spouse(s)** Azam Farahi (1981–present)<sup>[1]</sup>

**Children** Mehdi

Alireza

Fatemeh

**Residence** Sa'dabad Palace (Official)

Gisha (Private)

**Alma mater** Iran University of Science and

Technology

**Profession** Civil engineer

**Religion** Twelver Shia Islam

**Signature**

محمود احمدی‌نژاد

In 1976, Ahmadinejad took Iran's national university entrance contests. According to his autobiography, he was ranked 132nd out of 400,000 participants that year,<sup>[25]</sup> and soon enrolled in the Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST) as an undergraduate student of civil engineering. He earned his PhD (1997) in transportation engineering and planning from Iran University of Science and Technology, located at Tehran, when he was the Mayor of Ardabil Province, located at the north-west of the country.

<b>Website</b>	Official website ( <a href="http://www.president.ir/">http://www.president.ir/</a> )
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Supporters of Ahmadinejad consider him a "simple man" that leads a "modest" life.<sup>[26]</sup> As president, he wanted to continue living in the same house in Tehran his family had been living in, until his security advisers insisted that he move. Ahmadinejad had the antique Persian carpets in the Presidential palace sent to a carpet museum, and opted instead to use inexpensive carpets. He is said to have refused the V.I.P. seat on the Presidential plane, and that he eventually replaced it with a cargo plane instead.<sup>[9][27]</sup> Also upon gaining Iran's presidency, Ahmadinejad held his first cabinet meeting in the Imam Reza shrine at Mashhad, an act perceived as "pious".<sup>[28]</sup>

## Administrative and academic careers

Some details of Ahmadinejad's life during the 1980s are not publicly known, but it is known that he held a number of administrative posts in the province of West Azerbaijan, Iran.<sup>[9]</sup>

Many reports say that after Saddam Hussein invaded Iran, Ahmadinejad joined the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution<sup>[10]</sup> and served in their intelligence and security apparatus,<sup>[10]</sup> but his advisor Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi says "He has never been a member or an official member of the Revolutionary Guards", having been a Basiji-like volunteer instead.<sup>[29]</sup>

Ahmadinejad was accepted to a Master of Science program at his alma mater in 1986. He joined the faculty there as a lecturer in 1989,<sup>[7][30]</sup> and in 1997 received his doctorate in civil engineering and traffic transportation planning.<sup>[7][10]</sup>

## Embassy siege

*Main article: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the 1979 hostage crisis*

Shortly after being elected president, some western media outlets published claims that Ahmadinejad was among the students who stormed the US embassy in Tehran, sparking the Iran hostage crisis. This claim has been denied by the Iranian government, the Iranian opposition as well as a CIA investigation on the matter.

## Early political career

After the Islamic Revolution, Ahmadinejad became a member of the Office for Strengthening Unity,<sup>[8]</sup> an organization developed to prevent students from sympathizing or allying with the budding Mojahedin-e Khalq.<sup>[8]</sup>

He first took political office as unelected governor to both Maku and Khoy in West Azarbaijan Province during the 1980s.<sup>[10]</sup> He eventually became an advisor to the governor general of Kurdistan Province for two years.<sup>[7][30]</sup> During his doctoral studies at Tehran, he was appointed governor general of Ardabil Province from 1993 until Mohammad Khatami removed him in 1997<sup>[30]</sup> when he returned to teaching.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Mayor of Tehran

In 2003, a 12 percent turnout elected conservative candidates from the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran to the City Council of Tehran.<sup>[7]</sup> The Council appointed Ahmadinejad mayor.<sup>[10]</sup>

As mayor, he reversed changes made by previous moderate and reformist mayors. He put religious emphasis on the activities of cultural centres they had founded, publicised the separation of elevators for men and women in the municipality offices,<sup>[11]</sup> and suggested that people killed in the Iran–Iraq War be buried in major city squares of Tehran. He also worked to improve the traffic system and put an emphasis on charity, such as distributing free soup to the poor.

After his election to the presidency, Ahmadinejad's resignation as the Mayor of Tehran was accepted on 28 June 2005. After two years as mayor, Ahmadinejad was one of 65 finalists for World Mayor in 2005, selected from 550 nominees, only nine of them from Asia.<sup>[31]</sup> He was among three strong candidates for the top ten list, but his resignation made him ineligible.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Presidency

*Further information: Government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–present)*

### 2005 campaign

Ahmadinejad was not widely known when he entered the presidential election campaign as he had never run for office before, (he had only been mayor of Tehran for two years and had been appointed not elected<sup>[32]</sup>), although he had already made his mark in Tehran for rolling back earlier reforms. He was/is a member of the Central Council of the Islamic Society of Engineers, but his key political support is inside the Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran (*Abadgaran* or *Developers*).<sup>[33]</sup> He was also helped by support from supreme leader Ali Khamanei, who some described Ahmadinejad as a "protege" of.<sup>[34]</sup>

Ahmadinejad generally sent mixed signals about his plans for his presidency, perhaps to attract both religious conservatives and the lower economic classes.<sup>[35]</sup> His campaign slogan was: "It's possible and we can do it".<sup>[36]</sup>

