

Iran's 2009 Voter Uprising



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Warm-Up:

**Review the text of the First Amendment below,
then answer the question that follows.**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Imagine that the First Amendment is repealed.

How might our society and government change?

What actions might our government be able to take that it is currently prohibited from doing based on this amendment?



About Iran

- **Islamic Republic of Iran**
- country in Central Asia; previously known as Persia
- 18th largest country in the world in terms of area
- Iran has a population of over seventy million
- Tehran is the capital & the country's largest city
- Iran is a regional power & holds an important position in international energy security and world economy as a result of its large reserves of petroleum and natural gas.



Iran's Government



- Iran officially became an **Islamic republic** on April 1, 1979, following the **Iranian Revolution**.
- The political system of Iran, based on the 1979 Constitution, comprises several intricately connected governing bodies.
 - The highest state authority is the **Supreme Leader**, who is the highest ranking political and religious authority of the nation
 - The Supreme Leader appoints the heads of many powerful posts :
 - Commanders of the armed forces, the director of the national radio and television network, the heads of the major religious foundations, the prayer leaders in city mosques, the members of national security councils dealing with defense & foreign affairs, the chief judge, the chief prosecutor, and special tribunals
 - With the help of the chief judge, the Supreme Leader also appoints the 12 jurists of the Guardian Council – the powerful body that decides both what bills may become law and who may run for president or parliament.
- The Islamic Republic has had two Supreme Leaders in its history; currently the post is occupied by **Ali Khamenei**.

Iran's Government



- After the Supreme Leader, the Constitution defines **President of Iran** as the highest state authority.
 - Presidential candidates must be approved by the **Council of Guardians** prior to running to ensure their “allegiance to the ideals of the Islamic revolution.”
 - The President is responsible for the implementation of the Constitution and for the exercise of executive powers, except for matters directly related to the Supreme Leader, who has the final say in all matters.
 - The President appoints and supervises the **Council of Ministers**, coordinates government decisions, and selects government policies to be placed before the legislature.
 - Eight **Vice-Presidents** serve under the President, as well as the cabinet of twenty two ministers, who must all be approved by the legislature.
 - The executive branch in Iran does not control the armed forces. (Although the President appoints the Ministers of Intelligence and Defense, it is customary for the President to obtain approval from the Supreme Leader for these two ministers before presenting them to the legislature for a vote of confidence.)



How would you describe the structure of Iran's government? Where does the power lie?

Voting for President



- The President of Iran is elected by **direct vote**.
 - highest official elected by direct popular vote, but does not control foreign policy or the armed forces.
- Presidential candidates have to be vetted by the 12-member **Council of Guardians**
 - consists of six clerics (selected by Iran's Supreme Leader) and six lawyers (proposed by the head of Iran's judicial system and voted in by the Parliament)
- Iran has a **two-round system**
 - if none of the candidates wins the majority in the first round, the top two candidates will go to a run-off.
- All Iranian citizens of age 16 and up are eligible to vote. There is an estimated 46.2 million eligible voters in Iran.
- ? What is your opinion of having a voting age of 16 rather than 18?

The 2009 Election

Iran makes world news when citizens wage protests over “election fraud”

- **June 12, 2009**

- Iran's **tenth presidential election** was held on June 12, 2009, with incumbent Mahmoud **Ahmadinejad** running against three opponents.
- Ahmadinejad was elected President of Iran in 2005.
- Ahmadinejad's largest competitor was Mir-Hossein **Mousavi** .



Rejection of the Results



- **June 13, 2009**

- Although polls and analysts had predicted that record voter turnout would favor Mousavi, the Islamic Republic News Agency announced that with two-thirds of the votes counted, Ahmadinejad had won the election with 63% of the votes cast, and that Mir-Hossein **Mousavi** had received only 33% of the votes cast.
- The official results were rejected by all three opposition candidates, who claimed that the votes were manipulated and the election was rigged.
- The UK and several western countries expressed concern over alleged irregularities during the vote, and many analysts and journalists from the United States, Europe and other western based media voiced doubts about the authenticity of the results.
- Mousavi issued a statement saying, "I'm warning that I won't surrender to this charade," and urged his supporters to fight the decision, without committing acts of violence.



How would you feel if you had voted for Mousavi and not only learned that he did not win, but also that his loss could be due to election fraud? How would you respond?

