

Chronology of Events in Iran, February 2004*

February 1

108 Iranian reformist MPs submit resignations. (Reuters)

More than 100 Iranian reformist MPs submitted their resignations in protest over Guardian Council's decision to disqualify hundreds of reformist candidates from parliamentary elections on February 20. Parliament Speaker Mehdi Karroubi told Parliament he had received 109 resignation requests from lawmakers.

Iranian official says poll-linked resignations subject to prosecution. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Head of Electoral Supervisory Board of Tehran, Shahr-e Rey and Shemiranat, Hojjat ol-Eslam Ahmad Azimizadeh said that given any resignation under the current conditions would be taken as interference with the elections trend, it would be subject to prosecution. Speaking at the meeting held by the council of deputy heads of Tehran Electoral Supervisory Board, he added that the recent resignations, the tone of the statement issued to the effect and the remarks made by a number of disqualified nominees showed that the Guardians Council (GC) has not fulfilled its task properly and in accordance with law.

February 3

Iran bans student rallies, prosecutor warns papers over vote crisis. (Agence France-Presse / AFP)

Iranian authorities banned student protests over the barring of reformist candidates from February elections and Tehran's prosecutor warned eight pro-reform newspapers about their reporting of the political crisis. On January 11, the Guardians Council barred 3,500 would-be candidates out of around 8,000 from standing for the February poll. Most of those ruled out were reformists.

February 5

Iran reformers confirm poll boycott after bar on most candidates upheld. (AFP)

Iran's main reformist party Islamic Iran Participation Front announced that it would go ahead with a boycott of key polls in two weeks, charging that a review ordered by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had resulted in the reinstatement of just 51 of some 2,500 candidates blacklisted. Some 130 deputies, who have been holding a sit-in

* *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*

at parliament since January 11, announced they would now make good their threat to resign their seats and were consequently abandoning their original protest.

Armed forces declare support for Iranian Supreme Leader's stance on election (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA)

The Armed Forces General Command Headquarters has issued a number of communiques to mark 19 Bahman [8 February - revolutionary anniversary] and to express its support for the recent remarks of the Iranian "Supreme Leader". One of the communiques states: "The recent distinct remarks of the supreme leader about the elections for the seventh Majlis is the final word on all the evil doubts and murmurs that have been calling for a delay in, or the suspension of, the elections. It was an ultimatum to all officials in charge of political and administrative affairs in the country as well as those responsible for the administration of the elections."

February 8

Iranian students call for election boycott. (Reuters)

Several hundred pro-reform Iranian students called for a boycott of the February 20 parliamentary election, reflecting mounting tension in the country gripped by its worst political crisis for years. Baton-wielding police blocked a crowd of about 400 students from leaving Tehran University campus. The protest ended without violence. The students also called on Khatami to resign, seeing him as having capitulated to conservative pressure. More than 120 parliamentarians have resigned over the row.

February 10

Final Iran vote list shows one-in-three banned. (Reuters)

The Guardian Council has barred almost one third of aspiring candidates from standing in February 20 parliamentary election, final candidate figures showed. The Council approved 5,627 candidates from a total of 8,144 hopefuls to take part in the election. The Guardian Council has said those disqualified were unfit to hold office. Many of those barred were accused of lacking loyalty to Islam and the constitution. President Khatami's party, the League of Combatant Clerics, has said it will still take part in the election, despite its strong reservations about the legitimacy of the vote.

February 13

Amir Abbas Fakhavar tortured. (Amnesty International website)

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of prisoner of conscience Amir Abbas Fakhavar, following a series of incidents in which he appears to have been subjected to treatment amounting to torture. Amir Abbas Fakhavar has been in prison for over a year. In January 2004 he was taken from Qasr prison to a detention centre called 325 to be interrogated about his alleged links with a political organisation called *Jonbesh-e Azadi-ye Iraniyan*, which opposes the Iranian government. The centre is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, a military force responsible for matters of national security. His cell in the 325 detention centre reportedly had no windows, and was entirely coloured creamy white, as were his clothes. At meal times, he was reportedly given white rice on white, disposable paper

plates and if he needed to use the toilet, he had to put a white slip of paper under the door of the cell to alert guards, who reportedly had footwear designed to muffle any sound. He was forbidden to speak to anyone. Amnesty International has been told that the "silence is deafening" in the facility and that this technique of sensory deprivation is called "white torture" (*shekanjeh-e sefid*). Such conditions of extreme sensory deprivation appear to be designed to weaken the prisoner by causing persistent and unjustified suffering which amounts to torture.