In the campaign, he took a populist approach. He emphasized his own modest life, and compared himself with Mohammad Ali Rajai, Iran's second president. Ahmadinejad said he planned to create an "exemplary government for the people of the world" in Iran. He was a "principlist", acting politically based on Islamic and revolutionary principles. One of his goals was "putting the petroleum income on people's tables", meaning Iran's oil profits would be distributed among the poor.<sup>[37]</sup>

Ahmadinejad was the only presidential candidate who spoke out against future relations with the United States. He told Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting the United Nations was "one-sided, stacked against the world of Islam."<sup>[38]</sup> He opposed the veto power of the UN Security Council's five permanent members: "It is not just for a few states to sit and veto global approvals. Should such a privilege continue to exist, the Muslim world with a population of nearly 1.5 billion should be extended the same privilege." He defended Iran's nuclear program and accused "a few arrogant powers" of trying to limit Iran's industrial and technological development in this and other fields.

In his second round campaign, he said, "We didn't participate in the revolution for turn-by-turn government....This revolution tries to reach a world-wide government." He spoke of an extended program using trade to improve foreign relations, and called for greater ties with Iran's neighbours and ending visa requirements between states in the region, saying that "people should visit anywhere they wish freely. People should have freedom in their pilgrimages and tours."<sup>[36]</sup>

Ahmadinejad described Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi, a senior cleric from Qom as his ideological and spiritual mentor. Mesbah founded the Haghani School of thought in Iran. He and his team strongly supported Ahmadinejad's 2005 presidential campaign.<sup>[39]</sup>

## 2005 election

*Main article: Iranian presidential election, 2005*

Ahmadinejad won 62 percent of the vote in the run-off poll against Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei authorized his presidency on 3 August 2005.<sup>[12][13]</sup> Ahmadinejad kissed Khamenei's hand during the ceremony to show his loyalty.<sup>[40][41]</sup>

## 2005 cabinet appointments

Iran's President is constitutionally obliged to obtain confirmation from the parliament for his selection of ministers.<sup>[43]</sup> Ahmadinejad presented a short-list at a private meeting on 5 August, and his final list on 14 August. The Majlis rejected all of his cabinet candidates for the oil portfolio and objected to the appointment of his allies in senior government office.<sup>[37]</sup> The Majlis approved a cabinet on 24 August.<sup>[44]</sup> The ministers promised to meet frequently outside Tehran and held their first meeting on 25 August in Mashhad, with four empty seats for the unapproved nominees.<sup>[45]</sup>

## 2006 Councils and Assembly of Experts election

*Main articles: Iranian councils election, 2006 and Iranian Assembly of Experts election, 2006*

Ahmadinejad's team lost the 2006 city council elections,<sup>[46]</sup> and his spiritual mentor, Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi, was ranked sixth on the country's Assembly of Experts.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> In the first nationwide election since Ahmadinejad became President, his allies failed to dominate election returns for the Assembly of Experts and local councils. Results, with a turnout of about 60%, suggested a voter shift toward more moderate policies. According to an editorial in the Kargozaran independent daily newspaper, "The results show that voters have learned from the past and concluded that we need to support.. moderate figures." An Iranian political analyst said that "this is a blow for Ahmadinejad and Mesbah Yazdi's list."<sup>[46]</sup>

## 2009 presidential election

*Main article: Iranian presidential election, 2009*

On 23 August 2008, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei announced that he "sees Ahmadinejad as president in the next five years," a comment interpreted as indicating support for Ahmadinejad's reelection.<sup>[47]</sup> 39,165,191 ballots were cast in the election on 12 June 2009, according to Iran's election headquarters. Ahmadinejad won 24,527,516 votes, (62.63%). In second place, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, won 13,216,411 (33.75%) of the votes.<sup>[48]</sup> The election drew unprecedented public interest in Iran.

## 2009 Iranian election protests

*Main article: 2009 Iranian election protests*

As of April 2011, the election results remain in dispute with both Mousavi and Ahmadinejad and their respective supporters who believe that electoral fraud occurred during the election. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei formally endorsed Ahmadinejad as President on 3 August 2009, and Ahmadinejad was sworn in for a second term on 5 August 2009.<sup>[49]</sup> Iran's Constitution stipulates term limits of two terms for the office of President.<sup>[50]</sup> Several Iranian political figures appeared to avoid the ceremony. Former presidents Mohammad Khatami, and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who is currently head of the Expediency Discernment Council, along with opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, did not attend the ceremony.<sup>[51]</sup> Opposition groups asked protesters on reformist websites and blogs to launch new street demonstrations on the day of the inauguration ceremony.<sup>[52]</sup> On inauguration day, hundreds of riot police met opposition protesters outside parliament. After taking the oath of office, which was broadcast live on Iranian state television, Ahmadinejad said that he will "protect the official faith, the system of the Islamic revolution and the constitution".<sup>[49]</sup> France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States announced that they would not send the usual letters of congratulation.<sup>[49]</sup>

