

Islamic Parliament of Iran; 6th Term

Preface

The outstanding feature of the sixth parliament was that it was dominated by reformist MPs. The pre-reform Khordad 2 Front (named after the date on the Persian calendar of the landslide victory of President Mohammad Khatami in 1997) won the majority of seats. According to a law adopted by the 5th parliament, the number of MPs in the new parliament rose to 290, from the previous 270.

Ambiance in 6th Election

Number of Hopefuls: 5083

Date of Election: February 18, 2000

Number of Eligible Voters: 38726431

Votes Cast: 26082157

Voter Turnout: 67.35%

Number of First-Round Electees: 211

Number of Second-Round Electees: 63

Date of Runoff: May 5, 2000 (Khajeh Sarvi, 2003:110)

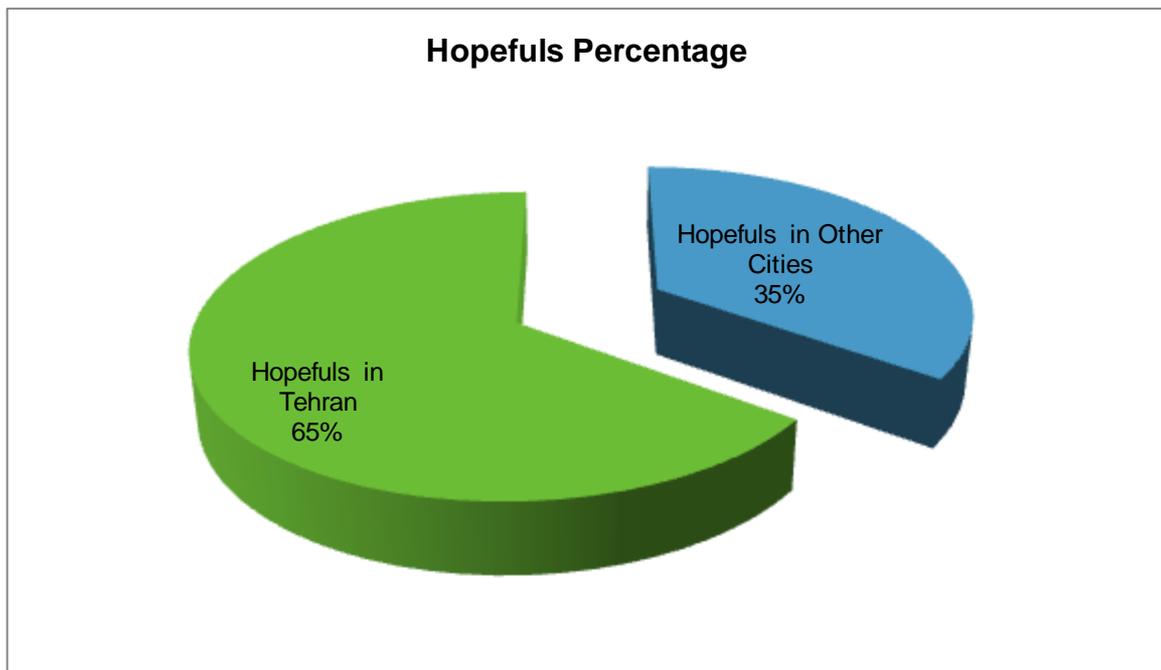
Representative of Armenian Christians in Northern Iran: Leven Davydyan