On or around 8 February, Amir Abbas Fakhavar was reportedly allowed to leave the detention centre. However, two days later he was taken into custody again. This is a form of psychological torture, which keeps a prisoner in a permanent state of uncertainty and anxiety. While he was free he was able to tell others about what was being done to him. It is not clear whether he is now held at 325, Qasr or elsewhere.

Amir Abbas Fakhavar was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment on defamation charges in November 2002, because of comments on Iran's political leadership in his book *Inja Chah Nist* (This Place is Not a Ditch). In February 2003, he and imprisoned student demonstrator Ahmad Batebi signed an open letter which criticised the Iranian authorities. Shortly afterwards, he was reportedly beaten in front of judges in the court room where his appeal was being heard.

February 14

More than 600 candidates withdraw from Iranian elections. (Iranian Interior Ministry web site)

The number of people who have withdrawn their candidacy for the Majlis has reached 607. The highest number of withdrawals has been in Fars Province with 65 people, and the lowest in the provinces of Hormozgan and Qom, with three people.

February 17

ICFTU lodges complaint against Iran with International Labour Organisation concerning the killings of 4 workers in Shahr-e Babak. (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions / ICFTU Online)

The international trade union movement, in a letter to the Iranian President Seyed Mohammed Khatami, has condemned the unlawful killings of workers in the Iranian village of Khatoonabad and the city of Shahr-e Babak on 24 January 2004. Four people died and over 40 workers were injured when violence broke out at an 8-day sit-in at a plant in the Kerman Province of the country. Workers had organised work stoppages and a sit-in to call for permanent positions and to protest against the use of temporary contracts, layoffs and deferred payment of salaries and benefits at the Nazkhaton's Copper Smelting plant. Violence erupted unexpectedly when special police forces were dispatched to the plant to break up the strike and sit-in using force against the protesting workers, following 8 days of peaceful protest. Demonstrators came under fire from the police during the confrontation and at least four workers were killed in front of the plant and dozens were wounded, some of who lie critically injured in nearby hospitals. Local security forces later confirmed that the police had fired the shots that killed the striking workers. Following the killings which were

accompanied by the arrest of over 80 people, ICFTU strongly urged the Iranian authorities to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of these killings.

Baha'i prisoners released after 15 years. (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL *Iran Report*)

Bihnam Mithaqi and Kayvan Khalajabadi, two members of the Bahai faith, were released from prison after serving almost 15 years on charges related to their religious beliefs. Imprisoned on 29 April 1989 for associating with Bahai institutions, they were initially sentenced to eight years imprisonment but then the sentences were reduced to three years and 50 lashes. They appealed again, and in April 1991 they were sentenced to death; this sentence was confirmed in February 1996. In February 2001, the judiciary chief reportedly reduced the sentences to 15 years and set a release date of February 2004. Zabiullah Mihrami is the only remaining Bahai known to be imprisoned for his religious beliefs; he was arrested in September 1995.

German police arrested Iranian Mujahedin. (RFE/RL *Iran Report*)

German Federal Border Police arrested 11 suspected PMOI members at Frankfurt's Rhein-Main Airport. The individuals had arrived from Amman, and the authorities confiscated their passports. The 11 face deportation hearings and, according to the report, another 11 PMOI members might have their asylums revoked.

Revolutionary Guards accused of political interference. (RFE/RL *Iran Report*)

The Interior Ministry's website reported that on 17 February Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) commanders met at the base on Tehran's Azadi Avenue and were informed that the country's senior leadership backs the Abadgaran list of parliamentary candidates. The Abadgaran list of mostly conservative candidates was then allegedly distributed among the military commanders. IRGC spokesman Masud Jazayeri rejected the Interior Ministry account. A report asserted that the Abadgaran "slate" included "several former commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, as well as founders of the Basiji militias."

