

You'll Never Believe Who's Making a Political Comeback

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's political career was supposed to be over after he fell out of favor with Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the end of his second term in 2013.

Ahmadinejad, who had brought Iran to the brink of war with the U.S. over its nuclear weapons program, was publicly humiliated by Khamenei in a rift over domestic policy, and was ordered just last year to never run for the presidency again. But, on Tuesday, the firebrand "conservative" leader announced he was, in fact, running for the presidency in a move that Iranian political observers called "an organized mutiny against Iran's ruling system."

"[Khamenei]'s advice does not prevent me from running," he told Iranian media. "There is extensive pressure on me from dear people of different walks of life as their small servant to come to the election."

Under Iran's electoral system, all applicants to run for political office must be vetted by the nation's Guardian Council. That clerical body is expected to announce a final list of candidates on or before April 27 ahead of the May 19 election.

The registration process remains open through Saturday. So far, more than 120 candidates have submitted their names, including six women and seven clerics. Registration remains open until Saturday. The Guardian Council typically does not approve dissidents or women for the official candidate list.

The election was supposed to be a national referendum on the nuclear agreement with the U.S., but with little improvement seen in the lives of many everyday Iranians, it could become a referendum on their entire form of government. Ahmadinejad's

appearance on the ballot will certainly complicate matters, particularly for “reformist” President Hassan Rouhani, the supposed “moderate” leader who’s government negotiated the nuclear deal.

A return to a more hard-line government, despite the Supreme Leader’s attempt to prevent it, could signal trouble for the U.S., Israel, and the entire Middle East. {eo}