## 2009 cabinet appointments

Ahmadinejad announced controversial ministerial appointments for his second term. Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei was briefly appointed as first vice president, but opposed by a number of Majlis members and by the intelligence minister, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i. Mashaei followed orders to resign. Ahmadinejad then appointed Mashaei as chief of staff, and fired Mohseni-Eje'i.<sup>[53]</sup>

On July 26, 2009, Ahmadinejad's government faced a legal problem after he sacked four ministers. Iran's constitution (Article 136) stipulates that, if more than half of its members are replaced, the cabinet may not meet or act before the Majlis approves the revised membership.<sup>[54]</sup> The Vice Chairman of the Majlis announced that no cabinet meetings or decisions would be legal, pending such a re-approval.<sup>[55]</sup>

Ministry	Minister
Agriculture	Mohammadreza Eskandari
Commerce	Masoud Mirkazemi
Communication and Information Technology	Mohammad Soleimani
Cooperatives	Mohammad Abbasi
Culture and Islamic Guidance	Hossein Saffar Harandi
Defense and Armed Forces Logistics	Mostafa Mohammad Najjar
Economy and Financial Affairs	Hossein Samsami
Education	Alireza Aliahmadi
Energy	Parviz Fattah
Foreign Affairs	Manoucher Mottaki
Health and Medical Education	Kamran Bagheri Lankarani
Housing and Urban Development	Mohammad Saeedikia
Industries and Mines	Aliakbar Mehrabian
Intelligence	Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejehei
Interior	Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi <sup>[42]</sup>
Justice	Gholam Hossein Elham
Labour and Social Affairs	Mohammad Jahromi
Petroleum	Rostam Ghassemi
Roads and Transportation	Hamid Behbahani
Science, Research, and Technology	Mohammad Mehdi Zahedi
Welfare and Social Security	Abdolreza Mesri



Ahmadinejad in Yekaterinburg, Russia, 16 June 2009

The main list of 21 cabinet appointments was announced on August 19, 2009.<sup>[56]</sup> On September 4, Majlis approved 18 of the 21 candidates, and rejected three, including two women. Sousan Keshavarz, Mohammad Aliabadi, and Fatemeh Ajorlou were not approved by Majlis for the Ministries of Education, Energy, and Welfare and Social Security respectively. Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi is the first woman approved by Majlis as a minister in the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>[57]</sup>

Ministry	Minister
Agriculture	Sadeq Khalilian
Commerce	Mehdi Ghazanfari
Communication and Information Technology	Reza Taqipour
Cooperatives	Mohammad Abbasi
Culture and Islamic Guidance	Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini

## Domestic policy

### Economic policy

*See also: Economy of Iran*

In Ahmadinejad's first four years as president, Iran's real GDP reflected growth of the economy. Inflation and unemployment have also decreased under Ahmadinejad due to better economic management and ending the unsustainable spending and borrowing patterns of previous administrations.<sup>[58][59]</sup> Ahmadinejad has increased spending by 25 percent and has supported subsidies for food and petrol. He also initially refused a gradual increase of petrol prices, saying that after making necessary preparations, such as a development of public transportation system, the government will free up petrol prices after five years.<sup>[60]</sup> Interest rates were cut by presidential decree to below the inflation rate. One unintended effect of this stimulation of the economy has been the bidding up of some urban real estate prices by two or three times their pre-Ahmadinejad value by Iranians seeking to invest surplus cash and finding few other safe opportunities. The resulting increase in the cost of housing has hurt poorer, non-property owning Iranians, the putative beneficiaries of Ahmadinejad's populist policies.<sup>[61]</sup> The Management and Planning Organisation, a state body charged with mapping out long-term economic and budget strategy, was broken up and its experienced managers were fired.<sup>[62]</sup>

In June 2006, 50 Iranian economists wrote a letter to Ahmadinejad that criticized his price interventions to stabilize prices of goods, cement, government services, and his decree issued by the High Labor Council and the Ministry of Labor that proposed an increase of workers' salaries by 40 percent. Ahmadinejad publicly responded harshly to the letter and denounced the accusations.<sup>[63][64]</sup> Ahmadinejad has called for "middle-of-the-road" compromises with respect to Western-oriented capitalism and socialism. Current political conflicts with the United States have caused the central bank to fear increased capital flight due to global isolation. These factors have prevented an improvement of infrastructure and capital influx, despite high economic potential.<sup>[58]</sup> Among those that did not vote for him in the first election, only 3.5 percent said they would consider voting for him in the next election.<sup>[65]</sup> Mohammad Khoshchehreh, a member of Iranian parliament that campaigned for Ahmadinejad, said that his government "has been strong on populist slogans, but weak on achievement."<sup>[66]</sup> President Ahmadinejad has changed almost all of his economic ministers, including oil, industry and economy, since coming to power in 2005. In an interview with Fars News Agency on April 2008, Davoud Danesh Jaafari who acted as minister of economy in President Ahmadinejad's cabinet, harshly criticized Ahmadinejad's economic policy: "During my time, there was no positive attitude towards previous experiences or experienced people and there was no plan for the future. Peripheral issues which were not of dire importance to the nation were given priority. Most of the scientific economic concepts like the effect of liquidity on inflation were put in question."<sup>[67]</sup> In response to these criticisms, Ahmadinejad accused his minister of not being "a man of justice" and declared that the solution to Iran's economic problem is "the culture of martyrdom".<sup>[68]</sup> In May 2008, the Petroleum minister of Iran admitted that the government illegally invested 2 billion dollars to import petrol in 2007. At Iranian parliament, he also mentioned that he simply followed the president's order.<sup>[69][70]</sup>