Dissident Iranian lawmakers break taboo with stinging rebuke of ruler. (Associated Press / AP)

In a daring protest described as a "cry of agony," more than 100 reformist lawmakers accused Iran's "Supreme Leader" of allowing freedoms to be "trampled" and rigging upcoming parliament elections in favor of conservative backers. A letter sent to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei struck right at a core complaint -- that Khamenei's regime has corrupted the spirit of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. "The popular (1979) revolution brought freedom and independence for the country in the name of Islam. But now you lead a system in which legitimate freedoms and the rights of the people are being trampled in the name of Islam," the legislators said in the letter. "Institutions under your supervision -- after four years of humiliating the elected parliament and thwarting (reform) bills -- have now, on the verge of the parliamentary elections, deprived the people of the most basic right: the right to choose and be chosen," the letter said. The letter was not signed. But a parliamentary source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said more than 100 legislators backed the letter, including deputy speaker Mohammad Reza Khatami, the brother of President Mohammad Khatami. The text of the letter appeared on pro-reform Web sites but was not mentioned by state-run media. Newspapers have reportedly been warned not to publish it.

Ensafali Hedayat still in detention. (Amnesty International website)

Ensafali Hedayat's month-long detention was extended for a further 10 days by order of the Ministry of Intelligence. He is reportedly held at a detention centre under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, where he is at serious risk of ill-treatment. It has also emerged that the prosecutor and the judge in his case will be the same person. Since he was arrested on 17 January, his lawyer and family have been permitted to meet with him on at least three occasions, at least two of these being at his own home. However, his lawyer has not been allowed to be present during successive interrogation sessions, and Amnesty International fears that he may be at ill-treated at such sessions or that he may be compelled to make statements that may later be used against him in court. Ensafali Hedayat reportedly faces charges relating to national security in connection with a visit to Turkey in 2003 and his participation in a conference in Berlin in January 2004. The conference was organized by the *Ettihad-e Jomhouri Khahan-e Iran* (known in English as 'Unity for Democracy and Secular Republic in Iran') and took place in Berlin on 8-10 January.

February 18

Two Iran papers shut for reporting Khamenei letter. (Reuters)

Iran's judiciary closed down two leading newspapers for publishing a letter in which reformist lawmakers accused "Supreme Leader" Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of heading a system that abused people's rights. The liberal *Sharq* and *Yas-e No* dailies were sealed by order of the Tehran Prosecutor's Office. It was not clear how long the newspapers would be banned from publishing.

February 19

Iran reform party office sealed on eve of election. (Reuters)

The judiciary sealed an office belonging to Iran's leading reformist party the Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF) which is boycotting parliamentary elections on February 20. A news Web site run by IIPF has also been blocked. The office building in Tehran which was sealed by the judiciary was the party's campaign headquarters.

People protest elections and attacks to campaign offices in the cities of Javanrood, Mariwan and Bookan. (The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran – Representation in Paris)*

On January 11, thousands of inhabitants in the city of Javanrood and its vicinity gathered to protest what they called the "one-sided" election. The security forces made efforts to turn the protest to a pro-regime demonstration. However, the protesters rallied in the main street of the town and moved along the streets of the city chanting anti-regime slogans. The security forces and plainclothed agents interfered and conflicts erupted between them and the protesters. During the said demo which lasted until the next morning, many of the vehicles belonging to the Disciplinary Forces were either damaged or set into fire. The Revolutionary Guard's Bassij Bank and the pharmacies at the Taleghani were attacked by the people and their windows were broken. Fifteen protesters were reportedly arrested during the said action.

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

Mariwan: Inhabitants of this town took into the streets to protest the elections. On 13 and 14 February, while a candidate was making a speech for his campaign the inhabitants took into the streets and attacked the campaign offices of him and of another candidate named Ghader Sharifi. They destroyed the campaign materials and closed down their office. The people continued their protest on 17 February. The rural inhabitants had also prevented the so-called candidates from campaigning in their villages. According to the reports, curfew had been declared in the towns of Mariman and Savelabad.

Bookan: On 17 February night, the inhabitants and particularly the youngsters protested the elections and broken the windows of some banks and state agencies.

In general, the people of the Kurdish populated cities are strongly acting against the elections by staying protest actions.