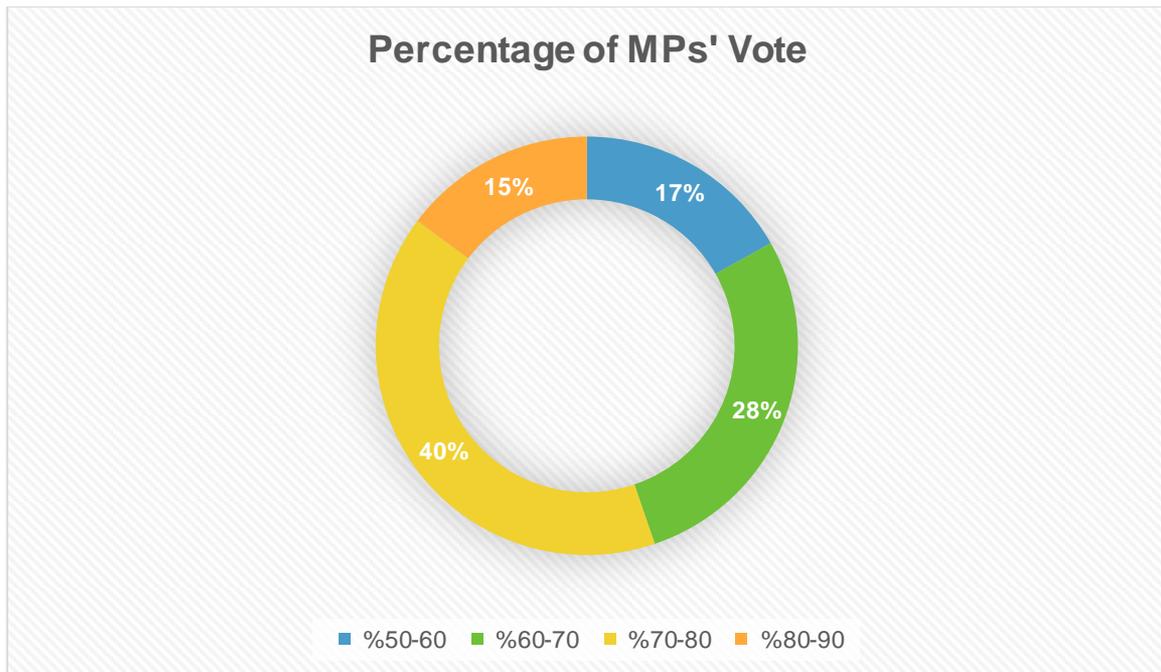
Representative of Armenian Christians in southern Iran: Jorjik Ebramian

Representative of Assyrians: Yonathan Bet Kolia

Representative of Jews: Mauris Motamed

Representative of Zoroastrians: Khosro Dabestani





Dominant Political Atmosphere

- 85% of candidates nominated by the Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF) were elected.
- The IIPF list won 90% of seats in the Tehran constituency.
- The top 18 vote-getters in the 6th parliament mustered more than one million votes.
- The 6th parliament took office under the title of "Khordad 2 Front Alliance" which brought together 18 reformist groups and parties, all loyal to the then reformist president Mohammad Khatami.
- In addition to the IIPF, the Front Following the Line of Imam Khomeini and Supreme Leader¹ and Executives of Construction² were the two leading competitors in the election. (Movasag, 2003:139)

Presiding Board

1. Speaker

- Mehdi Karroubi

2. Vice Speakers

¹ The prominent figure of this current was Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel.

² The prominent figure of this current was Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

- Mohammad Reza Khatami
- Behzad Nabavi

7th Islamic Parliament in a Glance

- Total MPs: 297
- First Session Held on: May 27, 2000
- Number of Women: 123
- Number of Laws Adopted: 396⁴
- Number of Rejected Bills and Motions: 36
- Number of Sessions Held: 433 (Sharei, 2017:121)

