



Iran Data Portal

Jame'eh-ye Ruhaniyyat-e Mobarez-e Tehran
The Society of the Militant Clergy of Tehran (JRM)

The Society of the Militant Clergy of Tehran (Jame'eh-ye Ruhaniyyat-e Mobarez-e Tehran – JRM) was established in 1977, two years prior to the 1979 Revolution, by followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. Its members were active in organizing marches, giving lectures in mosques, and providing slogans for demonstrations. In early 1979, the group wrote its first statute and stated as chief goals: guarding the Islamic Revolution, "strengthening the institutions" of the emerging Islamic Republic of Iran, and "supervising" the country's affairs for the purpose of realizing justice.

The JRM has had an influential presence in the Judiciary, the Assembly of Experts, the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council, the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, the National Security Council, the armed forces, and, to a lesser extent, the Parliament and the Executive. Many of its members have been Friday prayer leaders (*imam jom'eh*) and representatives of the Supreme Leader in the provinces. Three members (Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, Abdolkarim Musavi-Ardebili, and Mohammad Yazdi) have served as Head of the Judiciary. Two (Akbar Rafsanjani and Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri) have been Speakers of Parliament, each for two terms. Three (Ayatollahs Mahdavi-Kani, Yazdi, and Emami-Kashani) have been members of the Guardian Council. One member, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has served as President, Head of the Expediency Council, and Speaker of the Assembly of Experts. Also, Ali Khamenei, the current Supreme Leader of Iran, was among the founding members of the JRM and was an active member of the Central Committee before his appointment as Supreme Leader.

The group believes that the Supreme Leader, or Guardian Jurist (*vali-e faqih*), is a representative of God and does not rely on the consent of the people, even though the Supreme Leader is indirectly elected by the people through the Assembly of Experts. The JRM maintains that participation in politics is not a right, but an individual duty. In

economic policy, the group supports the free market and entrusting economic matters to the private sector, although de facto the group's members have contributed to and upheld the heavy state involvement in Iran's economy. The JRM also supports the right of the individual to make profit in economic activity, as long as this is governed by Shi'i jurisprudential rules. In cultural policy, the JRM supports traditional Islamic values and calls for governmental supervision over the cultural realm, including the censorship of the arts and the media.

The JRM has experienced four major episodes of internal tension since its establishment in 1977. In 1980, the majority of JRM members supported Prime Minister Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, while some leading members who were also members of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) supported Hasan Habibi, the legal scholar who had drafted the first version of the 1979 constitution. Nevertheless, in the first parliamentary election in 1980, the JRM and IRP formed a coalition (in Tehran, for example, their lists had 25 of 30 candidates in common).

The second episode of tension within the JRM occurred in 1987, before the third parliamentary elections (1988). There was internal disagreement in the JRM's central council over the economic policies of prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi's government, the increasing interference of the state in the economy, the limits of the Supreme Leader's (Khomeini's) authority, and the list of candidates for the upcoming parliamentary election. The right wing of the JRM advocated a limited role for the state in the economy and therefore opposed Mousavi's economic policies. They also were of the opinion that the Supreme Leader's power should be limited by the rules of religious law [*shari'a*,] (whose interpretation rests with the Guardian Council). The left wing, by contrast, was supportive of the welfare programs of Mousavi's government and also pushed for rights of the Supreme Leader beyond the limits of religious law. The JRM split when the opposing sides could not come to an agreement over the list of their candidates for the third parliamentary election. The split led to the formation of a new association by the left wing, the Association of Militant Clerics (*Majma'-e Ruhāniyun-e Mobārez* – MRM). After the split, the MRM became an important constituency of Prime Minister Mousavi, and the JRM one of the most influential critics of Mousavi's policies.

In the third parliament (1988-1992), the left wing faction under the leadership of the MRM managed to gain the majority of seats, while the JRM and its affiliates were in the minority. However, after Ayatollah Khomeini - who had been an important patriarch of the left wing - passed away, the JRM succeeded in winning access to the country's most important political positions. In 1989, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a prominent member of the JRM, was elected the fourth president of Iran. As a result of the amendment of the Constitution in 1989, the office of prime minister was eliminated and the president became the head of the executive. Further, Ali Khamenei, a member of the JRM's central committee, was elected Supreme Leader of the country, and thereby Khomeini's successor. The new Head of the Judiciary, appointed by the Supreme Leader, also was a JRM member, Ayatollah Yazdi.

In the fourth parliamentary elections in 1992, the right wing under the leadership of the JRM managed to retake the majority of the house, mostly due to the fact that many left-wing candidates had been disqualified by the JRM-dominated Guardian Council. As a result of the JRM's success, JRM member Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri was elected Speaker of Parliament. Thus, within a period of only three years after Khomeini's death, the JRM succeeded in installing its own members at the top of all three branches of power as well as in the Supreme Leader's office.

This situation led to the third tension within the JRM in 1995, when JRM member and Speaker of Parliament Nateq-Nuri led the parliament in opposing president Rafsanjani's planned economic reforms. While Rafsanjani's policies generally favored industrialist development strategies, the parliament backed traditional trade measures associated with bazaar economic relations. This tension continued until the 1997 presidential elections took place, for which the JRM nominated Nateq-Nuri for the presidency, while Rafsanjani implicitly backed Mohammad Khatami, the candidate of the Assembly of the Militant Clerics (MRM). With Khatami's landslide victory, the JRM became one of his most fervent critics. It opposed Khatami's policies of political, economic and cultural liberalization.

In the 2005 presidential election, the JRM supported Rafsanjani, who lost the race to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The JRM has not had a unified position toward Ahmadinejad's policies. Some of the younger members of the JRM, like Shajuni and

Salek, have been among Ahmadinejad's strongest supporters, while some of the more senior members like Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, and former nuclear negotiator Hasan Rohani, have been among his most outspoken critics.

This led to the fourth episode of internal tension during the 2009 presidential elections, when some of the JRM members, including the Secretary-General, supported Ahmadinejad's candidacy, while other members kept silent, or implicitly or explicitly backed MRM member Mir-Hosein Mousavi. As a result, the JRM central committee remained divided and as a result stayed silent and inactive during the election and the country-wide protests in its aftermath.

The organizational elements of the JRM are a Constitutive Board, a Central Committee, the office of the Secretary-General, a Board Executive, the Council of Regions, and the general membership. The Central Committee, the highest authority in the party, elects the secretary-general every five years. The Central Committee consists of the original members who have stayed in the JRM and new members that have joined the Central Committee since its ratification. Ayatollahs Mahdavi-Kani, Akbar Nateq-Nuri, and Mohammad Emami-Kashani have been the secretary-generals of the JRM since its founding. The JRM has a statute but does not have a manifesto.

Official Website: <http://www.rohaniatmobarez.com/Portal/Home/>

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