



**'Zionist'
methods used
to kill Iran
scientist:
Ahmadinejad
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Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Thursday "Zionist" methods were used in the bombing of a top atomic scientist, as angry mourners chanting anti-US and anti-Israeli slogans buried the slain professor.

"One can see the level of the enemy's grudge in the way he was assassinated. The method of bombing was a Zionist one," the *Mehr* news agency quoted Ahmadinejad as saying. It did not elaborate.

Massoud Ali Mohammadi, a particle physics professor at prestigious Tehran University, died when a bomb strapped to a motorbike was triggered by remote control as he was leaving his home on Tuesday morning.

"He was a Hezbollahi and pious university professor serving his people," Ahmadinejad said in a speech in Khuzestan province, using a term indicating a person's dedication to the Islamic republic's regime.

"The enemies by killing the elite cannot take away the knowledge from the Iranian nation," the president added.

Iranian officials have accused the CIA and Mossad, the intelligence agencies respectively of the United States and Israel, of having a hand in the murder of the atomic scientist.

A senior Israeli official in Jerusalem, who asked not to be named, declined to respond to Ahmadinejad's accusation, saying that "Israel consistently refuses to comment on such issues."

Nuclear energy 'our right'

In Tehran, several thousand mourners joined a funeral procession from Ali Mohammadi's home in an affluent northern neighbourhood to a nearby shrine, an *AFP* correspondent said.

Around 100 policemen were deployed in the area during the procession and burial.

Relatives and members of the elite Revolutionary Guards placed the body of Ali Mohammadi in an ambulance which then carried it for burial at the shrine.

A military marching band led the procession followed by hundreds of mourners, many of whom were chanting "Death to Israel" and "Death to America."

Mourners also chanted slogans against the so-called "hypocrites" - the Islamic republic's term for the outlawed People's Mujahedeen which some have accused of having had a hand in the assassination, despite its denials.

Some chanted that "nuclear energy is our undeniable right" in an allusion to accusations by Iranian officials that the killing was an attempt by Western powers to disrupt Iran's controversial nuclear programme.



New sanctions

Veto-wielding UN Security Council members Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, plus Germany are to meet over the weekend in New York to consider new sanctions against Tehran over its nuclear programme.

The media advisor to Ahmadinejad, meanwhile, told *AFP* that the United States, Britain and Israel were "high on the list of suspects" for the murder of Ali Mohammadi.

"Our security and intelligence apparatus are pursuing those behind the blast to bring them to justice as soon as possible," said Ali Akbar Javanfekr.

"America, Britain and Israel have the most animosity towards our scientific progress, especially the nuclear programme, so when our scientists are targeted they become high on the list of suspects," he said.

Similar allegations by other Iranian officials of US involvement in the attack have been dismissed out of hand by Washington.

Neither the Iranian police nor the intelligence services have yet reported any leads in their investigation on the murder.

The political affiliation of the murdered scientist remains unclear.

People close to him have stressed his close links with the elite Revolutionary Guards, where he seems to have worked for more than 20 years until 2003.

Official media and regime hardliners have referred to him as "a revolutionary teacher who was martyred."

But several opposition websites said Ali Mohammadi was among the academics whose name appeared in a June letter supporting Mir Hossein Mousavi, the defeated presidential election candidate and current opposition leader.

At a distance from the funeral procession in Tehran, a group of about 300 people tried to follow in silence but was dispersed by police without incident.

- *AFP*

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