MPs Age

Aged Under 30: 3 MPs

Aged 30-35: 10 MPs

Aged 35-40: 12 MPs

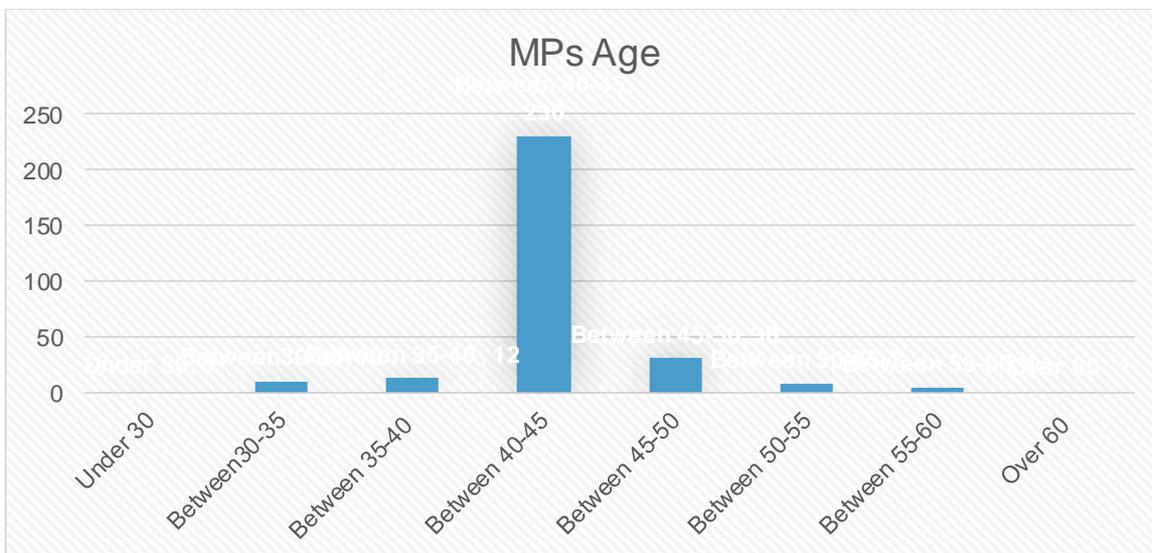
Aged 40-45: 230 MPs

Aged 45-50: 30 MPs

Aged 50-55: 7 MPs

Aged 55-60: 4 MPs

Aged Over 60: 1 MPs (Fawzi, 2008:125)

