

**US embassy cable - 10BAKU107****GRAND AYATOLLAH TO KHAMEINI: FREE PRISONERS, MAKE CLEAR BREAK WITH "FANATICS"****Identifier:** 10BAKU107**Wikileaks:** [View 10BAKU107 at Wikileaks.org](#)**Origin:** [Embassy Baku](#)**Created:** 2010-02-16 12:30:00**Classification:** [CONFIDENTIAL](#)**Tags:** [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PHUM](#) [AJ](#) [IR](#)**Redacted:** This cable was not redacted by Wikileaks.VZCZCXYZ0000  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000107

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TAGS: PGOV, KISL, PHUM, AJ, IR  
SUBJECT: GRAND AYATOLLAH TO KHAMEINI: FREE PRISONERS, MAKE  
CLEAR BREAK WITH "FANATICS"

REF: 2009 BAKU 759

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR ROB GARVERICK, REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)  
)**Ardebili Meets Khameini**  
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1. (C) Iranian source briefed Baku Iran watcher on an alleged **February 9** meeting in Tehran **between Supreme Leader Khameini and Grand Ayatollah Musavi-Ardebili**. The source, a relative by marriage of Ardebili's, is a longtime Baku Iran watche contact who has credibly demonstrated access to a wide range of political contacts in Iran. Source claimed that his rundown of the meeting was derived from a a meeting transcript distributed by an Ardebili associate.
2. (C) The meeting details are very similar to an account printed in the opposition blog, "Rah-e-Sabz," likely derived from the **same source**. The meeting details also correlate closely to a summary provided to Baku Iran watcher on February 14 by a **Najaf-based Hojateleslam Jawad al-Khoei**, who

contacted Iran watcher on a separate matter. The Hojateleslam (who had no knowledge of the Baku source) said that had been apprised of the meeting on February 11 by a visiting associate of Ayatollah Ardebili's son, a friend of many years (see reftel for more information on al-Khoei).

#### Alleged Ardebili-Khameini Meeting

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3. (C) According to the Baku source, the wheelchair-bound **Ardebili** (a former close associate of Ayatollah Khomeini) noted that he is apolitical, and has stayed out of Teheran for seventeen years. He allegedly reminded Khameini that "you sit in the seat of the Imam (Khomeini), and should remain above conflicts between political factions. Ardebili reportedly scolded Khameini for being out of touch with the people as a result of being misled by a coterie of extremists who "lack the people's support." This error, he reportedly said, is seriously undermining the Islamic Revolution and Islam, and bringing the long term existence of the Islamic Republic into question.

#### Two Steps to Reconciliation?

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4. (C) To remedy the situation, **Ardebili supposedly said, Khameini should take two steps:** order the release of senior opposition figures and their relatives, and make clear to the people through his actions that he is not allied with the fanatic (or any other) faction. In response, Khameini asked incredulously "How can I release them (after what they have done)?" **Ardebili** reportedly replied "I know many of the arrested people, and know that they are honest. They are not trying to overthrow you. They want reforms, not to change the leadership. They did not cause this crisis. I do not ask you to forgive their actions, I'm just saying they are honest. My wish is that you release them, separate yourself from extremists, and listen to the population. If those to whom you have listened (up to now) were truly wise or had the support of the people, there would be no crisis, no threat to the Revolution, and no damage to Islam ) all of which has happened."

5. (C) **Ardebili** reportedly added, "I have known you more than 35 years, and will die soon. These are my two last wishes." Ardebili reportedly promised that, if Khameini takes these two steps, he (Ardebili) will return to Qom and go "house-to-house" visiting the religious leadership to obtain a statement of support for Khameini. Khameini then allegedly said "Please do that," to which Ardebili replied "I will, after I see that you are responding to my wishes." Khameini then reportedly stared at him silently, and made no further comments on the issue.

#### Subsequent Release of Prisoners

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6. (C) The source added that within hours of this meeting reform figures **Ali Reza Beheshti, Mohammed Reza Tajik, and Mohsen Aminzadeh** were released from prison. The source credited these releases to Ardebili's intervention, and

opined that they will lead to a domino effect involving many other releases. He called this meeting "extremely significant." He also noted however, without prompting, that

Ayatollah Rafsanjani had also talked to Khomeini on the 10th, after receiving a call from Beheshti's wife, who was then in hiding due to fear of arrest. The source said that that Ayatollah Rafsanjani "gave Khomeini an ultimatum" not to arrest Beheshti's wife, or other opposition elite relatives (Note: this account conforms to a report provided by the British Embassy in Tehran, of which source was unaware. End Note).

Comment: A Reconciliation by, for, and of the Elite?


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7. (C) Ardebili's associates (or others with access to them) seem to have made a major effort to disseminate details of the Ardebili-Khomeini meeting. Though some details are undoubtedly spun or left out, the existence of multiple sources suggests that the meeting did occur along the lines indicated. What is notable in the accounts received so far is the apparent emphasis on "reconciling" primarily with an opposition "elite" consisting of revolutionary veterans and their relatives. To that extent, it is reminiscent of the emphasis on persecution of "loyal party people" (as opposed to non-party members or genuine regime opponents) that was stressed in the Soviet Union in the wake of Stalin's regime. End Comment.

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