

## STANDPOINT

## Hamis Accountability

By Kourosh Zaim

The attitude of the US, some western governments and Israel toward Hamas' victory in the Palestinian elections and a Hamas-dominated government is bewildering. Isn't this outcome what everybody wanted—that a militia organization become a responsible and accountable government? What happened to logical political foresight and good sense?

Hamas has effectively transformed from a militia organization without constituent accountability into a position of social responsibility. This should be considered a blessing for all regional countries and, more than anyone, for Israel and its western allies. They should be jumping with joy as winners, not acting like sore losers.

The militia has always maintained an uncompromising stand against Israel and against the US for supporting Israel for the sake of the Palestinian people's just aspirations of regaining lost land and becoming a sovereign country.

Now, there is a chance for the United States and its western allies who preach democracy to show that the will of the people has priority over settling past accounts. If the Palestinians want Hamas, let there be Hamas. Help Hamas to become a responsible member of the international community rather than being isolated. Pay them what they are due. And, better yet, increase the economic and humanitarian aid so they can deliver what people expect and let their dependence on the international community continue.

If the international community aids them, they'll be accountable to the international community. Otherwise, they'll have to get the money from other eager contributors not so favored by the international community.

If it were up to me, I would help them more by increasing aid, opening my markets to their trade and by planning investments, especially for agricultural and industrial development. This will create jobs, improve economy and upgrade the welfare of the people. Palestinians will be grateful and the Hamas government will become more dependent in order to keep a good thing going.

Withholding tax rebates due to Palestinians makes Israel untrustworthy in the minds of the people and proves that Hamas' militancy against Israel is well-founded. And the withholding of aid by the Americans will prove their untruthfulness about concerns for democracy and economic development.

The demands made of Hamas to disarm and recognize Israel are both unrealistic and unnecessary at this time. The Irish Republican Army's experience should be a guide.

Whether they put down their weapons and dismantle their militia or not, Hamas is now a government. The international community needs not to worry about their militia. Sooner or later, they will have to incorporate them into the regular army and the security forces in order to prevent chaos and breakdown of the chain of command and, above all, to save their own neck.

## Press Board Ban Denounced

TEHRAN, March 4—Association of Iranian Journalists said on Saturday the temporary suspension of a local newspaper by the Press Supervisory Board is illegal and called for lifting the ban.

AIJ, as reported by ISNA, noted that as per the law, the board does not have the authority to ban a paper from publishing, except when the material is deemed insulting to a religious authority.

Managing Director of the Khuzestan-based daily Hamsayeha (Neighbors) Mohammad Hezbaeizadeh told the news agency in late February that the Press Supervisory Board in a letter to Khuzestan Department

ordered the paper's closure, referring to clauses four and five of Article 6 of the Press Law. Calling on the board to stick to legal boundaries as stipulated in the Press Law when attending to press violations, the association said that in recent months, the body has banned a number of periodicals, including the latest on Hamsayeha.

## Hamshahri Chief Appointed



Hossein Entezami

leading Persian newspapers. Managing director of Hamshahri Institute, Mohsen Chiniforoushan, introduced Entezami as the new managing director to Culture Ministry's Press and Propagation Department, Fars News Agency reported.

Entezami is currently the Supreme National Security Council's spokesman and representative to the Press Supervisory Board on behalf of managing directors.

He was the former managing director of Jaan-e Jam newspaper affiliated to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting.

## American Rabbi:

## Israel's Creation Against Judaism

By Farzaneh Shokri

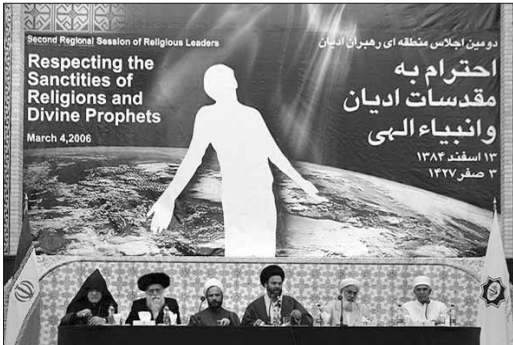
TEHRAN, March 4—A senior Jewish rabbi said the establishment of Israel by Zionists is against Judaism and disregarded the impact of such a move on the local population of many countries since Jews are scattered all over the world.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Conference on Respect for Sanctities of Divine Religions and Prophets on Saturday, Rabbi Aharon Cohen, senior representative of the delegation of US-based Jews, said Zionists have no right to occupy Muslim land in the name of Judaism.