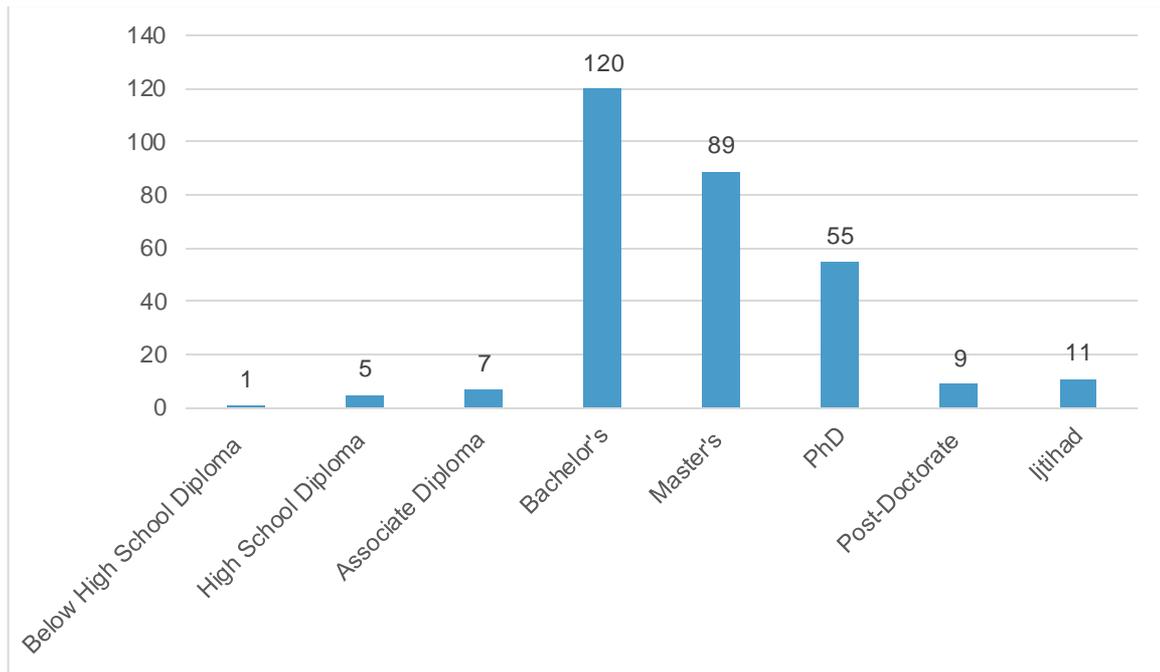


³ Shahrbanoo Amani Anganeh, Soheila Jelodarzadeh, Fatemeh Haqiqatjoo, Fatemeh Khatami, Fatemeh Rakei, Tahereh Rezazadeh, Hamideh Edalat, Vahideh Alaei Taleqani, Jamileh Kadivar, Elaheh Koulaei, Akram Mansourimaneh, and Azam Nasseripour

⁴ Including 88 motions and 308 bills

MPs Education

One MP did not hold a high school diploma, 5 were high school graduates, 7 held associate diploma, 120 bachelor's, 89 master's, 55 PhD, 9 post-doctorate, and 11 were High-Level Degree in Islamic Jurisprudence (Ijtihad), (Fawzi, 2008:105). Some lawmakers held multiple university degrees.



Marking Events

1. Multiple Letters / Statements

During its term in office, the 6th parliament issued 134 letters and statements. Just 22 days after taking office, the legislators signed their first letter to the then head of judiciary Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi. The letter, issued on June 18 by 150 MPs, called on the chief justice to explain the mass closure of the press by the Tehran Justice Department and arbitrary detentions.

The next significant letter was addressed to the Iranian nation. Bearing 148 signatures, it called on the people not to be incited against the Islamic parliament after it shelved deliberations on the press law and instead support their representatives⁵.

The sixth parliament, which used to heap praise on the policies of Ataollah Mohajerani⁶, was its staunch supporter. A group of 190 lawmakers signed a letter, praising Mohajerani⁷.

⁵ This letter was issued when gatherings were held for several days in front of parliament. The demonstrators were protesting the reaction of some lawmakers to the Supreme Leader's state decree.

Again on January 24, 2001, a group of 150 MPs signed a letter to Shahroudi, criticizing the judiciary's performance.

The next letter was addressed to the Guardian Council after some of mid-term parliamentary election hopefuls were disqualified.

And on May 2, 2003, 190 MPs signed a letter to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, offering support for his message on fight against economic corruption.

The lawmakers also wrote a letter to the then president Khatami, giving him pieces of advice about the lineup of his second administration⁸. The most important letter was the one signed by 131 MPs to Ayatollah Khamenei, which was described famously as the "chalice of poison" and drew strong reaction⁹. (Movasaq, 2013:148)

2. Political Offense

The 6th parliament voted in 2001 the political offense bill¹⁰ in 3 chapters and 23 articles. It was a priority of this parliament which sought political development in the country. However, it was shelved due to politically motivated decisions and differences. The Guardian Council struck it down, citing 18 breaches of the Constitution and Islam. (Azimi Dowlatabadi, 2008:140)

3. Forwarding Budget to EC

After the rejection of national budget bill for the calendar year 1380 (March 2002-March 2003), the budget bill was sent to the Expediency Council for arbitration¹¹. (Shadloo, 2007:111)

4. Torture Ban Motion

The 6th parliament voted twice two pieces of legislation banning torture in prison. The first legislation¹² was adopted on May 8, 2002 on second reading. The Guardian Council

⁶ Then minister of culture and Islamic guidance

⁷ This gesture of appreciation came against the backdrop of sharp criticism of Mohajerani's performance by the faithful and scholars.

⁸ In the letter, the lawmakers demanded that women's status be upgraded in the second administration.

