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Ethicist blasts Ahmadinejad on IRIB

Hojjatoleslam Seyyed Mehdi Tabatabayi Shirazi, known in Iran as the television ethics teacher, raked the Iranian president and his officials over the coals during a live debate program on IRIB 2.

In the beginning of the program, when presenter Morteza Heydari attempted to ask a rhetorical question, Tabatabayi said, "I want to make it clear that you are not to use what I say here for what you have in mind."

In response to a question about how rumors spread in society, Tabatabayi said, "When we keep harping on a subject, it creates doubts for listeners. You congratulated the president for his reelection once, and that's enough. Why do you keep insisting every now and then that millions participated in the election and voted for a certain person and then congratulate him [again]?"

"How many times will you express your appreciation for the mass turnout of the people? There is a saying that goes: 'You told me once, and I believed you. You told me twice, and I got suspicious. The third time I became certain that you are lying.'"

"Instead of this [behavior], it is better for the man who is now president to ask those who support his rivals what they want so that as president he can [represent] their views too."

"The prophets were humble and showed leniency in the face of mockery. We are not prophets so it is necessary to apologize to the people on television for the mistakes we have made."

Heydari, who appeared shocked by Tabatabayi's remarks, asked once again what caused rumors to spread in society.

Tabatabayi replied, "Society is like the human body. When functioning well, it is balanced. But when we show extremist tendencies, the results are what we see today. You are a doctor yourself, so you should know that you don't sprinkle salt over a wound, you bandage it."

"We cannot bow our heads and think people are unable to see [through] what we are doing. No people understand very well."

"We should not say that everything the people say is a lie."

"I would like to tell the people that there are easier and less complicated ways to have themselves heard. But the person who lies is constantly trying to alter his stories and is scared."

"God bear witness that I have used this opportunity to say everything that needs to be said."

"He who has weaknesses and cannot carry out his responsibilities well tends to accuse others."

"Whoever holds a position for which he is not suitable should, instead of accusing others, abdicate his responsibilities."

"Do not think that I am willing to do anything for the Islamic Republic and safeguard the establishment. No. Many ask me why I don't hold a high position despite being one of the veterans of the revolution. I always answer, 'I didn't know how [to grovel for a position].'"

Heydari then asked Tabatabayi to elaborate on whom the Supreme Leader had in mind when he said "rumors should not be spread by hurling accusations."

Tabatabayi said the leader was addressing the entire nation, including those who are helpless and angry.

"You should not over think [this] and set out to find a person to say the leader intended [to warn] him."

"When a child returns home from school and says 'mom' and hears no reply, he says 'mom, mom, mom!' The second time [after hearing no reply] he shouts and shows a reaction. The next time he might even start throwing cups.... Why didn't you hear the child the first time he called you so that now [you are] be forced to do such things?"

"What I want to say is that the situation must be remedied not worsened. To prevent the escalation of tensions we must try to restore the lost calm."

"Nuclear energy is an important matter and our inalienable right -- but isn't getting married and having a home and a job not also inalienable rights? Don't these have a priority over nuclear energy?"

"Why do you keep insisting on something that is not a priority and hide what has priority underneath it?"

"When Imam [Khomeini] returned to the country he did not say, 'I'm bringing you food and water,' because people were doing well financially. Rather he said 'we will bring you spirituality.' At that time faith was in danger, therefore faith took priority at that time."

Heydari then asked how rumors and accusations spread among the elite.

"We should not consider every report an accusation and say whoever has information and is reporting it is making allegations. Rather we must take the report and investigate it because if we do not do this, there will be no more reporting. It has even been advised in our religion to feel responsible."

"To prevent the spread of rumors we must stop repeating the unimportant things that have important things hidden underneath them."

"Our actions must not be such to make people become suspicious of faith."

"They ask why the elite have remained silent. I don't consider myself as one of the elite but what else can we do? Break our silence so that you can play with

our reputation? So that you can take away our credibility?"

"If you want to restore the faith of the people you must do as was done in the beginning of the revolution, make use of politicians -- and in matters of religion, refer to the Sources of Emulation. Religion is something that must be left to the clergy, not laymen."

"I know nothing about engineering; therefore I cannot interfere in engineering matters. The same applies to a person who knows nothing about religion and must refrain from rendering opinions on religion."

"Mr. [Esfandiyar Rahim] Mashai must only express his opinion on topics within the limits of his knowledge and nothing more."

"More recently, Mister... [Ahmadinejad] wrote in a letter that my government is the most pious and faithful of the governments of the past century. What is the meaning of this? God forbid, does he see himself as more pious than the late Imam [Khomeini]?"

"I have lived my life and not much of it is left. But I would like to ask the people to pray for my forgiveness if -- God forbid -- I have not carried out my duty in preventing people from losing their faith."