"My message is that Zionism and Judaism are not the same. It is truly the wish of Jews to see that the illegitimate Zionist regime unseat itself," he said.

Rabbi Aharon noted that the genuine followers of divine religions should show utmost respect for moral and humane principles, as well as to people of all religions.

Representatives of various religions, Tehran-based foreign diplomats as well as foreign and domestic intellectuals are attending the conference.



A view of the Conference on Respect for Sanctities of Divine Religions and Prophets in Tehran Saturday organized by the Culture and Islamic Communications Organization. (Fars Photo)

organized by the Culture and Islamic Communications Organization.

Referring to the publication of insulting cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the western press, he said the perpetrators know nothing about respect for divine religions and their followers. "This insulting act stems from their ignorance."

Vatican's envoy in Tehran, Cardinal Angelo Michela, said the publications spurred different reactions in the West and the world of Islam. "We

witnessed violent behaviors by extremists from the western as well as the Islamic world."

The cardinal, however, noted that the affront caused by one individual or publication should not be attributed to the entire official body.

Parliament Speaker Gholamali Haddad-Adel also addressed the gathering, saying the biggest harm done by the caricatures was that it pitted religion against freedom.

"The question is what benefit was derived from publishing the insulting

cartoons of the prophet of Islam and offending the religious sentiments of more than one billion Muslims throughout the world who love their prophet?" he asked.

The speaker referred to the insult done in the name of freedom as a blatant violation of human rights.

Haddad-Adel further said supporting the people of Palestine and their cause does not and should not imply that the country is pursuing a Jew-bashing policy, which the world press is trying to convey.

## US Disrupting Regional Peace

## Deputy FM to Visit UAE, Bahrain

ABU DHABI, UAE, March 4—Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Mostafavi exchanged views with the Qatari emir on bilateral and multilateral cooperation, noting that the US intends to disrupt regional peace.

The official started his regional tour by traveling to Qatar, where he submitted a written message from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to

Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani on Friday, inviting him to pay a visit to Tehran, IRNA reported.

The Qatari leader welcomed the invitation, expressing hope he would visit Tehran in a couple of months.

Al-Thani called for avoiding sectarian and ethnic differences under the country's current sensitive circumstances. Talking to reporters in Doha on Saturday, Mostafavi said that by interfering with talks on Iran's uranium enrichment, the US intends to disrupt regional peace. According to the Qatari

press, the Iranian official added that the US, which had proposed the establishment of 23 nuclear reactors in Iran in 1974, is now doing its best to deprive the country of its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the IAEA supervision.

As President Ahmadinejad's special envoy, Mostafavi stressed Iran's commitment to IAEA, the Non-Proliferation Treaty and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Stressing that economic sanctions against Iran will inflict irreparable damage on the entire world, he said

no country will break its economic ties with Iran.

Commenting on Ahmadinejad's recent visit to Kuwait and other regional states, he said Iran attaches great importance to expansion of ties with the neighboring countries.

In response to a question about the three Iranian islands and misunderstanding with the UAE in this regard, Mostafavi said Iran has taken positive steps to solve this misunderstanding. Mostafavi is scheduled to visit the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in the coming week and explore every avenue for boosting bilateral ties.

## European Envoys Underscore

## Nuclear Talks

TEHRAN, March 4—European envoys in Tehran reiterated on Saturday the necessity of ending Iran's nuclear impasse through dialogue.

British Ambassador Richard Dalton, German Ambassador Paul von Maltzahn and French Ambassador Bernard Poletti also told IRNA that Iran is entitled to peaceful nuclear technology and urged Iran to simultaneously engage in confidence-building activities. Iran has allowed 1,400 person-hour of International Atomic Energy Agency's inspection at its nuclear facilities and demonstrated the

transparency of its activities.

Poletti said Iran's nuclear fuel cycle work is problematic, without specifying the nature of the problem.

This is while Iran has already announced that the research work has nothing to do with uranium enrichment.

"The international community is concerned about Iran's efforts to gain access to nuclear fuel cycle technology," Poletti stressed.