February 20

Secretary of the Guardian Council says not participating in elections tantamount to "treason". (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)

Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati [leader of Tehran Friday prayers and secretary of the Guardian Council] in his second sermon said that those gentlemen who do not intend to vote, according to Imam Khomeyni's views, are traitors to the state, adding that the importance of casting vote is not less than the religious duty of prayers.

February 21

Eight die in vote result disputes in south Iran. (Reuters)

Eight people have died in clashes with police in two towns in southern Iran over disputed parliamentary election results, local officials said. Four died in the town of Firouzabad in Fars province, in protests on February 21 when the governor's office declared an unexpectedly high turnout in a tight race between a reformist and an Islamic conservative candidate. A crowd of several hundred people grew angry after one protester was shot and wounded by police. The protesters began damaging police cars and attacking government buildings and in subsequent clashes.

Another four were killed in Khuzestan province when police clashed with a group of people protesting about election results in the town of Izeh. The protesters tried to storm the governor's office and attacked government and judiciary buildings in the town.

February 22

Final turnout in Iran election 50.6 percent. (Reuters)

The Iranian Interior Ministry announced a 50.6 percent turnout of eligible voters in disputed parliamentary election on February 20 which was boycotted by leading reformist parties.

Agence France Presse report on the same news on February 23: In Tehran, which has 6.04 million eligible voters, turnout in Friday's polls was 28.11 percent. During the last Majlis elections in 2000, participation was 55.91 percent. In Isfahan, just 32.19 percent of the electorate showed up at polling stations. Four years ago,

participation there was 47.45 percent. In Kurdistan province, whose outgoing deputies had been close to the reformists and most of whom were also disqualified from standing again, turnout was more than halved, falling from 70.18 percent to 32.26 percent. In Mahabad, participation was just 23.65 percent. But in the southern province of Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad, participation was put at 90 percent. And in some areas, voter turnout was even above 100 percent. This can be explained by the fact that voters can legally vote in any district they wish, although reformists had accused some conservative candidates of planning to move voters to other areas by bus.

February 23

Officials deplore closure of websites (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Shutting down of two Internet sites, Rooydad.com and Emrooz.com has caused debate among the officials challenging the action taken by the Judiciary as illegal. Deputy Minister of Culture and the Islamic Guidance for Press Affairs Mohammad Sohfi said that the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has not yet reported the closure to the Ministry of Culture and the Islamic Guidance. Sohfi said that the closure of an internet site legally requires a decision to be made by a three-man committee and the press department will follow up the action taken without observing the normal procedure. Meanwhile, Tehran Prosecutor Sa'id Mortazavi defended the action to shut down the two websites and said that a special committee composed of representatives of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), the High Cultural Revolution Council and the Information Ministry is expected to monitor the websites and take decision to stop them.

February 24

Opinion poll detainee Abbas Abdi allowed home visit. (Iranian Fars News Agency)

Abbas Abdi, defendant in the opinion poll case, has been out on prison leave. Maryam Abdi said her father had his usual weekly meeting with the family and the meeting this week took place in their house and the time of the meeting was from the previous night until the morning. She pointed out that the meeting took place with guards present outside the house.

Two armed robbers hanged in Iran. (AFP)

In the northern Caspian Sea port town of Gaz, two armed robbers were hanged publicly after being found guilty of multiple counts of armed robbery of jewellery stores.

February 25

Conservatives win parliament polls. (Reuters)

A final vote count showed conservatives gained a clear parliamentary majority in February 20 election, sweeping aside reformist rivals. 27 conservatives were elected to parliament from Tehran, the last constituency to finish counting its votes, giving the conservatives 156 seats in the 290-seat assembly. Three seats in the capital are to be

recontested after the contenders failed to gain the minimum 25 percent of votes. The campaign chief for the reformist Coalition for Iran, Aliakbar Mohteshamipour, lodged an official complaint to the Guardian Council demanding a recount of 57 ballot boxes in 38 polling stations across the capital. Khatami allies won only 40 seats compared with around 190 in the last parliament, but outgoing deputies will retain an important platform in parliament to vent their complaints until the end of May, when they have to hand over their seats. Independents won 30 seats, and five places are reserved for Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian minorities. The poll was postponed in Bam because of the earthquake there in December 2003.

