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Majma'e Ruhaniyoun-e Mobarez
Assembly of Militant Clerics (MRM)

The Assembly of Militant Clerics (*Majma'e Ruhaniyoun-e Mobarez* – MRM) was founded in 1988 as a result of a split within the Society of Combatant Clergy of Tehran (JRM). Some left-wing members departed from the JRM over differences in the association's stance towards economic policy. They founded their own group, the MRM. In contrast to the JRM, the newly founded MRM believed in state intervention in the economy to support lower segments of society. The MRM also advocated a more aggressive foreign policy including the “Export of the Revolution”.

In the third parliamentary elections in 1988, the MRM won the majority of seats, and Mehdi Karroubi, the Secretary-General of the Association, became the Deputy Speaker of Parliament and later the Speaker when Akbar Rafsanjani (a prominent member of the JRM) was elected president. A turning point for the MRM came when Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989 and the Assembly of Experts elected Ali Khamenei, a leading member of the JRM, as the new Supreme Leader. This put the right-wing JRM in a strong position. In the fourth parliamentary elections in 1992 the JRM regained its dominance in parliament, which the MRM blamed on the fact that many of its candidates had been disqualified by the JRM-dominated Guardian Council. In the run-up to the 1996 parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council again disqualified many MRM candidates with the result that the MRM declared a boycott of the elections altogether.

In 1997, Mohammad Khatami, a leading member of the MRM, ran for the presidency and won in a landslide victory. In his campaign, Khatami argued that the MRM's values and agenda had changed. Instead of its radical views regarding foreign policy in the late 1980s, Khatami put more emphasis on freedom, civil society, and the rule of law. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, the MRM, as a member of the reformist 2nd Khordad coalition of Khatami supporters, managed to return to the

legislature and MRM-member Mehdi Karroubi became Speaker of Parliament. In the 2004 parliamentary election, the MRM lost its dominance in parliament, as many candidates of the 2nd Khordad Front were disqualified by the Guardian Council - including 80 sitting MPs - and other reformist parties boycotted the election. In 2005, Karroubi, the MRM Secretary-General, ran for the presidency, but ranked third in the first round behind Ali Akbar Rafsanjani and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Days later, Karroubi wrote an open letter to the Supreme Leader calling the elections unfair because of the alleged interference of the military and paramilitary forces. Moreover, Karroubi resigned from the MRM since he believed that it had not fully backed him. After Karroubi's resignation, the MRM changed its statute. Mohammad Khatami was elected the chairman of the central committee, and Mohammad Musavi-Khoeniha the Secretary General.

In the 2009 presidential election, Khatami initially declared his candidacy, but withdrew when Mir Hossein Mousavi's candidacy was announced. After the election on June 12, 2009 and the officially announced victory by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the MRM, like other reformist parties, stated that the election results were fraudulent and called for an annulment by the Guardian Council. Khatami, the chairman of the group, called the events, including the crackdown on protestors a "velvet coup" [by the extreme right loyal to the Supreme Leader, against the elected institutions]. Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a member of the MRM central committee and former vice president under president Khatami, was arrested during the crackdown. Abtahi later confessed against himself and ex-president Khatami. The MRM called the trial a sham, stating that Abtahi's confession must have been given under the duress of torture and was therefore invalid.

Official Website: <http://www.rouhanioon.com>

Literature: Mortaji, Hojjat, *Jenah-ha-ye Siasi dar Iran* [Political Factions in Iran.] Tehran: Entesharat-e Naqsh o Negar, 1999.