



Iran: We Have Five Years to Grow the Population

OE Watch Commentary: It has become fashionable in both journalistic and diplomatic accounts to discuss the youth bulge in the Middle East. But while Arab states like Egypt and Iraq have baby booms and a population whose median age is declining, after the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, Iran saw one of the world's sharpest declines in birth rates. Indeed, the Iranian birthrate today is less than half of what it was in the period immediately following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This is likely why Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has delivered at least two major speeches over the past few years highlighting the need to reverse declining birth rates and to combat Iran's high divorce rate, which leads many women to forego having children or prevents them from having larger families.

The excerpted article from the hardline *Fars News Agency* suggests that Khamenei's past entreaties have not worked and Iran is now facing a demographic crisis and has a limited time—perhaps just four or five years—to reverse it. Parliamentarian Hojjatoleslam Hossein Mirzaei sounded the alarm and outlined a plan to remedy it, including free land, subsidies, a national fund to support childrearing, and health support in order to encourage younger Iranians to have children and pull Iran back from a demographic precipice. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“If this golden time is lost, we will definitely see a crisis.”

Source: “Ozu-ye Komisiyon-e Farhang-e Majles: 5 Sal Bara-ye Rashad Jome’at-e Farsat Darim (Member of the Parliamentary Cultural Commission: We have five years to grow the population),” *Fars News Agency*, 5 November 2020. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/13990815000417>

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The Azad News Agency has conducted an interview with Hojjatoleslam Hossein Mirzaei, a member of the parliament's cultural commission, the important parts of which are as follows: If the fertility rate in the country does not reach the replacement level, the population will gradually age and thousands of problems will arise for the entire population. The goal of the population youth plan and family support is to prevent that until we reach a critical point in the population debate. There are 4 to 5 years of opportunities to help fertility and population growth in the country. If this golden time is lost, we will definitely see a crisis.



Hojjatoleslam Hossein Mirzaei.

Source: FarsNews.ir, https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1399/08/12/13990812000841_Test_PhotoN.jpg