

Leader's Hajj message:

Renunciation must go beyond Hajj

Muslim states must tighten noose around Israel



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the renunciation of the Israeli regime and the United States must continue "beyond time and place of Hajj to all Muslim countries and cities across the world" due to their months-long genocide against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip. In his annual Hajj message, Ayatollah Khamenei called on millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the globe who started performing their rituals in Mecca on Saturday to demonstrate their "renunciation of the Zionist regime and its supporters, in particular the US, in words and actions."

The Leader said this year's issue of renunciation of the polytheists or bara'at in Qur'anic terms is more significant than ever before as "the tragedies in Gaza, which are unparalleled in

our contemporary history, along with the audacity of the ruthless Zionist regime, which is the embodiment of cruelty and villainy, and of course the declining state of Zionism, leave no room for any consideration or tolerance by any individual, party, government or Muslim denomination." Ayatollah Khamenei also underlined that the "ironclad resistance" of Palestinians in Gaza "must be fully supported in every way." The following is the full text of the Leader's message to the 2024 Hajj pilgrims:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the best of creation, our Master Muhammad al-Mustafa, and upon his Pure Progeny, upon his chosen Companions



An aerial view of Kaaba as Muslim pilgrims perform rituals at the Grand Mosque ahead of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia on June 11.

● REUTERS

and upon those who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment.

The appealing Abrahamic call, which by God's command summons all human beings in all eras to the Kaaba during the time of Hajj, has once again this year, attracted the hearts of a number of Muslims from around the world to this center of tawhid and unity.

It has created this magnificent, diverse gathering of a multitude of people, revealing the human spectrum and spiritual power of Islam both to itself and to others. When one contemplates this

magnificent gathering and the complex Hajj rituals, they are a source of reassurance and increase the confidence for the Muslims, while being intimidating and a cause of trepidation for enemies and for ill-wishers.

It should not come as a surprise if the enemies and ill-wishers of the Islamic Ummah attempt to ruin and sow doubts about both of these aspects of the Hajj - whether it is by accentuating denominational and political differences, or by trying to diminish the importance of its sacred and spiritual aspects.

The Quran introduces Hajj as a manifestation of worship, dhikr [remembering God], humbleness and the equal dignity of all human beings. [It introduces Hajj as] a manifestation of a human being's organized material and spiritual life, a manifestation of blessings and guidance, and a manifestation of moral peace and harmony between [religious] brothers in practice. And [the Quran introduces Hajj as] a manifestation of repugnance and the establishment of a powerful front against the enemies.

Reflection on the verses related to Hajj and contemplation on the acts and rituals of this unparalleled obligation, reveal these matters and similar secrets and mysteries as these that exist within the intricate arrangement that constitutes Hajj.

Brothers and sisters, as pilgrims undertaking Hajj, you are currently in a place where you can practice these truths and luminous teachings. Bring your thoughts and actions closer and closer to these, and bring back to your homes a reformed identity infused with these lofty con-

cepts. This is the valuable, real souvenir of your Hajj journey.

This year, the issue of bara'at [renunciation of the polytheists] is more significant than ever before. The tragedies in Gaza, which are unparalleled in our contemporary history, along with the audacity of the ruthless Zionist regime, which is the embodiment of cruelty and villainy, and of course the declining state of Zionism, leave no room for any consideration or tolerance by any individual, party, government or Muslim denomination. This year's renunciation of the polytheists must continue beyond the time and place of Hajj to all Muslim countries and cities worldwide. It must continue beyond just the Hajj pilgrims and be extended to the general populace.

This renunciation of the Zionist regime and its supporters, in particular the government of the United States of America, must be demonstrated in the words and actions of nations and governments, and it must impede the actions of the murderers.

The ironclad resistance of Palestine and the patient, respected people of Gaza - whose remarkable patience and resistance have earned them admiration and respect globally - must be fully supported in every way.

I implore God for their complete and swift victory. And for you dear pilgrims, I pray that your Hajj will be accepted. May the prayers of the Remnant of God on earth [Imam Mahdi (may our souls be sacrificed for him)] be with you.

May Allah's greetings and mercy be upon you.

A 'competitive election' ...

Therefore, I believe that the media should help guide people to acquire a better understanding of the country's issues and the capabilities of the presidential hopefuls, and not be heavily influenced by the emotional and sensational atmosphere of electoral campaigns.

It appears that economic hardships are a main source of concern for both the candidates and the public. Do you believe that economic issues could emerge as a central point of contention in the competition and electoral debates?

Understanding the primary needs of society at this stage is essential. Economic problems and having a plan to address them will definitely be one of the main topics in the election. However, I believe the root of the existing economic obstacles lies in the quality of management. That is, if management improves and, for example, a candidate with significant managerial experience at various levels becomes president, they can recruit experienced and expert managers. If management improves, then it will have its effects on other areas such as the economy, culture, politics, and social issues. Therefore, it is important to know what the primary needs of society are and which candidate can better respond to these needs, meaning to meet those requirements with robust and expert management.

The candidates' televised campaign has begun. Given the time constraints, it appears that the state-run TV can play a crucial role in the competition. Can these programs assist in familiarizing people with the candidates and their programs?

It can help or it may not. It depends on the candidates' performance in the electoral debates. If the campaign programs broadcasted by the national TV and watched by many viewers tend towards sensational controversies, attacks, and revelations against each other, the atmosphere will definitely become polarized, overshadowing the programs and capabilities of the candidates within it. However, if the candidates adhere to political ethics and focus more on introducing themselves and their programs, it can help people get to know them.