Paul Maltzahn noted that Iran is entitled to peaceful nuclear technology for civilian purposes, pointing out that only 10 out of 31 countries with nuclear pro-

grams have taken part in uranium enrichment activities. Dalton, for his part, emphasized the role Iran could play in the upcoming nuclear talks in New York and Vienna.

He said it is normal for every country with a nuclear program to be suspected by the international community, especially when that country is a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"That's why when Iran's nuclear programs began on such a big scale, inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency spent a lot of time inspecting Iran's nuclear activities," Dalton said.

## Quake Hits Hashtroud

TEHRAN, March 4—An earthquake measuring 3.7 on the Richter scale hit the outskirts of Hashtroud in East Azarbaijan province, northwestern Iran, late Friday, IRNA reported.

According to the provincial seismological base,

the quake was felt in an area measuring 47.09 degrees longitude and 37.17 degrees latitude.

On February 28, two earthquakes measuring 5.8 and 5.6 on the Richter scale jolted the cities of

Orzouyeh and Jiroft in the southeastern province of Kerman respectively on Tuesday.

Iran is often hit by quakes of varying magnitudes as it sits on some of the world's most active seismic faultlines.

## Persian Press Watch

## Dialogue of the Deaf!

SHARQ: Main purpose for taking part in constructive dialogue is to achieve concrete results. However, different countries pursue different objectives in this respect and subsequently different results. For example, Iran is pursuing the objective of using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in its negotiations with Europeans and other countries.

Another interpretation of dialogue is that negotiators should only talk during dialogue and no one should listen to what others have to say. This notion can be detected in Iran's nuclear dossier in the sense that none of the sides listens to what the other side has to say. In fact, each side is trying to achieve its own goals. Proof for this claim is that the Americans are trying to refer Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council while Iran and some other countries are opposed to this idea.

## Vicious

HAMSHAHRI: It seems that the vicious crime of exploding the holy Askariya shrine in Samarra was masterminded in a bid to spread seeds of discord among Shiites and Sunnis and hinder establishment of a religious-oriented democracy in Iraq so that the prolonged presence of American forces in that country would be legitimized. Furthermore, a conscious mind is bound to think that the occupiers of Iraq intended to divert the attention of the global public opinion from other regional developments by masterminding the bombing. At any rate, in the past couple of weeks America was facing a tough challenge with the global public opinion and hence it had no other alternative than planning the Samarra tragedy so that it would find sufficient time to rid itself of the mounting public opinion objections to its costly presence in Iraq.

## Poverty

HADAF-VA-EQTESAD: The unwanted phenomenon of poverty can be witnessed in economic, social, political and cultural domains of the country. The ratio of the Iranian people who live under the poverty line to the country's total population is very near to the world's average poverty indicators. This is while since Iran is a rich country, this ratio should be lower than the global norms. According to the statistics released by the United Nations, a total of 1.2 billion people are currently living under the poverty line in the world. In other words, about one third of the world population is deprived from basic needs such as food, housing, health and medicine. The main causes of spread of poverty are injustice in distribution of resources, revenues, opportunities and potentials.

## Democracy

ASR-E EQTESAD: A total of 51 legislators expressed their opinion about the budget bill proposed for the next Iranian year (starts March 21). The manner in which some parliamentarians criticized the government over its proposed budget bill is harbinger of good news. The notion of democracy is closely linked to the extent of government's flexibility towards criticisms. If lawmakers and ministers continue to maintain their attitudes towards the lofty notion of constructive criticism, the nation will see the beginning of a new era in terms of institutionalization of democracy in the country. However, the good omen is that the active presence of MPs in intensive sessions shows that common understanding among them has considerably increased and this is a step forward for the future of Iran's democracy.

## Perspective

## Effective Supervision

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Give and take a few exceptions, almost the same situation applies in politics and other domains. This is why we have not progressed as we deserve. This is indeed the troubling premise our senior officials and experts have focused on and hence charted out what has been published as "Vision 2025". The 20-year national charter obliges all incoming governments to function under a specific framework. Those who miss the mark, take a reverse course, or tend to detour can do so at their own peril.

This year is the first year of the 20-year plan and all eyes are set on good governance and the ability of the government to play by the rules.

To this end it is crucial that parliament, the State Expediency Council (SEC) and relevant institutions exercise more supervision over the implementation of the long-term plan. Lethargy or diversion from the plan, even in the early stages, can entail unwanted consequences.