

# Mohammad Eslami: Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Director

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**Table of Contents**

*Career in military and aviation* .....3

*Director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran*.....3

*What we can expect from Eslami*.....4

## *Mohammad Eslami*

In August 2021, [President Ebrahim Raisi](#) appointed Mohammad Eslami to serve as Director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). Eslami has held leadership positions in the defense, aviation, and engineering sectors, but lacks direct experience in the nuclear energy field. In 2008, the United Nations [designated](#) Eslami while he served as director of the Defense Industries Training and Research Institute as “a person linked to Iran’s proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or development of nuclear weapons delivery.”

## *Career in military and aviation*

Born in 1956 in Esfahan, Eslami [acquired](#) a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from the Detroit University of Michigan in 1979, according to his biography in Iranian media. That may be a mistaken reference to a University of Michigan campus. He subsequently earned a master’s degree from Ohio University in 1981. Little else is known about his time in the United States, which coincided with the Iranian revolution and resulting hostage crisis.

Although not much is known about Eslami’s whereabouts in the early to late 1980s, he [emerged](#) as acting deputy for the Defense Industries Organization's engineering and development projects, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), from 1987 to 1995e, and undertook the development and production of military equipment. From 1995 to 2003, he served as the managing director of the Iran Aviation Manufacturing Company, and then from 2003 to 2004, as deputy of the Aerospace Industries Organization. Eslami was [awarded](#) an MBA in aviation management from Canada’s Royal Rhoades University in 2004 and held the position of director of the Defense Industries Training and Research Institute from 2004-2008. It was in that position that he was [sanctioned](#) by the UN in 2008.

Following his position at the Defense Industries Training and Research Institute, Eslami was [appointed](#) governor of the northern Mazandaran Province by the Rouhani administration. After holding this position until 2017, he was [appointed](#) Roads and Urban Development Minister, following the resignation of Abbas Akhoundi in 2018. Throughout his career, Eslami’s has held other [prominent](#) positions, including chairman of the board of directors of the National Construction Company and Iran Housing and Civil Company, which are affiliated with the [Mostazafan Foundation](#), a conglomerate under control of the Supreme Leader.

## *Director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran*

In 2021, Eslami was [appointed](#) by President Ebrahim Raisi as Director of the AEOI, despite his lack of expertise in the field. As a result of his inexperience, faced a steep learning curve in the nuclear agency.

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Fereydoon Abbasi, a former AEOI director and current member of parliament, [praised](#) Eslami as a figure who has had “a very positive experience in training, research leading to products, and executive management at the national level, which signal correct implementations of the system’s nuclear strategies.”

Despite this inexperience, Eslami has fulfilled the Islamic Republic’s goals of [expanding](#) its nuclear infrastructure. Under Eslami’s leadership, the Iranian uranium enrichment activities have [rapidly expanded](#), enriching uranium up to 60% by 2023. That year, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors [found](#) that the IAEO had enriched particles of uranium over 83%, just shy of the 90% weapons grade. Beginning in January of 2024, regime officials including [Eslami confirmed](#) that the AEOI now has the capacity to develop nuclear weapons, while [deceptively](#) claiming that they do not intend to do so. Recent comments made by Eslami and other senior Islamic Republic officials on weaponization, which have become more frequent, suggest the regime is seeking to normalize the idea of a nuclear weapon among its social base. Such comments are also aimed at testing the international response, not least the reaction of the United States and European powers. The IAEA has [complained](#) about a lack of transparency from Iran, including restrictions on international inspections. The IAEA has also raised [serious concern](#) about comments made by senior Iranian officials implying nuclear weapon preparation. This indicates suspicious activity, and demonstrates that the Islamic Republic feels emboldened enough to flaunt strides made by its nuclear program.

## *What we can expect from Eslami*

As Eslami’s tenure leading the AEOI continues, it is likely that the nuclear program will [accelerate](#), should the United States and the international community fail to implement adequate deterrence and non-proliferation enforcement. As the Islamic Republic [nears](#) nuclear capability, the regime may become increasingly emboldened in its actions. Eslami will remain at the forefront of these efforts, and may attempt to obfuscate them – particularly if IAEA [pressure](#) increases.