Presidential hopefuls outline blueprints ahead of June 28 vote

With Iran's snap presidential election set for June 28, candidates are in the midst of intense campaigning, making every effort to impress voters.

Six hopefuls - Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Masoud Pezeshkian, Saeed Jalili, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, and Alireza Zakani - have successfully completed the Guardian Council's vetting process and been approved by the country's 12-member election supervisory body.

On the second day of televised roundtables on Friday, the nominees showcased their plans while fielding tough questions from panel experts.

Also, five live, televised debates on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) are set to begin as of June 17.

In separate televised appearances on Friday, the presidential hopefuls further explained their strategies and proposals concerning crucial areas like the economy, culture, and foreign policy.

In a live televised roundtable, Qazizadeh Hashemi, the head of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs and a former lawmaker, unveiled his cultural blueprint for the country, placing "family" at the nucleus of his strategic vision, Press TV reported. Saeed Jalili, the former nuclear negotiator and former head of the Supreme National Security Council, accompanied by two advisors, participated in a 90-minute discussion focused on foreign policy issues.

Jalili stressed the importance of leveraging "global opportunities" while miti-

gating threats through collaborative and diplomatic engagements with nations worldwide.

Mostafa Pourmohammadi was next to appear on state TV in an hour-long program, presenting his vision as a potential leader of the Islamic Republic.

Emphasizing his campaign theme centered around fostering societal "well-being," Pourmohammadi stressed the multifaceted advancement of society in areas encompassing "culture, economy, and scientific development." Masoud Pezeshkian, another presidential candidate and former health minister, unveiled a narrative steeped in his personal insights and national service that underscored his commitment to the Islamic Republic. A seasoned parliamentarian, Pezeshkian articulated a vision of empowerment, heralding the "potential embedded within every individual across the nation" as a catalyst for national advancement.

A 90-minute live roundtable discussion unfolded in the presence of a seasoned politician and the speaker of the Iranian parliament, Qalibaf. Delving into the economic realm, Qalibaf underscored his dedication to realizing the objectives outlined in the Seventh National Development Plan, lauding it as a robust blueprint for national advancement.

Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani, who appeared on the IRIB at 22:00 local time, unveiled his economic strategies and blueprint for realizing the objectives outlined in the Seventh National Development Plan.

Ex-Iranian official Hamid Nouri released from Swedish prison

Hamid Nouri, a former Iranian Judiciary official, who had been illegally incarcerated in Sweden on politically-motivated charges, was released from prison.

Welcomed by Head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi, he arrived in Tehran on Saturday.

Iran's top human rights official had earlier announced Nouri's release on his X account.

"I am delighted to inform the esteemed nation of Iran that Mr. Hamid Nouri, who has been under detention in Sweden since 2019, has been released and will be returning to our country within a few hours," Gharibabadi said, Press TV reported.

He also attributed this success to the efforts of his colleagues in the Judiciary, the Ministry of Intelligence, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly late foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. In a message on Saturday, Nouri's son also announced the release of his father from a prison in Sweden.

"On the eve of the Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadir festivals, after 1,680 days of captivity, the tireless efforts of our resolute and courageous officials have paid off, and my father, Hamid Nouri, is about to return to Iran," Majid Nouri said.

Nouri was arrested upon arrival at Stockholm Airport in November 2019 and was immediately imprisoned. He has been illegally jailed for three and a half years in solitary confinement in Sweden.

He was put on trial on unfounded allegations staged against him by elements representing the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist group that has openly boasted about carrying out terrorist operations against Iranian officials and civilians perceived to be supporters of the government.

A Swedish court sentenced Nouri to life imprisonment in 2022. The court, which was described by Iran as illegitimate in the first place, convicted Nouri of "war crimes and crimes against humanity" entirely based on claims made by MKO



● MIZAN

terrorists living in exile across Europe.

Sweden's Appeal Court then upheld the verdict in December 2023. Nouri himself has vehemently denied the charges brought against him in the case while calling them fabricated.

Meanwhile, a Swedish EU diplomat and another Swede held in Iran have been released and were on a flight home to Sweden, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said on Saturday, AFP reported.

Johan Floderus, who had been held in Iran since April 2022 accused of espionage, and Saeed Azizi, who was arrested in November 2023, were on their way home," Kristersson said.

In any case, the country is grappling with a range of issues, and candidates are offering different pledges to tackle them. Are you optimistic that these elections will pave the way for economic growth and resolution of current challenges?

I see a major weakness in the country that has led to problems in various areas, which is the quality of management. If we can strengthen management, we can make better use of facilities. We do not have a serious lack of resources; with professional and scientific management, we can overcome these problems with the existing resources. For example, a dualism has emerged among the political currents, some saying that the root of the problems lies in foreign sanctions, while others argue that sanctions have no impact on the country's status. I do not deny the pressure and negative effects of sanctions, but I believe that a more important issue than sanctions is the poor quality of management in the country, which has become problematic. Even during this period of sanctions, we have examples of highly-qualified managers who have been able to improve the conditions in their relevant areas. Therefore, it is important for people to choose a candidate with high managerial abilities rather than a candidate who lacks robust management skills but has a raucous election campaign. If we improve management, other problems will also be resolved along the way.