

## Poll shows Iranians endorse democracy, but by smaller margin than rest of world

An international opinion poll shows Iranians widely endorse democratic principles, believe the will of the people should be the basis for the authority of government and express a high level of trust in their own government. The poll, conducted by World Public Opinion, surveyed 17,525 people—710 of whom were Iranian—in 19 nations: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Britain, China, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, Palestine, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States. In the 19 nations polled, an average of 85 percent agreed and 52 percent agreed strongly that “the will of the people should be the basis for the authority of government”—a principle enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On average, 74 percent said the “will of the people” should have more influence over how the country is governed than it currently does. The following statistics compare Iranian responses with the other nations polled.

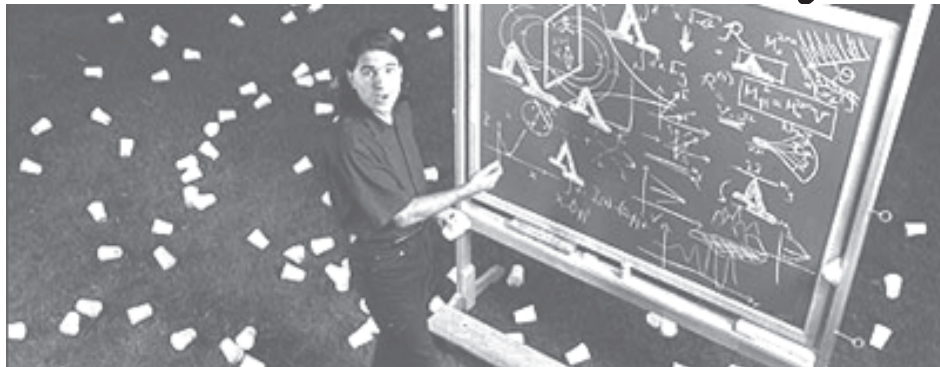
- 67% of Iranians believe the authority of government should be based on the will of the people—compared to the survey average of 85%. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic states that God has “exclusive sovereignty and the right to legislate” and the people must “submit to his commands.”

- When asked how much the will of the people should influence the governing of the country on a 10-point scale, with 10 meaning “com-

pletely,” Iranians gave a collective response of 8.4, slightly higher than the mean of 8.0. When asked to rate how much the country is currently governed by the will of the people, Iranians gave a score of 5.9, significantly higher than the mean response of 4.5. About 75% of total respondents and 59% of Iranians said the will of the people should have a greater influence in governing the country than it currently does. The highest levels of dissatisfaction on this issue were found in Egypt (97%) and Nigeria (89%), however, high levels of dissatisfaction were also found in the U.S. (83%), Britain (77%) and France (73%).

- Iranians expressed higher percentages of trust in their national government than the survey average. Almost half of Iranians (48%) said they trust the national government to do what is right “most of the time,” while an additional 26% said “some of the time,” while 11% said they trust the government “rarely” and 2% said “never.” In 11 of the 17 other countries that were asked the question, clear majorities trusted their governments “only some of the time” or “never.” The report noted that the question was asked “slightly differently” in Iran than in other countries. The poll, conducted from January 10 to March 20, was sponsored by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. Not all questions were posed in every country.

## Irani tries to expand on Einstein's theory



IranTimes: A young Iranian-Canadian physics professor will soon test his revolutionary theory that may extend Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Nima Arkani-Hamed, 36, who was born in the United States to Iranian parents and later became a Canadian citizen, is one of the world's leading thinkers in the field of particle physics. The former Harvard professor's revolutionary ideas about the undiscovered properties of nature will finally be tested this year at Switzerland's Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the world's most powerful particle accelerator. The accelerator, estimated to cost between \$5 billion and \$10 billion, could provide answers to questions that have plagued physicists for decades. Thousands of scientists from around the world are collaborating on the project at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). CNN reported that if the upcoming results confirm any of Arkani-Hamed's predictions, they would be the first addition to known notions of space-time since Einstein. Speaking about the LHC, which operates inside a 17-mile circular tunnel, Arkani-Hamed said, “We're essentially guaranteed that there's going to be something surprising.” Chris Tully, professor of physics at Princeton University, described Arkani-Hamed as a “gem” and said the young physicist is “opening our minds and creating a new world of ideas that challenge deepgrained preconceptions about space-time.” Tully said, “From the point of view of the big experiments at the LHC, there is no amount of money or craftsmanship that would produce the kind of insight that comes from sharing LHC data with a true visionary like Arkani-Hamed.” Arkani-Hamed is currently a faculty member at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, New Jersey, where Einstein worked from 1933 until his death in 1955. Arkani-Hamed “was lured from Harvard to the IAS; I'm sure that's considered quite a coup,” said Daniel Marlow, a physics professor at Princeton. Arkani-Hamed has helped explain how the world can operate according to Einstein's theory of relativity, which describes the universe on a very large scale, and at the same time follow quantum mechanics, laws that explain the universe on a microscopic scale. These clashing theories have produced questions that have plagued physicists for decades. A theory that has emerged in recent decades that claims to offer some answers to physics myster-