While his government had 275 thousand billion toman oil income, the highest in Iranian history, Ahmadinejad's government had the highest budget deficit since the Iranian revolution.<sup>[71]</sup>

During his presidency, Ahmadinejad launched a gasoline rationing plan to reduce the country's fuel consumption. He also instituted cuts in the interest rates that private and public banking facilities could charge.<sup>[14][15][72]</sup> He issued a directive that the Management and Planning Organization be affiliated to the government.<sup>[73]</sup> In May 2011 Ahmadinejad announced that he would temporarily run the Oil Ministry.<sup>[74]</sup>

### Family planning and population policy

*See also: Family planning in Iran*

In October 2006, Ahmadinejad began calling for the scrapping of Iran's existing birth control policies, which discouraged Iranian couples from having more than two children. He told MPs that Iran could cope with 50 million more people than the current 70 million. In November 2010 he urged Iranians to marry and reproduce earlier, "We should take the age of marriage for boys to 20 and for girls to about 16 and 17."<sup>[75]</sup> His remarks have drawn

criticism and been called ill-judged at a time when Iran was struggling with surging inflation and rising unemployment, estimated at around 11 percent. Ahmadinejad's call was reminiscent of a call for Iranians to have more children made by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979. The policy increased Iran's population by 16 million in seven years<sup>[76]</sup> but was eventually reversed in response to the resultant economic strain.<sup>[77]</sup>

In 2008, the government sent the "Family Protection Bill" to the Iranian parliament. Women's rights activists criticized the bill for removing protections from women, such as the requirement that a husband obtain his wife's consent before bringing another wife into the family. Women's rights in Iran are more religiously based than those in secular countries.<sup>[78]</sup>

## Housing

*See also: Construction industry of Iran#Mehr Housing Scheme*

The first legislation to emerge from his newly formed government was a 12 trillion rial (US\$1.3 billion) fund called "*Reza's Compassion Fund*",<sup>[79]</sup> named after Shi'a Imam Ali al-Rida. Ahmadinejad's government said this fund would tap Iran's oil revenues to help young people get jobs, afford marriage, and buy their own homes.<sup>[80]</sup> The fund also sought charitable donations, with a board of trustees in each of Iran's 30 provinces. The legislation was a response to the cost of urban housing, which is pushing up the national average marital age (currently around 25 years for women and 28 years for men). In 2006 the Iranian parliament rejected the fund. However, Ahmadinejad ordered the administrative council to execute the plan.<sup>[81]</sup>

## Human rights

*See also: Human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*

According to a report by Human Rights Watch, "Since President Ahmadinejad came to power, treatment of detainees has worsened in Evin Prison as well as in detention centers operated clandestinely by the Judiciary, the Ministry of Information, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps."<sup>[82]</sup> Again according to Human Rights Watch, "Respect for basic human rights in Iran, especially freedom of expression and assembly, deteriorated in 2006. The government routinely tortures and mistreats detained dissidents, including through prolonged solitary confinement." Human Rights Watch described the source of human rights violations in contemporary Iran as coming from the Judiciary, accountable to Ali Khamenei, and from members directly appointed by Ahmadinejad.

Responses to dissent have varied. Human Rights Watch writes that "the Ahmadinejad government, in a pronounced shift from the policy under former president Mohammed Khatami, has shown no tolerance for peaceful protests and gatherings." In December 2006, Ahmadinejad advised officials not to disturb students who engaged in a protest during a speech of his at the Amirkabir University of Technology in Tehran,<sup>[83][84]</sup> although speakers at other protests have included among their complaints that there had been a crackdown on dissent at universities since Ahmadinejad was elected.<sup>[85]</sup>

In April 2007, the Tehran police, which is under Khamenei's supervision, began a crackdown on women with "improper hijab." This led to criticism from associates of Ahmadinejad.<sup>[86]</sup>

In 2012, Ahmadinejad claimed that AIDS was created by the West in order to weaken poorer countries, and repeated a previous claim that homosexual Iranians did not exist.<sup>[87]</sup>

## Universities

*See also: Higher education in Iran*

In 2006, the Ahmadinejad<sup>[88]</sup> government reportedly forced numerous Iranian scientists and university professors to resign or to retire. It has been referred to as "second cultural revolution".<sup>[89][90]</sup> The policy has been said to replace old professors with younger ones.<sup>[91]</sup> Some university professors received letters indicating their early retirement unexpectedly.<sup>[92]</sup> In November 2006, 53 university professors had to retire from Iran University of Science and Technology.<sup>[93]</sup>

In 2006, Ahmadinejad's government applied a 50 percent quota for male students and 50 percent for female students in the university entrance exam for medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. The plan was supposed to stop the growing presence of female students in the universities. In a response to critics, Iranian minister of health and medical education, Kamran Bagheri Lankarani argued that there are not enough facilities such as dormitories for female students. Masoud Salehi, president of Zahedan University said that presence of women generates some problems with transportation. Also, Ebrahim Mekaniki, president of Babol University of Medical Sciences, stated that an increase in the presence of women will make it difficult to distribute facilities in a suitable manner. Bagher Larijani, the president of Tehran University of Medical Sciences made similar remarks. According to Rooz Online, the quotas lack a legal foundation and are justified as support for "family" and "religion."

