



Iran Data Portal

Jebheh-ye Mosharekat-e Iran-e Islami
Islamic Iran Participation Front

The Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF), one of the largest reformist parties in Iran, was founded in 1998 by mid-career politicians who were leading members of Mohammad Khatami's campaign in the 1997 presidential elections. Many of the party's founders were leading reformists of the late 1990s, who had earlier been radical members of the "Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line" (Daneshjooyan-e Mosalman-e Peyrov-e Khatt-e Emam) that seized the United States Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and took 53 members of the staff hostage for over a year. After the hostage crisis, the group continued to be active in the lower ranks of the Islamic leftist faction. Like other leftist elites in the Islamic Republic of Iran, an emphasis on social justice and anti-imperialism characterizes the main features of their political mindset.

After the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini and the constitutional amendment in 1989[1], the group, like the entire Islamic Left more generally, was marginalized in Iranian domestic politics. In the aftermath of the fourth parliamentary elections in 1992, the group started to revise its political values and agenda. Instead of social justice and anti-imperialism, it now placed more emphasis on a "liberal" reading of Islam, political liberties, a market economy, and the normalization of the country's foreign policy. After a decade at the margins of the Islamic Republic's politics, they formed the main skeleton of Mohammad Khatami's campaign in the presidential election of 1997, and with Khatami's landslide victory took many positions within the executive.

The party was established months before the municipal elections in 1999, and its main slogan was "Iran for all Iranians." Its leadership stems mostly from educated and religious members of the urban middle class. Among its main figures are Mohammad Reza Khatami, the Secretary-General of the party until 2005, and younger brother of former president Mohammad Khatami. He served as deputy speaker of the sixth parliament (2000-2004); Mohsen Mirdamadi, the current Secretary-General and a

member of the sixth parliament; Saeed Hajjarian, chief theorist and strategist of the “reform movement,” a founder of the Ministry of Intelligence in the 1980s, and one of President Khatami’s advisors; Abdollah Remzan-zadeh, the spokesperson of president Khatami’s cabinet; and Mostafa Tajzadeh, the deputy of the Ministry of Interior.

The sixth parliamentary election in 2000 was a landslide victory for the reformists and the IIPF formed the largest faction in parliament with 150 (of 290 members). The coalition enacted bills regarding the press, satellite usage, and foreign investment. However, most of these reforms were rejected by the extra-legal opposition of the Supreme Leader and the “legal” opposition of the Guardian Council. In the 2001 presidential election, the party again supported Mohammad Khatami and with his second landslide victory its members managed to stay in the executive for the subsequent four years.

The second election of the rural and municipal councils in 2003 was a turning point for the IIPF. Due to the low turnout, they lost all of their seats in Tehran and the majority of seats in other areas to the conservative camp. In the run-up to the 2004 parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council disqualified all of the IIPF candidates, and the party announced it would boycott the elections. Thus, after losing majorities in the municipalities, the party also lost its majority in the national legislature. For the 2005 presidential election, the IIPF nominated Mostafa Mo’een, the former Minister of Higher Education. However, according to the official election results, Mo’een ranked fifth among seven candidates, and the IIPF lost the executive, the last branch of government it controlled.

Days after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s election to the presidency in 2005, the unofficial newspaper of the party (“Eqbal”) was shut down, and the party never succeeded in acquiring permission to open another newspaper. In spite of the serious limitations from Ahmadinejad’s government and the disqualification of members from running, the party did participate in the 2007 municipal elections and the 2008 parliamentary elections. In the 2009 presidential election, the party first invited former president Khatami to run, but after Khatami withdrew from the race, it endorsed former prime minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi. In the run-up to election day, Mousavi’s campaign managed to bring masses of people into the streets and there was much hope that he

would win the election in the first round or challenge the incumbent president in the second round. However, shortly after polling stations closed, the Ministry of Interior announced a landslide victory for Ahmadinejad. The day following the election, Mousavi supporters came into the streets and protested the announced results of the election. The government responded with a severe crackdown and arrested many of the reformist campaign activists, including many IIPF members.

[1] In the 1989 constitutional amendment, the office of prime minister was dissolved, taking away responsibilities from Mir Hossein Mousavi, a prominent member of Iran's left-wing faction for almost twenty years. The president became the real head of the executive. Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani, a pragmatist figure who swung between the right and left wings, was elected president, and the left wing lost control of the executive.

Official Website: <http://www.mosharekat.ir/>