Brother of Iranian sisters who fled to Canada dies after lashing. (The Canadian Press)

Three sisters who fled to Canada from Iran to escape beatings from its religious police were in mourning after learning their brother died after reportedly being flogged 80 times. Mohsen Mofidi, 35, who turned himself in to police so Iranian authorities would release his sisters from prison, died after the beating. Amnesty International officials said the lashings, which under Iranian law involve a one-metre leather cord, amounted to torture.

The three sisters _ Nika Nahasti, 18, Mahdis Nahasti, 20 and Mahnam Nahasti, 22 _ turned up in Vancouver in January after the Canadian government issued visas to them to join their mother, who had struggled for five years to win approval for her daughters to join her. The problems with Iranian morality police began when two of the women attended a party last summer where young men were also present. The party was arranged by their brother at his Tehran apartment. Police broke up the party at gunpoint and took the two girls into custody. They suffered broken teeth after being beaten with chains while in custody and they were sentenced to be lashed. Mofidi surrendered to police and was accused of corrupting his sisters, owning an illegal satellite dish and possessing medicines containing alcohol.

Amnesty International said that Mofidi suffered from lung and sinus infections while in the Qasr prison in Tehran and had spent a week in the prison's hospital before being beaten. He was released after being flogged on February 18. Mofidi made his way to his aunt's home and was admitted to hospital, where he received antibiotics for his infection but died.

Protests against alleged forgeries in Charmahal and Bakhtiyari Province vote. (Iranian newspaper *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*)

Protests against the results of the elections in the constituencies of Ardal, Kiyar, and Farsan [in Charmahal and Bakhtiyari Province] reached their height. A big crowd of the people in Ardal (about 1,700 people) gathered opposite the governorate building of the city and embarked on chanting slogans against the governor and the election executive officials. Subsequently, as a result of the arrival of the law enforcement forces and the hurling of teargas canisters at the demonstrators there was much unrest and confrontations in the city as a result of which a number of protestors were injured. The unrest and confrontations began when rumours spread around the city to the effect that a great many forged ballots had been cast for Seyyed Qobad Mortazavi-Farsani (the deputy who has found his way to the Majlis) and that the money

distributed by Mortazavi's agents among the people in some areas of Ardal was forged.

February 26

Iran to introduce restrictions for Afghan refugees. (Iranian radio *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*)

The director-general of the department for foreign affairs of Tehran Province has reported about the restrictions to be introduced for the emigrated Afghan nationals in Tehran Province and said that the adoption of a new regulation by the state officials with the aim to speed up the returning process of foreigners will create some unfavourable conditions for the Afghan refugees. These restrictions include occupation, working place and job restriction issues in the insurance, banking and production fields and some other issues.

Two prisoners pardoned. (Amnesty International website)

Reza Nazaarit and Mohammad Safaavi have been pardoned by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to a 17 February letter to Amnesty International from the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in London, "the sentences of Mr Reza Nazaarit and Mr Mohammad Safaavi were commuted by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The amnesty of these persons was initially proposed to the 'Amnesty and Commutation Commission' of the Judiciary. Following the confirmation by this commission they were pardoned by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of the anniversary of the prophethood of prophet of Islam Muhammad." Reza Nazaarit and Mohammad Safaavi were sentenced to "cross amputation" (right hand and left foot) on charges of "armed uprising against the Islamic regime" and theft by a Revolutionary Court in Shiraz on 9 August 2002.

February 28

Official says all Iranian, Iraqi POWs released. (IRNA)

Head of the General Information Security Department and the POWs Commissions Brig-Gen Abdollah Najafi said that there are no Iranian POW in Iraq and no Iraq POW in Iran now. Najafi said the last batch of Iraqi POWs was freed on 5 May 2003, while the last group of Iranian POWs were released on 17-18 May in 2002. He said his commission is now following up the case of 7,000 Iranian missing-in-action, a majority of whom have most probably died. He added that his commission is now in talks with the International Committee of the Red Cross to verify fate of the Iranian missing-in-action.