## December 2006 student protest

On 11 December 2006, some students disrupted a speech by Ahmadinejad at the Amirkabir University of Technology (Tehran Polytechnic) in Tehran. According to the Iranian Student News Agency, students set fire to photographs of Ahmadinejad and threw firecrackers. The protesters also chanted "death to the dictator." It was the first major public protest against Ahmadinejad since his election. In a statement carried on the students' Web site,<sup>[citation needed]</sup> they announced that they had been protesting the growing political pressure under Ahmadinejad, also accusing him of corruption, mismanagement, and discrimination. The statement added that "the students showed that despite vast propaganda, the president has not been able to deceive academia." It was also reported that some students were angry about the International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust.<sup>[94]</sup>

In response to the students' slogans, the president said: "We have been standing up to dictatorship so that no one will dare to establish dictatorship in a millennium even in the name of freedom. Given the scars inflicted on the Iranian nation by agents of the US and British dictatorship, no one will ever dare to initiate the rise of a dictator."<sup>[95]</sup> It was reported that even though the protesters broke the TV cameras and threw hand-made bombs at Ahmadinejad,<sup>[96]</sup> the president asked the officials not to question or

Defense and Armed Forces Logistics	Ahmad Vahidi
Economy and Financial Affairs	Shamseddin Hosseini
Education	Hamid-Reza Haji Babae
Energy	Majid Namjoo
Foreign Affairs	Manouchehr Mottaki
Health and Medical Education	Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi
Housing and Urban Development	Abdolreza Sheikholeslami
Industries and Mines	Aliakbar Mehrabian
Intelligence	Heydar Moslehi
Interior	Mostafa Mohammad Najjar
Justice	Morteza Bakhtiari
Labour and Social Affairs	Ali Nikzad
Petroleum	Masoud Mir Kazemi
Roads and Transportation	Hamid Behbahani
Science, Research, and Technology	Kamran Daneshjoo
Welfare and Social Security	Sadeq Mahsouli



Ahmadinejad speaking at Columbia University

disturb the protesters.<sup>[97][98]</sup> In his blog, Ahmadinejad described his reaction to the incident as "a feeling of joy" because of the freedom that people enjoyed after the revolution.<sup>[99]</sup>

One thousand students also protested the day before to denounce the increased pressure on the reformist groups at the university. One week prior, more than two thousand students protested at Tehran University on the country's annual student day, with speakers saying that there had been a crackdown on dissent at universities since Ahmadinejad was elected.<sup>[94][100]</sup>

## Nuclear program

*See also: Nuclear program of Iran*

Ahmadinejad has been a vocal supporter of Iran's nuclear program, and has insisted that it is for peaceful purposes. He has repeatedly emphasized that building a nuclear bomb is not the policy of his government. He has said that such a policy is "illegal and against our religion."<sup>[101][102]</sup> He also added at a January 2006 conference in Tehran that a nation with "culture, logic and civilization" would not need nuclear weapons, and that countries that seek nuclear weapons are those that want to solve all problems by the use of force.<sup>[103]</sup> In a 2008 interview Ahmadinejad elaborated that countries striving to obtain nuclear weapons are not politically progressive nations and those who possess them and continually make new generations of such bombs are "even more backward".<sup>[104]</sup>

In April 2006, Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had successfully refined uranium to a stage suitable for the nuclear fuel cycle. In a speech to students and academics in Mashhad, he was quoted as saying that Iran's conditions had changed completely as it had become a nuclear state and could talk to other states from that stand.<sup>[105]</sup> On 13 April 2006, Iranian news agency, IRNA, quoted Ahmadinejad as saying that the peaceful Iranian nuclear technology would not pose a threat to any party because "we want peace and stability and we will not cause injustice to anyone and at the same time we will not submit to injustice."<sup>[106]</sup> Nevertheless, Iran's nuclear policy under Ahmadinejad's administration has received much criticism, spearheaded by the United States and Israel. The accusations include that Iran is striving to obtain nuclear arms and developing long-range firing capabilities—and that Ahmadinejad issued an order to keep UN inspectors from freely visiting the nation's nuclear facilities and viewing their designs, in defiance of an IAEA resolution.<sup>[107][108][109][110]</sup> Following a May 2009 test launch of a long-range missile, Ahmadinejad was quoted as telling the crowd that with its nuclear program, Iran was sending the West a message that "the Islamic Republic of Iran is running the show."<sup>[111]</sup>

