

The Kurdish National Congress of North America is calling boycott the 10th round of elections of the Islamic Republic

June 10, 2009

News from the KNCNA Public Relations Committee

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The Kurdish National Congress of North America is calling on the 12 million Kurds living in Iran under the rule of the Islamic Republic and Iranian Kurds in Diaspora to publicly boycott the 10th round of elections of the Islamic Republic, and to use the current political arena to actively pursue and demand civil and human rights changes within Iran.

The Kurdish National Congress of North America is a pro-democracy, pro-voting rights organization, which encourages people around the world, including Kurds, to be fully engaged members of their society in the governance of their rights and in civil action; however, the current elections under the Islamic Republic of Iran does not qualify as a democratic system. We feel that participation in these elections only legitimizes the iron grip of the tyranny of the Islamic Republic regime. Therefore, a boycott of this election is necessary, and instead we ask our people to participate in a massive non-violent civil action, demanding equal opportunity and equal rights, and emphasizing human rights during these critical hours.

Iran's system of government is structured in such a way that it perceives itself to have a "divine right" to oversee all aspects of life in Iran, including but not limited to, the nomination of elected presidents. Roughly 50% of the population in Iran are women, making up the majority of university graduates, yet these educated individuals are not allowed under Islamic rule, on the basis of their gender, to nominate themselves for the presidential election. Minorities, including most ethnic and religious groups, also do not have the right to nominate themselves to the presidential elections. These minorities include, but are not limited to, those of the Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrians, Ba'heei faiths, and even Sunni Muslims, which automatically eliminates all of the Kurdish population from being able to nominate a presidential candidacy. Furthermore, the candidates must be a follower of the Shia branch of Islam, adhere to the 12 Imam, and accept the role of the Supreme Leader, and then be approved by the Guardian Council.

Clearly, in such a discriminatory environment, all democratic elements are missing from this election, and the candidates cannot be looked at as a legitimate representative of all Iranian citizens. We cannot stand behind such systematic discrimination and violation of all basic rights of people in the name of law.

Aside from the issue of selected nominees, no party in Iran, “reformists” or “non-reformists,” have ever addressed the dire life and death concerns of the Kurdish people in Iran. The provinces where Kurds reside in Iran have been under “emergency rule” for the past 30 years, which means a martial law and the presence of heavy military personnel. The fiscal allocations to these regions have always been severely under prioritized; in such a way that currently some of the most poverty stricken areas of Iran are places where Kurds reside. Unimaginable poverty, unemployment, homelessness, illiteracy, health-care issues, environmental concerns, including lack of clean and available water, under-developed infrastructure, security concerns, trafficking of drugs and many other concerns plague the region, and yet none of the selected candidates, “reformists” or “non-reformists,” have made attempts at addressing these issues.

Kurds make up the highest number of political prisoners of conscience, are arbitrarily detained, and are executed at an alarming rate in Iran, which again, neither one of the selected nominees think should be revised or reformed.

The issue of human rights, political prisoners of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of press, freedom of religious practice and assembly, the execution of minors, the crackdown of decent or organized civil rights movements and unionization, is beyond a Kurdish human rights crisis, it is an International crisis that crosses all borders and political partisanship.

However, it is important to emphasize that historically, Kurds in Iran have faced many of the most ferocious atrocities in the last 30 years that no levels of government or camps (reformists or non-reformist) even to this date, have taken any measures to eradicate. The injustices inflicted upon the Kurdish people in Iran continue and we feel that participation in a fraud election that does not address these issues only empowers this system of continuous exploitation and violation of people’s basic rights and further disenfranchises the population.

Recalling the last eight years of the previous “reformist government” of Mohamad Khatami, which the Kurds overwhelmingly supported in 1997, it can be factually stated that no steps were taken to make Iran a better place for Kurds, where their basic human rights would be respected. In fact, many of the human rights instances, especially the brutal crackdown in Sanadaj in 1999, happened during the reign of that “reformist”.

The Kurdish population in Iran and in Diaspora must make the connection between the re-emergence of “reformist figures” to attract the support of the minorities, among them

Kurds on one hand, and the youth on the other, in order to give the regime a seeming appearance of legitimacy within Iran and in the International front.

We ask our fellow Kurds to not allow such propaganda to distract them from facts and notice that one of the regime approved “reformist” candidates who has publically (only in Kurdish areas) set out his plans for Iranian “tribes” is Mehdi Karoubi who has been part of this system for the last thirty years including many years in Majlis, but has failed to mention even the existence of Kurdish rights in Iran. The other candidate is Mir Hussein Mousavi, who was the country’s prime minister from 1981 to 1987, and he is primarily responsible for many extrajudicial killings in Kurdistan and other areas of Iran, particularly the mass political executions of 1983- 1988. All four candidates have in the past 30 years shown that they have no interest in diplomatically solving the Kurdish issue within Iran. In fact, under the pretense of negotiations, Kurdish leaders were assassinated by the regime and assistance of some of the same people who are now running for office.

Kurdish people can use a boycott of the election as a non-violent civil action against the atrocities, which has been done to them and show how much their vote can translate within the power struggle of the conservative and non-conservative forces within the regime.

While the Iranian government is indulging in propaganda for the presidential election, 13 Kurdish human rights, political activists, and journalists who have been sentenced to death are waiting for their execution dates. Hundreds of Kurdish women and men, along with other prisoners of conscience are in jail cells with no trials. Kurdish Women rights activists, who fight for equality and justice in Iran, have spent months and months in prison, and carry the trauma for generations to come.

Kurdish National Congress of North America is not asking for a passive boycott but rather a call to action. We cannot see these illegitimate elections as a “reform” in a place where the basic ideas of equality and fairness are not respected and explicit discrimination is part of the law. During these times of havoc within Iran, the people of Kurdistan must seize the opportunity to demand their rights for a justly executed election where their voices are heard and their concerns met.

Date published: Wednesday, June 10, 2009