Agency chief acquitted on four counts, facing Revolution Court hearing. (IRNA)

An Iranian court ordered an end to legal procedures against IRNA chief Abdollah Naseri-Taheri on four out of five counts of complaints lodged against him. The Bench 1083 of Tehran's Public Court, presided over by Judge Eslami, referred the remaining one count of complaint to the Islamic Revolution Court on account of its incompetence to examine the case. The complaints had been filed against Naseri by the prosecutor-general, Basij [Resistance Force] and general headquarters of the armed forces for publication of an interview with wife of the jailed journalist Abbas

Abdi, the in-camera court proceedings of the so-called Iran Freedom Movement, and alleged Britain's assistance to Iran's Judiciary for judicial reforms. Naseri was also subject to charges for publication of a report on digging and cutting off trees at Ahmad Shah Palace of Sa'dabad. The court acquitted him of the said charges. The complaint lodged by the general headquarters of the armed forces which dealt with action against national security was referred to the revolution court.

Majlis deputies worry about an article on resumption of "serial killings". (Iranian newspaper *Iran*)

Two prominent lawmakers wrote an official letter to President Mohammad Khatami criticizing an article published in the Persian daily *Hemayat* and urging him to investigate the matter. In the letter, Ahmad Pournajati, head of Majlis Cultural Commission, and Mohsen Mirdamadi, head of Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, went on to say that the Persian daily *Hemayat* affiliated to State Prisons Organization and the judiciary, in its 22 February edition, published critical remarks that demand serious attention. Part of the article published in the daily wondered "whether an alternative approach today is still able to recreate social and political conditions of a few years ago such that the serial killing of political dissidents and student unrests can be resumed". Noting that the current political/social conditions do not allow such incidents to take place, the controversial article noted that they (the vigilantes) will have no choice but to recreate or stage them. "Take the closure of reformist dailies as well as legal actions taken against the press and journalists that made a hero of them in the public eye - by creating a harsh picture of the system toward critics or dissidents--for instance," the daily stated. "Their next attempt could be to stage an incident in which an imprisoned journalist, on some unknown charges, plays the role of a victim or is murdered, which could also lead to a serial killing and ignite public hatred nationwide."

Three new members elected to Iranian Assembly of Experts. (Iranian newspaper *Iran Daily*)

New members of the Experts' Assembly were elected from the provinces of East Azarbaijan, Zanzan and Hormuzgan. After mid-term elections were held in the three provinces, Mohammad Feizi garnered 467,258 votes from the total of 1,114,040 votes cast in East Azarbaijan, Mohammad Taqi Vaezi received 267,224 votes from 407,715 votes cast in Zanzan and Gholamali Naimabadi garnered 221,517 votes from 468,304 votes cast in Hormuzgan. The mid-term elections in these provinces were held concurrent with the seventh Majlis race in those provinces.

Tehran announces final election results. (RFE/RL *Iran Report*)

The State Election Headquarters announced that counting of votes for the 20 February parliamentary elections has concluded. Out of a total of 46,351,032 eligible voters, 23,725,724 voters cast their ballots. This puts overall voter turnout at 51 percent. According to the State Election Headquarters, 225 candidates received enough votes to win outright in the first round, and 128 candidates will run in the second round to decide the winners of 64 seats. A date for the second round has not been announced yet. Overall, 156 conservative candidates were elected in the first round of the parliamentary elections, the legislature's website (<http://mellat.majlis.ir>) reported on 25 February. Reformists hold 39 seats, independents hold 31 seats, and five went to the religious minorities. Voting did not take place in the Bam constituency, which was

badly damaged by an earthquake in December. (These results do not agree with the ones provided later by the State Election Headquarters.) Iranians who are compelled to vote sometimes register their disapproval of the electoral system and candidates by casting blank or voided ballots. The 28 February report from the State Election Headquarters did not provide any information on the number of such ballots. Gholamreza Gudini, the head of the Tehran, Shemiranat, Islamshahr, and Rey election headquarters, said on 27 February that in his constituencies 188,468 ballots out of 1,971,748 were voided or blank. Gudini said turnout in the capital was about 30 percent. The Interior Ministry announced on 25 February that the counting of votes in the capital had been completed, according to the ministry's website (<http://moi.ir/>). In the Tehran, Rey, Shemiranat, and Islamshahr constituency 1,965,666 votes were cast and 27 candidates received a sufficient number of votes to take their seats in the 290-member legislature. The remaining three seats will be determined in by-elections for which the date has not been set yet.

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