⁹ In this letter, some hardline MPs complained about democracy, freedom of expression, and press restrictions.

¹⁰ By virtue of parliament legislation, any action or actions, which are punishable by positive law, committed with political motivation against ruling political establishment, sovereignty of government, political management of the country, the interests of the Islamic Republic or political, social and cultural rights of citizens and legal freedoms, shall amount to political offense.

¹¹ Under the rules of procedure of parliament, bills and motions are sent to the Guardian Council after approval in parliament. The Guardian Council would send them back for reconsideration in case of finding anti-Islamic or anti-Constitutional faults. If parliament sticks with its position and refuses to change the legislation it would be sent to the Expediency Council for a final decision.

dismissed the technicalities as anti-Islamic. On May 23, 2004, the legislation was forwarded to the Expediency Council for final decision. (Azimi Dowlatabadi, 2008:139)

5. Arbitrary Vetting Repeal

The motion on the reversal of arbitrary vetting for employment was first submitted in 1995, but it was reintroduced on September 3, 2000 by a group of lawmakers requiring state-run organs, municipalities, and companies to hire staff based on their scientific qualifications, clean record of ethics, and drug test¹³. (Khajeh Sarvi, 2003:119)

6. Divorce Right for Women

The sixth parliament, in its August 25, 2002 session, adopted on second reading a motion providing a new definition of alimony, modifying regulations on women's share of succession and granting women the right to file divorce¹⁴. But the Guardian Council dismissed it as anti-Islamic. (Azimi Dowlatabadi, 2008:149)

7. Female Students Studying Abroad

On September 27, 2000, the parliament voted the general outlines of a piece of legislation which authorized girls to study abroad. Some grand ayatollahs wrote a letter to the speaker of parliament, criticizing the legislation. The Guardian Council also found faults with it. (Khajeh Sarvi, 2003: 109)

8. Court Jury

A group of 27 lawmakers proposed a fast-track motion to parliament on the establishment of juries in tribunals dealing with press and political affairs. It passed the parliament on October 28, 2001, but it was second back three months later as the Guardian Council found 11 flaws in it. The parliament made some amendments¹⁵ to it and sent it once more to the Guardian Council on April 7, 2002. It was finally signed into law. (Shadloo, 2007:99)

¹² As per this legislation, any bodily harm or torture to extract confessions and holding prisoners in solitary confinement or holding more than two inmates in a solitary cell are evidence of torture and thereby prohibited.

¹³ In their motion, the lawmakers had said that the only criteria for employment must be the Constitution, scientific merits, physical and mental ability, and clean record.

¹⁴ According to provisions of this motion which was approved, women could, like men, file for divorce in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in law.

¹⁵ According to one amendment, members of jury are chosen in any province under the eye of a committee headed by the chairman of provincial Islamic Council and comprised of the chairman of the provincial capital's Islamic Council and the head of provincial justice administration.

9. Twin Bills and MPs Sit-In

The 6th parliament spent much time on twin bills, one of which pertained to enhancing presidential power¹⁶ and the other one was about amendments to Election Law¹⁷. Regarding the presidential authority bill, the Guardian Council insisted on the principle of separation of powers, stipulating that any empowerment must lie within the framework of the Constitution. The twin bills were submitted to the parliament which endorsed the outlines of the election law amendments in November 2002. But the Guardian Council cited provisions in breach of the Constitution. Throughout 2003, the twin bills were exchanged between the parliament and the Guardian Council. In March 2004, the seventh legislative election was held. MPs staged a sit-in to protest the mass disqualification of hopefuls running for parliament. (Khajeh Sarvi, 2003:129)

¹⁶ This bill empowered the president to block illegal actions by state bodies.

¹⁷ In line with this bill, ascertainment of disqualification is required for disqualification and no candidate may be disqualified without citing ascertainment. The authors of this bill maintained that the Guardian Council's vetting process ignored law.

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