Despite Ahmadinejad's vocal support for the program, the office of the Iranian president is not directly responsible for nuclear policy. It is instead set by the Supreme National Security Council. The council includes two representatives appointed by the Supreme Leader, military officials, and members of the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government, and reports directly to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who issued a fatwa against nuclear weapons in 2005.<sup>[112]</sup> Khamenei has criticized Ahmadinejad's "personalization" of the nuclear issue.<sup>[113]</sup>

Ahmadinejad vowed on February 2008, that Iran will not be held back from developing its peaceful nuclear program<sup>[114]</sup> and has stated that at least 16 different peaceful uses for nuclear technology have so far been identified.<sup>[104]</sup> Ahmadinejad has stressed the importance of the right to peaceful nuclear development. Iranian opposition leader, Mousavi, has even stated that giving up the country's nuclear program would be "irreparable" and that the Iranian people support the nuclear program. "No one in Iran will accept suspension," Mousavi has said, adding that if elected, his policy would be to work to provide "guarantees" that Tehran's nuclear activities would never divert to non-peaceful aims.<sup>[115]</sup>

In October 2009 the United States, France and Russia proposed a U.N.-drafted deal with Iran regarding its nuclear program, in an effort to find a compromise between Iran's stated need for a nuclear reactor and the concerns of those who are worried that Iran harbors a secret intent on developing a nuclear weapon. After some delay in responding, on October 29, Ahmadinejad seemed to change his tone towards the deal. "We welcome fuel exchange, nuclear co-operation, building of power plants and reactors and we are ready to co-operate," he said in a live broadcast on state television.<sup>[116]</sup> However, he added that Iran would not retreat "one iota" on its right to a sovereign nuclear program.<sup>[117]</sup>

## Domestic criticism and controversies

### Alleged corruption

Ahmadinejad has been criticized for attacking private "plunderers" and "corrupt officials," while engaging in "cronyism and political favouritism". Many of his close associates have been appointed to positions for which they have no obvious qualifications, and "billion dollar no-bid contracts" have been awarded to the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), an organization with which he is strongly associated.<sup>[118]</sup>

### Other statements



Participants of the second Caspian Summit. From left to right: President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev, President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

In June 2007, Ahmadinejad was criticized by some Iranian parliament members over his remark about Christianity and Judaism. According to Aftab News Agency, Ahmadinejad stated: "In the world, there are deviations from the right path: Christianity and Judaism. Dollars have been devoted to the propagation of these deviations. There are also false claims that these [religions] will save mankind. But Islam is the only religion that [can] save mankind." Some members of Iranian parliament criticized these remarks as being fuels to religious war.<sup>[119][120]</sup>

Conservative MP Rafat Bayat has accused Ahmadinejad for a decline in observance of the required hijab for women, calling him "not that strict on this issue".<sup>[121]</sup> Ahmadinejad has been also accused of indecency by people close to Rafsanjani,<sup>[122]</sup> after he publicly kissed the hand of a woman who used to be his school teacher.<sup>[123]</sup>

### The UN and football stadiums

Two statements that have brought criticism from some religious authorities concern his speech at the United Nations, and the attendance of women at football matches. In a visit to group of Ayatollahs in Qom after returning from his 2005 speech to the UN General Assembly, Ahmadinejad stated he had "felt a halo over his head" during his speech and that a hidden presence had mesmerized the unblinking audience of foreign leaders, foreign ministers, and ambassadors. According to at least one source (Hooman Majd), this was offensive to the conservative religious leaders because an ordinary man cannot presume a special closeness to God or any of the Imams, nor can he imply the presence of the Mahdi.<sup>[124]</sup>

In another statement the next year, Ahmadinejad proclaimed (without consulting the clerics beforehand), that women be allowed into football stadiums to watch male football clubs compete. This proclamation "was quickly overruled" by clerical authorities, one of whom, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Fazel Lankarani "refused for weeks to meet with President Ahmadinejad" in early 2007.<sup>[124]</sup>

## Iran constitution conflict

In 2008, a serious conflict emerged between the Iranian President and the head of parliament over three laws approved by Iranian parliament: "the agreement for civil and criminal legal cooperation between Iran and Kyrgyzstan", "the agreement to support mutual investment between Iran and Kuwait", and "the law for registration of industrial designs and trademarks". The conflict was so serious that the Iranian leader stepped in to resolve the conflict. Ahmadinejad wrote a letter to parliament speaker Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, furiously denouncing him for an "inexplicable act" in bypassing the presidency by giving the order to implement legislation in an official newspaper.<sup>[125]</sup> President Ahmadinejad accused the head of parliament of violating Iranian constitutional law. He called for legal action against the Parliament speaker.<sup>[126][127]</sup> Haddad-Adel responded to Ahmadinejad accusing him of using inappropriate language in his remarks and letters.<sup>[128]</sup>

## Ali Kordan

*Main article: Ali Kordan*

In August 2008, Dr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, appointed Ali Kordan as Iran's interior minister. Kordan's appointment has been criticized by Iranian parliamentarians, media and analysts after it came to light that a doctoral degree allegedly awarded to Ali Kordan was fabricated, and that the putative issuer of the degree, Oxford University, had no record of Ali Kordan receiving any degree from the University.<sup>[129]</sup> It was also revealed that he had been jailed in 1978 for moral charges.<sup>[130][131]</sup> Fabrication of legal documents is punishable in Iranian law with one to three years of imprisonment and in the case of government officials, the maximum sentence (three years) is demanded.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

