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Clerical Hardliners Expected to Gain in Iran's Elections

By John Glaser

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Robust voter turnout in Iran's parliamentary elections [may bolster clerical hard-liners according to some reports](#), evidence that harsh U.S.-led economic sanctions have not boosted support for liberal secularists.

Much of the election was focused on Iran's troubled economy, high unemployment, crippling inflation, etc. The Interior Ministry said Saturday that 64.2% of the nation's 28 million eligible voters cast ballots on Friday.

Considerable weight has been placed on these elections, as they are the first in the country since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection triggered the mass protests of 2009. Ahmadinejad himself did not run – his term ends in 2013 and, under current law, he cannot run again – but his side of Iran's political spectrum is expected to take a hit.

Parvin Ahmadinejad, the president's sister, reportedly failed in her bid to win a parliamentary seat in the family's own hometown.

Contrary to Western propaganda which paints Ahmadinejad as Iran's authoritarian leader at the forefront of the country's extremist religious rule, he in fact does not hold that much power compared to the clergy and the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. Many in Iran have questions Ahmadinejad's loyalty to the clergy, and his partisans may be the ones suffering losses to Khamenei's adherents.