

Reformist Front's head gives good grade to gov't

No negotiation back then means no cohesion now

INTERVIEW

During the wartime, we witnessed an exceptionally strong national cohesion among Iranians, which experts cite as a key factor behind Iran's power and victory against the Zionist regime and the United States. Ms. Azar Mansouri, as the head of Iran's Reformist Front and secretary-general of the Union of Islamic Iran People Party, what's your take on how this national cohesion came about and the ways to preserve and strengthen it?

MANSOURI: I firmly believe that alongside defensive capability, the most crucial deterrent was our national cohesion and the unwavering solidarity of all patriots against the aggression of the Zionist regime. This assault had long been planned out, and if the effective elements that managed to bring this 12-day war to a cease-fire get overlooked or covered up by governance negligence, this opportunity might have backfired into a serious threat.

I can say with certainty that if Iran hadn't sat down at the negotiation table and proven its interactive approach to the world, this vindication wouldn't have come about, and the national cohesion we witness today wouldn't have taken shape. Facing an assaulting power, which had deluded itself after Iran's state media, top government sessions, highest-ranking military commanders, and scientists were targeted — generating fears of the continuation of assassinations — the country would have been hit by street protests if Iran hadn't maintained an engaging stance against sanctions and hostilities. Without this stance, the situation would have looked entirely different.

Many say, "Now, we negotiated. What good came out of it?" We did negotiate, and that negotiation, that interactive approach, vindicated us among all Iranian citizens who understand that we went for dialogue, that we are not belligerent but tolerant and peaceful, and that we were never and will never be the instigators of any war. Thus, when diplomacy takes center stage in our foreign policy, it strengthens patriotism in Iranian society. How could a country be attacked right in the midst of ongoing talks? This is a serious and noteworthy matter.

In my view, another major factor is Iran's history and civilizational background. We are not a country with a 100 or 200-year history; We boast one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Since the formation of the earliest states on this planet, Iran has always been at the forefront of dialogue and a pioneer of intercultural conversations.

Throughout the ups and downs in this land's history, a prevailing and enduring sentiment has taken hold among our people. Regardless of government behavior, this dominant feeling is



of a profound commitment to this land and soil. We come and go, governments come and go, but this land must stand firm; Iran must remain in its place. Because any piece of this land lost due to incompetence, negligence, or lack of national unity has never under any circumstances come back. This national sentiment and attachment to the soil have bred unparalleled national solidarity among Iranians. The enemy repeatedly called out for people to hit the streets and riot. They had devised a scheme, assuming that because Iranians live under economic pressure and their livelihoods shrink day by day, they could play the savior role and, with a few attacks, set the stage to target influential institutions and shake the foundations of the regime.

In my opinion, the government handled things very shrewdly here. By making a timely ap-

pearance on the scene, it didn't let parts of the plan designed to spark riots play out. Regarding livelihood and public provisions, efforts were made during the trips over those 12 days to properly manage the supply and demand in the market, so provinces wouldn't face shortages or difficulties.

On the other hand, the measures and arrangements swiftly put in place following the martyrdom of our military commanders showed that an integrated body — including the Islamic Establishment, the government, political institutions, parties, activists, and civil society — came together under one banner called "the Nation," standing firm against this 12-day aggression and unequal war without prior preparation.

We're approaching the one-year mark of Mr. Pezeshkian's

government. From the day he entered the election arena, "national unity" was his chief slogan. Despite emphasizing unity, some actions and rhetoric, like the talk of "the president's political incompetence," end up playing into the hands of the enemies, and such discussions aren't appropriate in the current situation. How do you assess this state of affairs?

Mr. Pezeshkian rightly said during his campaign that we didn't come to quarrel and kept insisting that we must join hands, assess the country's political status, and then agree on solutions. To me, this perspective, put forth by the president himself, is entirely reformist and peacebuilding.

Despite the president's viewpoint, an interpretation among Mr. Pezeshkian's political rivals took root that meant: If the

president acts according to our wishes, that's unity; If he goes against our desires, that's division and the opposite of unity. But real unity should come into being where it helps bridge the existing gaps between the Islamic Establishment and the people. Today, we're up against enormous shortages in energy, water, electricity, and gas sectors. When such an issue exists, strengthening and expanding solar panels can patch up some problems, but the heart of the matter is that the heavy shadow of sanctions must be lifted from Iran. Which sanctioned country can right the ship of its economy?

If sanctions are to be lifted, unity must be hammered out around the fact that we are currently in neither war nor peace, but in a period where diplomats' full capacity must be tapped to push the shadow of war away from the country.

The approach that for years insisted on calling UN Security Council sanctions "scraps of paper" and at one point torched the JCPOA, preventing us from properly benefiting from it, must now be thrown out. Is there a better deal than the JCPOA? If so, let them speak up. If they say "no negotiations," then what solution do they offer Iran?

The truth is, the majority of global public opinion — in America, Europe, and non-Muslim countries — strongly condemns the Zionist regime's crimes in Gaza. Societies that no one expected have kicked up a fuss with "pots and pans protests" over the imposed starvation in Gaza. This highlights the depth of the tragedy and genocide; Truly, no words suffice to describe these crimes.

In such a scenario, those societies pressure their governments.



Reformist candidate for Iran's June 28 presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian (c), clenching his fist in a campaign meeting in Tehran, Iran, on June 23, 2024.

● VAHID SALEMI/AP



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Azar Mansouri, the head of Iran's Reformist Front and secretary-general of the Union of Islamic Iran People Party, gives an interview to IRNA on August 1, 2025.

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