In November 2008, President Ahmadinejad announced that he was against impeachment of Ali Kordan by Iranian parliament. He refused to attend the parliament on the impeachment day.<sup>[132]</sup> Ali Kordan was expelled from Iranian interior ministry by Iranian parliament on 4 November 2008. 188 MPs voted against Ali Kordan. An impeachment of Kordan would push Ahmadinejad close to having to submit his entire cabinet for review by parliament, which is led by one of his chief political opponents. Iran's constitution requires that step if more than half the cabinet ministers are replaced, and Ahmadinejad has replaced nine of 21.<sup>[133][134]</sup>

## Conflict with Parliament

On February 2009 after Supreme Audit Court of Iran reported that \$1.058 billion of surplus oil revenue in the (2006–2007) budget hasn't been returned by the government to the national treasury,<sup>[135][136]</sup> Ali Larijani, Iran's parliamentary speaker, called for further investigations to make sure the missing funds are returned to the treasury as soon as possible.<sup>[137]</sup> Ahmadinejad criticized the National Audit Office for what he called its "carelessness", saying the report "incites the people" against the government.<sup>[138]</sup> The head of the parliament Energy Commission, Hamidreza Katouzian, reported: The government spent \$5 billion to import fuel, about \$2 billion more than the sum parliament had authorized. Katouzian quoted Iran's Oil Minister, Gholam-Hossein Nozari, as saying that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had ordered the extra purchase.<sup>[139]</sup>

In May 2011 several members of parliament threatened to initiate impeachment proceedings against Ahmadinejad after his merger of eight government ministries and the firing of three ministers without parliament's consent. According to the Majles News Web site, MP Mohammad Reza Bahonar stated, "legal purging starts with questions, which lead to warnings and end with impeachment." On May 25 parliament voted to investigate another allegation, that Ahmadinejad had committed election irregularities by giving cash to up to nine million Iranians before the 2009 presidential elections. The vote came within hours after the allegations appeared in several popular conservative news sites associated with supreme leader Ali Khamenei, suggesting the supreme leader supported the investigation.<sup>[140]</sup> The disputes were seen as part of the clash between Ahmadinejad and other conservatives and former supporters, including supreme leader Khamenei, over what the conservatives see as Ahmadinejad's confrontational policies and abuse of power.<sup>[140][141]</sup>

## Relations with Supreme Leader

Early in his presidency, Ahmadinejad was sometimes described as "enjoy[ing] the full backing" of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei,<sup>[142]</sup> and even as being his "protege."<sup>[143]</sup> In Ahmadinejad's 2005 inauguration the supreme leader allowed Ahmadinejad to kiss his hand and cheeks in what was called "a sign of closeness and loyalty,"<sup>[144]</sup> and after the 2009 election fully endorsed Ahmadinejad against protesters.<sup>[145]</sup> However as early as January 2008 signs of disagreement between the two men developed over domestic policies,<sup>[142]</sup> and by 2010-11 several sources detected a "growing rift" between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei.<sup>[146]</sup> The disagreement has been described as centering on Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, a top adviser and close confidant of Ahmadinejad<sup>[147]</sup> and opponent of "greater involvement of clerics in politics",<sup>[148]</sup> who was First Vice President of Iran until being ordered to resign from the cabinet by the supreme leader. In 2009 Ahmadinejad dismissed Intelligence minister Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i, an opponent of Mashaei. In April 2011, another Intelligence minister, Heydar Moslehi, resigned after being asked to by Ahmadinejad, but was reinstated by the supreme leader<sup>[143]</sup> within hours.<sup>[149]</sup> Ahmadinejad declined to officially back Moslehi's reinstatement for two weeks and in protest engaged in an "11-day walkout" of cabinet meetings, religious ceremonies, and other official functions.<sup>[146][149]</sup> Ahmadinejad's actions led to angry public attacks by clerics, parliamentarians and military commanders, who accused him of ignoring orders from the supreme leader.<sup>[147]</sup> Conservative opponents in parliament launched an "impeachment drive" against him,<sup>[148]</sup> four websites with ties to Ahmadinejad reportedly were "filtered and blocked",<sup>[143]</sup> and several people "said to be close" to the president and Mashaei (such as Abbas Amirifar and Mohammed Sharif Malekzadeh) were arrested on charges of being "magicians" and invoking djinns.<sup>[146]</sup> On 6 May 2011 it was reported that Ahmadinejad had been given an ultimatum to accept the leader's intervention or resign,<sup>[150]</sup> and on 8 May he "apparently bowed" to the reinstatement, welcoming back Moslehi to a cabinet meeting.<sup>[147]</sup> The events have been said to have "humiliated and weakened" Ahmadinejad, though the president has denied that there was any rift between the two,<sup>[147]</sup> and according to the semiofficial Fars News Agency stated that his relationship with the supreme leader "is that of a father and a son."<sup>[148]</sup>

## Foreign relations

*Main article: Foreign policy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*

During Ahmadinejad's tenure as President of Iran the foreign policy of the country took a different approach from the previous administration. Relations with the West generally soured while relations with other parts of the world, including Africa and Latin America, were on the ascendance. In light of the calls for sanctions on Iran for its nuclear weapons programme, Ahmadinejad and his foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, traveled extensively throughout the two regions, as well as hosted other leaders. Relations with the ALBA states, and Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, in particular, were most strengthened. Relations with America during the Bush administration and Israel were weakened.

