



Iran's late president Ebrahim Raisi (C) meets with Palestinian resistance leaders, commanders, and intellectuals in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on May 4, 2023, while foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is sitting to Raisi's immediate left.

Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi (1960-2024)

Born in the Iranian city of Mashhad, a key religious location in the country and home to the Imam Reza shrine, Ebrahim Raisi was educated from around the age of 15 at the renowned Qom religious seminary and went on to study under several important Islamic scholars of the time.

A child of a clerical family, Raisi would join the protests that culminated in the birth of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 when the Iranian people overthrew the UK-US-installed dictator, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

What is often not pointed out is the centrality of the Palestinian cause to the popular revolt that overthrew the tyrannical Iranian monarch, not only in terms of the references made to Palestine within the revolutionary movement itself but also in terms of the Palestine Liberation Organization's training of groups of revolutionaries.

Receiving his doctorate in Islamic Jurisprudence and Law at the Shahid Motahari University, Ebrahim Raisi would quickly be promoted, aged 25, to be the deputy prosecutor of Tehran.

Inside Iran, while there were a range of opposition parties and individual voices against him, he was seen in much of the country as a man of the people who would travel frequently to the poorest areas of the nation. For this reason, many speculated that he would potentially be in line to replace Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

When elected to power in 2021, Ebrahim Raisi ran as a religiously conservative candidate and won on a platform of economic reform. In Western media he was labeled a "hardliner" or "conservative", which had to do mostly with two key aspects of his orientation as a politician, his foreign policy approach and his religious approach. The term conservative in Iran is only befitting to the religio-social aspect, however, as those described with the term often pursue

socialist economic policies and have little to do with conservatives in the West.

On the foreign policy front, Ebrahim Raisi was focused on an "Eastern pivot", leaving behind attempts to align Iran with the West. This meant building on Tehran's ties with Moscow and Beijing and joining the BRICS economic alliance and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The other key aspect of Iran's new foreign policy was adopting a more resolute stance towards the issue of regional resistance to Israel and US hegemony.

Iran, under Raisi, would focus on developing a stronger deterrence equation when it came to their "shadow war" with the Israelis. Tehran also advocated more frequently on behalf of the Palestinian people, developed its relationship with Hamas further, and sought to combat the US-planned Saudi-Israeli normalization deal that became a primary foreign policy goal until October 7.

After October 7, Ebrahim Raisi was the most resolutely pro-Palestinian voice at the Arab-Islamic summit that was triggered by the war in Gaza, calling on all nations involved to sanction Israel for their crimes against the Palestinian people and spoke in support of the armed struggle against the occupation.

It was also under president Raisi's rule that the Islamic Republic launched its first-ever direct attack against Israel from Iranian territory, which came in retaliation for Israel having bombed the consular segment of Iran's embassy in Damascus, Syria.

Throughout the war on Gaza, Iran has been one of the most vocal states against Israel's genocide and has advanced its confrontational approach to Israel, whereby it coordinates with its allies Hezbollah, the PMU, and Ansarullah to aid the Palestinian resistance in Gaza.

During president Raisi's last speech, delivered in Azerbaijan, he turned his attention to the is-



Martyr President