ies is called superstring or string theory. Previously, scientists believed that the world's smallest building blocks were particles, but string theory purports the world is composed of tiny vibrating loops called strings. In order for these strings to properly compose our universe, they must vibrate in 11 dimensions. Humans observe three spatial dimensions and one for time, but theoretical models suggest there are at least seven others that remain unobserved. Arkani-Hamed said these dimensions remain unobserved because gravity is the only force that can wander around them; by slamming particles into one another, the LHC may detect particles slipping in and out of the dimensions Arkani-Hamed has worked on describing. Arkani-Hamed, along with physicists Savvas Dimopoulos and Gia Dvali, think some of these unobserved dimensions are larger than previously believed—specifically, as large as a millimeter. Their model is known as the ADD model, named after the first initials of their last names. String theory has come under question because some say it can never be tested; the strings are thought to be smaller than any particle ever detected. But Arkani-Hamed said the LHC could allow for the direct observation of strings, or at least indirect evidence of their existence. Professor Marlow said data reflecting Arkani-Hamed's work on large extra dimensions “would really provide the first confirmation in this very profound way we might think about nature.” Arkani-Hamed said that since he was a child, he has always had a great love and interest of the natural world. Though his parents are also physicists, he considers it his “act of teenage rebellion to become one too,” as his mother wanted him to become a physician. He said he was impressed in his early teens that Newton's laws could enable him to calculate such things as the minimum speed that a space shuttle had to attain to escape the Earth's gravitational field. He'd wondered whether scientists had reached the figure of 11 kilometers per second by trial and error, shooting things in the air until the right speed emerged, until he could calculate it himself. “When I figured out how to do that for myself, I just thought it was the coolest thing—that little old me, scratching away on my piece of paper, could figure this out. From about 13 or 14, I knew that this is what I wanted to do,” Arkani-Hamed said.

## 6 Baha'i leaders carted off to jail

Iran has arrested six leaders of the Baha'i community, asserting the group was detained for security purposes and not because of their faith. Amnesty International released a statement citing the Intelligence Ministry's May 14 arrest of Fariba Kamalabadi-Taefi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naemi, Saeid Rezaei, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm, leaders of a group that managed the Baha'i community's religious and administrative affairs in Iran. Mahvash Sabet, the acting secretary for the group, was previously arrested and has been in detention since March 5. In July 2005, Taefi and Tavakkoli were arrested in Mashhad as they were scheduled to meet with fellow Baha'is to discuss community affairs. Taefi was released on bail in September while Tavakkoli was released in November. Taefi, a member of a coordinating group that oversees course work for Iranian Baha'is who want to study the religion, was also arrested in May 2005 and released on bail in June, one month before her July arrest. Sabet, who lives in Tehran, was summoned to Mashhad by the Intelligence Ministry as part of its investigation into a burial in the city's Baha'i cemetery. She was arrested March 5 and later transferred to Evin prison, where she currently remains. While various coun-

tries and rights groups have condemned the move, citing the arrests as solely due to their Baha'i faith, Gholam-Hossein Elham, the government spokesman, said the arrests were for security purposes and not because of their faith. “The group is an organized establishment linked to foreigners, the Zionists in particular.... Every country must defend its security, and this has nothing to do with ideological issues,” Elham said. U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, “We strongly condemn the May 14 arrests.... This is a clear violation of the Iranian regime's international commitments and obligations to respect international religious freedom norms.” Canada also expressed concern over the matter, calling for their release while condemning what it called an “ongoing decline” in the country's human rights situation. Last month, Canadian Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier said, “These individuals were detained solely on the basis of their faith. This is unacceptable [and] we call on the Iranian authorities to ensure the immediate and safe release of these prisoners.” The recent arrests follow the Iranian Judiciary's sentencing in January of 54 Baha'i members for what it claimed was anti-regime propaganda.