Ahmadinejad is an outspoken critic of the United States, Israel, and the United Kingdom.<sup>[151][152]</sup>





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## Further reading

- Harris, David (2004), *The Crisis: the President, the Prophet, and the Shah—1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam*, New York: Little, Brown, ISBN 978-0-316-32394-9
- "Referral of Iranian President Ahmadinejad on the Charge of Incitement to Commit Genocide" (<http://www.jcpa.org/text/ahmadinejad-incitement.pdf>) by Justus Reid Weiner, Esq., with Amb. Meir Rosenne, Prof. Elie Wiesel, Amb. Dore Gold, Irit Kohn, Adv., Amb. Eytan Bentsur, and MK Dan Naveh
- Ali Rahnama, *Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics: From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad* (<http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Superstition-as-Ideology-in-Iranian-Politics-From-Majlesi-to-Ahmadinejad-by-Ali-Rahnema.php>) , Cambridge University Press, 2011 (Reviewed in The Montréal Review (<http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Superstition-as-Ideology-in-Iranian-Politics-From-Majlesi-to-Ahmadinejad-by-Ali-Rahnema.php>) ), ISBN: 978-0-521-18221-8

## External links

- Official website of the President of Iran (<http://www.president.ir/en/>)
- Blog of President Ahmadinejad (<http://www.ahmadinejad.ir/>)
- Biography ([http://www.cidob.org/es/documentacion/biografias\\_lideres\\_politicos/asia/iran/mahmoud\\_ahmadinejad](http://www.cidob.org/es/documentacion/biografias_lideres_politicos/asia/iran/mahmoud_ahmadinejad)) at CIDOB Foundation
- Video Archive of President Ahmadinejad ([http://www.irannegah.com/video\\_browse.aspx?keyword=ahmadinejad](http://www.irannegah.com/video_browse.aspx?keyword=ahmadinejad)) at *Irannegah.com*
- Appearances (<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/mahmoudahmadinejad>) on C-SPAN
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://www.charlierose.com/guest/view/6173>) on *Charlie Rose*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2258253/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- Works by or about Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n2006-56194>) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://english.aljazeera.net/category/person/mahmoud-ahmadinejad>) collected news and commentary at *Al Jazeera English*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://www.dawn.com/tag/mahmoud-ahmadinejad/>) collected news and commentary at *Dawn*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/mahmoud-ahmadinejad>) collected news and commentary at *The Guardian*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://www.haaretz.com/meta/Tag/Mahmoud%20Ahmadinejad>) collected news and commentary at *Ha'aretz*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ([http://www.jpost.com/topic/Mahmoud\\_Ahmadinejad](http://www.jpost.com/topic/Mahmoud_Ahmadinejad)) collected news and commentary at *The Jerusalem Post*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ([http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/mahmoud\\_ahmadinejad/](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/a/mahmoud_ahmadinejad/)) collected news and commentary at *The New York Times*
- Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://topics.wsj.com/person/A/mahmoud-ahmadinejad/5388>) collected news and commentary at *The Wall Street Journal*
- People Who Mattered: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570714,00.html>) *Time*, 16 December 2006
- The Results As They Came In ([http://andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com/the\\_daily\\_dish/2009/06/the-results-as-they-came-in.html](http://andrewsullivan.theatlantic.com/the_daily_dish/2009/06/the-results-as-they-came-in.html)) , Andrew Sullivan, *The Atlantic*, 13 June 2009

<b>Political offices</b>		
Preceded by <b>Hossein Taheri</b> <i>as Governor of East Azerbaijan</i>	<b>Governor of Ardabil</b> 1993–1997	Succeeded by <b>Javad Negarandeh</b>
Preceded by <b>Mohammad-Hassan Malekmadani</b>	<b>Mayor of Tehran</b> 2003–2005	Succeeded by <b>Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf</b>
Preceded by <b>Mohammad Khatami</b>	<b>President of Iran</b> 2005–present	<b>Incumbent</b>
<b>Party political offices</b>		
Preceded by <b>Mehdi Chamran</b>	<b>Leader of Alliance of Builders of Islamic Iran</b> 2004–present	<b>Incumbent</b>
<b>Diplomatic posts</b>		
Preceded by <b>Abdelaziz Bouteflika</b>	<b>Chairperson of the Group of 15</b> 2006–2010	Succeeded by <b>Mahinda Rajapaksa</b>
<b>Order of precedence</b>		
Preceded by <b>Ali Khamenei</b> <i>as Supreme Leader</i>	<b>Order of Precedence of Iran</b> <i>as President</i>	Succeeded by <b>Ali Larijani</b> <i>as Speaker of Parliament</i>

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