Protesting the Election

- **June 14, 2009**

- Mousavi announced that he wouldn't "surrender to this manipulation" and lodged an official appeal against the result to the **Guardian Council**.
- Protests had broken out in Tehran over the alleged fraud and continue to grow, as did violence.
- On the night June 14 the pro-Ahmadinejad Basij paramilitary group raided Tehran University, injuring many.
- Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged the nation to unite behind Ahmadinejad, labeling his victory as a "divine assessment".



- **June 15, 2009**

- more than 3 million protesters marched on Azadi street and Mousavi made his first post-election appearance.
- Khamenei announced there would be an investigation into vote-rigging claims, which would take seven to ten days.
- **?** Who will be responsible for leading such an investigation? Does this make you question the authenticity of the investigative results? Explain.

Protesting the Election

- Remember, Iran is a country where the rights of citizens to protest and speak out against their government are severely limited.
 - Protestors were threatened, attacked with tear gas, beaten, and fired upon
 - Although the government was demanding the dissent to stop, Iranians continued to voice their anger and dissent
 - How were protestors able to organize, particularly with government officials trying to stop them through threats, violence, and even by shutting media/communications such as phone lines and broadcasting?
 - Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, text messaging, YouTube, etc.
- Even given the great risks they faced, why did Iranian citizens choose to voice their discontent? Would you do the same? Why or why not?



Protesting the Election

- **Tuesday, June 16**

- the Guardian Council announced it would do a partial recount of the votes; however, the vote was not annulled
- Mousavi stated that 14 million unused ballots were missing, giving a chance to manipulate the results.
- Protests continued
- The US State Department asked Twitter to delay a network upgrade that would have interrupted service to ensure Iranians could continue using Twitter to share information regarding protests



In your opinion, how involved should the US government have been in the Iranian controversy and why?



Protesting the Election

- **Wednesday, June 17**

- large protests continue
- some members of the Iranian national football team wore green wristbands in support of Mousavi during their game against South Korea.

- **Thursday, June 18**

- more than 100,000 protesters held a candle-light vigil in Tehran following Mousavi's call for a day of mourning for those killed in protests.
- The Guardian Council invited the three major challengers to meet to discuss their grievances.



Protesting the Election

- **Friday, June 19**

- Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini spoke out saying that the election accurately reflected the will of the people and accused "enemies of Islam" of stoking anger.
 - He told a large crowd at Tehran University that the "historic" 85 percent turnout of more than 40 million people meant the vote was too large to have been manipulated.
 - "There is a difference of 11 million votes. How can vote-rigging happen? The Islamic establishment would never manipulate votes and commit treason. The legal structure in this country does not allow vote-rigging,"
 - He stated that the election was legitimate and protests would no longer be tolerated.
- Protests occurred on a smaller scale.



Protesting the Election

- **Saturday, June 20**
 - The next day, June 20th, protesters still took to the streets.
 - At the protests that did occur, said to number in the tens of thousands of people, much violence occurred, causing many would-be protesters to stay in their homes the next day out of fear.
 - A young Iranian woman, identified as **Neda Agha-Soltan**, was shot by the Basij and died in front of cameras on Kargar Avenue in Tehran.
 - Highly graphic amateur videos of the killing rapidly spread virally across the internet after being posted to Facebook and YouTube.



Neda Agha-Soltan



- Neda was a young Iranian woman on her way to participate in protests in Tehran. After her car's AC stopped working, she got out on foot to escape the heat. While observing a sporadic protest in the area, she was shot in the chest by a Basij officer.
- Videos of the killing, taken by bystanders, rapidly spread over the internet, posted to Facebook and YouTube. Videos show Neda collapsing to the ground and someone in the crowd shouting, "She has been shot! Someone, come and take her!"
- Dr. Arash Hejazi was present during the incident & tried to care for her; he has since fled Iran out of fear of government reprisals:

"A young woman who was standing...watching the protests was shot by a Basij member hiding on the rooftop of a civilian house. He had a clear shot at the girl and could not miss her. However, he aimed straight for her heart. I am a doctor, so I rushed to try to save her. But the impact of the gunshot was so fierce that the bullet had blasted inside the victim's chest, and she died in less than two minutes."

