



Caution, Hope & Reality after the Iranian Elections

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Salt Lake City, UT. In a striking rejection of the status quo, the Iranian voters have overwhelmingly voiced their support for a candidate who claims to stand for moderation, greater personal freedom, and a rational engagement with the world. Even in Iran's unfree and unfair electoral system in which pre-approved regime insiders compete for office, the victory of Hassan Rouhani should be seen as a barometer of public opinion in Iran and a loud call for change. The vote for Rouhani was a rejection of the hardline policies of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that have isolated the country, inflicted serious economic pain on the population, brought the country to the brink of war, and sharply increased the repression of political actors in a system that was already highly repressive.

The overwhelming victory by President-elect Hassan Rouhani has inspired celebrations in the streets of Tehran and hopeful conversations within the centers of power around the world. When the President-elect, and former nuclear negotiator, victoriously called his election results, "a new opportunity for those who respect democracy, interaction and free dialogue," there was a global wave of careful optimism in government offices everywhere. However, this optimism must be carefully guarded due to the undemocratic vetting process of candidates. Even though Mr. Rouhani was a former official in Iran's national security apparatus, the Supreme Leader and his fellow clerics maintain complete control in major decisions regarding defense and foreign policy. If the President-elect tries to deliver his campaign promises, with or without approval by the Supreme Leader, it will provide a giant step forward for Iran's return to the world community, but for now that prospect must be considered hopeful and clearly difficult to achieve. The people of Iran have spoken, but it is only the beginning of the conversation.

Omid for Iran, a not-profit organization devoted to building Iran's civil society and supporting efforts to promote democracy, expresses its support once again for the Iranian people who are courageously fighting for greater freedoms and economic dignity.

"Our organization, *Omid for Iran*, hopes for meaningful, fundamental changes in humanitarian and economic policies, and has dedicated itself to focusing on the critical role of the Iranian people in determining their future," said Khosrow Semnani, President of *Omid for Iran*. "We congratulate the people of Iran on their courage and commitment, as well as their purpose, power and passion in risking retribution by supporting much needed change in the country's direction. We should do everything possible to lessen the danger of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities which would have devastating consequences... Let us hope that President-elect Rouhani can deliver on his campaign promises and that the establishment will find a way to resolve some of the many problems Iran faces today."

We should be cognizant of the fact that similar excitements were expressed in 1997 upon the election of a reformist candidate Mohammad Khatami. However, either planned or coincidental, theocratic elements close to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei crushed the hopes and dreams of the Iranians by preventing implementation of meaningful democratic policy changes and forcing the country into an even worse social and economic disaster.

We remain dedicated to speaking out and lending humanitarian assistance and support to improve the lives of the Iranian people, and hope for a positive and peaceful future for all Iranians.

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Omid for Iran is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the interests of Iranian people by striving to create the conditions for a better future. For more information, visit our website: <http://omidforiran.org>