

## Senior Iran official predicts imminent demise of Gulf state royals

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NICOSIA &mdash; Iran expects the Gulf states to undergo a major crisis in 2009.

A senior official said the states would face what he termed a crisis in "legitimacy." He said both Sunni and Shi'ite nationals would challenge the pro-Western Gulf Arab monarchies.

"Soon another crisis will grip the Persian Gulf area, and that is the legitimacy crisis of the monarchies and traditional systems in the region," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mohammadi said.

Mohammadi's remarks were reported by Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency amid rising GCC criticism of Teheran's policy in the Gulf. This was the first time in years that Iran raised the prospect of the downfall of the GCC.

In a June 26 address to a conference of the Basij paramilitary force, Mohammadi predicted a rapid decline of the six GCC member states, several of which have large Shi'ite populations. The deputy foreign minister said he doubted whether the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) could quell rising domestic unrest fueled by a U.S. military presence.

"The next crisis, predicted to cover mainly the Persian Gulf, is the crisis of legitimacy of the monarchies and traditional systems, which considering current circumstances cannot survive," Mohammadi, responsible for the ministry's research department, said.

"Such suspicious comments do not at all help build trust among states of the region," GCC secretary-general Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah said on Aug. 7. "They can only stoke conflicts and drag the region into a cycle of dangerous crises."

In 2007, a senior pro-regime Iranian cleric asserted that Bahrain was part of Iran. Bahrain, rocked by rising unrest over the last two years, contains a Shi'ite majority.

Al Attiyah warned that GCC members would resist any Iranian attack in the Gulf. He did not elaborate.

"Those who believe that the current circumstances enable them to expand and exercise control at the expense of the interests of others are mistaken," Al Attiyah said.

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