Protesting the Election

- **Monday, June 22**
 - Riot police broke up the main rally in Tehran with tear gas and live fire.
- **On Friday, June 26**
 - During Friday prayers broadcast live on television Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami is reported to have said that *"Anybody who fights against the Islamic system or the leader of Islamic society, fight him until complete destruction"*, and called for the execution of leading demonstrators as they are *"people who wage war against God"*.
- **On Monday, June 29**
 - Iran's electoral board completed the partial recount, and concluded that Ahmadinejad won the election. The Guardian Council certified the results.
 - This set off a wave of protests, disregarding the Iranian governments ban on street marches.
 - The Iranian intelligence chief alleged that western and "Zionist" forces were responsible for inciting the protests. Four British officials remain in custody under those charges.



Protesting the Election



- **Late July**

- protest had reportedly entered "Phase II", using tactics such as:
 - the boycott of goods advertised on state-controlled television;
 - attempting to deny power to state-run TV evening news broadcasts by turning on all electric appliances just before the news;
 - "blitz" street demonstrations "lasting just long enough to chant `Death to the dictator!` several times", but not long enough for security forces to arrive;
 - Identifying paramilitary Basij vigilantes linked to the crackdown and putting marks in the opposition color green, or pictures of protest victims in front of their homes;
 - scribbled anti-regime slogans on money.
 - The new protest is reportedly based on the idea of Mohandas Gandhi that "even the most powerful cannot rule without the cooperation of the ruled."

- **August 5th, 2009**

- The inauguration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was held on August 5th in Tehran amid protests held outside the Parliament.
- Protesters chanted "death to the dictator".

Activity: Protesting the Election

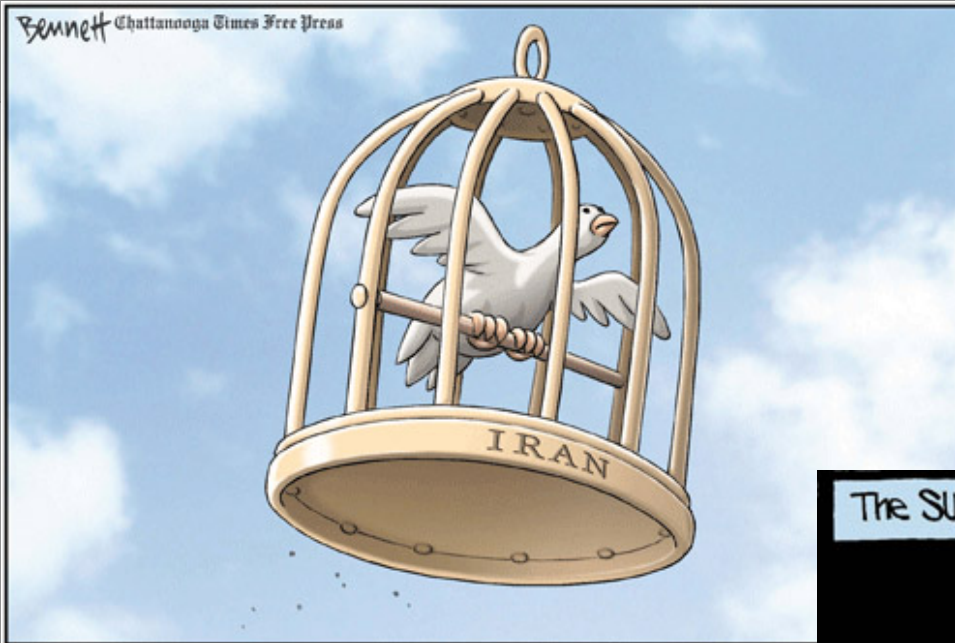
- In your group, examine the materials given to you (either political cartoons, photographs, or the graphic novel).
- Use the handout provided to discuss the materials provided and what additional information it can teach you about the 2009 Iranian election.
- In a moment, you will be responsible for summarizing the materials provided to you and teaching the remainder of class about what your medium says about the 2009 Iranian election.

POLITICAL CARTOONS

IRANIAN TRUTHS



POLITICAL CARTOONS



IRAN



ILOST



PEREIRA
OPE
CERTEZAS 19

IMAGES







GRAPHIC NOVEL

PERSEPOLIS 2.0



Edited by Payman & Sina

BASED ON THE ORIGINAL GRAPHIC NOVEL BY MARJANE SATRAPI