## Man is hanged in public despite ban

Iran has hanged a convicted criminal in public, making it the first known public execution since a January decree banning such executions without prior approval. The latest batch of executions brings the number so far this year to at least 95. Nine drug traffickers were among the latest executed. Without giving any further details, Kayhan reported the nine were hanged—one of them in public—in the northeastern city of Bojnurd. The date of the executions was not reported. This appears to be the first public execution in Iran since Judiciary Chairman Mahmud Hashemi-Shahrudi issued a decree in January banning public executions without his prior approval. It is not known if Shahrudi approved the public execution. The Qods newspaper reported that on May 4 three criminals convicted of kidnapping and raping at least 11 girls were executed in the southwestern city of Ahvaz. And five men

were hanged in Qom last week upon conviction for kidnapping and raping a newlywed, then incinerating her while she was still alive. Amnesty International reported that in 2007 Iran was second only to China in terms of its use of the death penalty—executing 317 people. The total was a sharp increase from the 2006 numbers, when 177 executions were carried out.



## Satrapi sets fire to her cigarette & French law

Marjane Satrapi started out strong as a jury member at the Cannes Film Festival by breaking the law on her very first day. She lit up a cigarette at



a news conference in violation of a new French law. At a kickoff news conference with the nine judges of the film entries, Satrapi lit up a ciga-

rette as the jury members were being introduced, although a law that took effect in January bans smoking in public enclosed spaces. Later, jury chairman Sean Penn was asked if he was enjoying his stay in Cannes so far. He complained about the smoking ban, briefly lit a cigarette in apparent protest and then put it aside. At that point Satrapi, who is usually seen in a swirl of smoke, said, “Some members of this jury, for medical reasons, need to smoke. Do you mind?” and lit up again. Penn and French actress Jeanne Balibar swiftly followed suit and the news conference staggered to a close in a cloud of tobacco smoke. The Cannes Film festival opened last Wednesday and Satrapi, the director of the award-winning animated film “Persepolis,” and fellow jury members have been busily attending screenings of two dozen entries since then.

## Couple told trial was unfair

An Iranian couple in Canada who were convicted of importing opium from the Middle East now face retrial after the provincial Court of Appeals ruled the original trial was unfair. Reza Eshghabadi, 47, and his wife, Ashraf Nabiloo, 39, were originally convicted by a British Columbia jury of importing 3.5 kilograms of opium hidden inside hollow picture frames shipped from the Middle East in 2003. In January, Eshghabadi was sentenced to eight years on charges of importing opium and of possession for the purpose of trafficking; Nabiloo was sentenced to 5 1/2 years after conviction on the same charges. The couple's home is in North Vancouver, which has a large concentration of Iranian-Canadians. The defense immediately appealed the convictions, arguing that Supreme Court Justice David Masuhara allowed Crown counsel Judy Kliever to ask leading questions during the prosecution's cross-examination while insinuating the couple was involved in previous drug-smuggling cases for which they had never charged. Kliever had asked Eshghabadi, who answered through a translator, about an earlier, unrelated shipment of goods from Iran, alleging that it also contained

hidden drugs. The defense objected, but Justice Masuhara allowed it and did not instruct the jury to ignore the suggestions. In a unanimous decision by three appeals court judges, Judge John Hall wrote, “I am unable to comprehend on what basis counsel for the Crown at trial could suggest to the appellant Eshghabadi ... that he had been involved in earlier shipments of drugs when he was not facing charges about any such activity.” Police and customs officials arrested the two in November 2003 after intercepting two shipments at Vancouver International Airport. In both cases, large amounts of opium were concealed inside hollow picture frames. The two shipments were valued at \$77,000 if sold by the kilogram and \$175,000 if sold by the gram. During the trial, defense lawyers Dan Sudeyko and Camran Chaichian argued the two were opium addicts who had no knowledge of the hidden drugs and were framed by a former business partner. The couple immigrated to Canada in 1995 and 1996, and both are now landed immigrants, roughly the equivalent of U.S. green card status. They face possible deportation unless their convictions are overturned.