

of a society's level of development. It's not about disrespecting or insulting someone who doesn't think like me, or doing something that makes them uncomfortable with our behavior. What can bring us together in a country or region is mutual respect for each other's beliefs and faiths. If a group tries to undermine or belittle someone else's beliefs, conflict will start. We shouldn't let that happen, and if it does, it's because we're not yet aware or capable of respecting each other's beliefs. When people are alone in a society, they can do whatever they want, but when they're together, they must behave within a framework that everyone agrees on, or else conflicts will arise within the society.

**So, what is your message to those Iranian women who are protesting against being forced to wear the hijab, the same women who protested after Mahsa Amini's death?**

When the incident happened to Mahsa Amini, I was one of those who protested. I was even invited to the state TV and I, as a member of Parliament at the time, protested against the behavior that had occurred, and as a result, I was criticized by those who were involved in the incident. Even in the recent parliamentary elections, my candidacy was not approved because of some of the views I hold.

Of course, the supreme Leader does not share the view that those incidents occurred in society. The harsh behavior of some people led to a social backlash, and naturally, that belief must be shaped in society based on ethics and practical behavior, not through force and conflict.

We must make people behave with awareness, not try to impose something through force. This is what we

**Does this mean that you want not just the people but also the government and security forces to change their behavior, so that if a protest occurs in society, the security forces will not use violence?**

Of course, we do not have the right to treat people with violence. Our government's slogan for all ministers and officials is to preserve the dignity of the people. We are currently under intense pressure from the US and Europe, and America is actually dealing with anyone who wants to make a deal with us. In the meantime, the Zionist regime is also provoking to bring war and insecurity to the region.

While we want to reform ourselves and our society, they are provoking to start a fight, and on the surface, they say they want peace and tranquility.

We have just received news that 490 people have been martyred in the bombing in Lebanon, and over 1,200 people are injured. This is the behavior of the Zionist regime, and this is the American approach. But no matter how much the US sanctions us, our behavior towards each other within the country has nothing to do with the sanctions.

Whoever comes to us and we need to provide a service, we must do it with respect, not with conflict and violence. This is what I have told the ministers and officials, and our evaluation of our forces is based on this principle. We have emphasized that even if we cannot do many things, we must explain it to the people with respect and kindness, and apologize for not being able to do something. This is the reform we want to create in ourselves as executives.

We don't have the right to treat people badly. If we have problems and are struggling, that's no excuse to

and if the Zionist regime didn't expel people from their homes and land, then let's see what the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, and others would do. If someone kicks you out of your home, how would you react? A group of people have been expelled from their homes, and Gaza has been turned into a large prison where people are not allowed to go anywhere, do anything, or make any connections. Even medicine, food, and equipment cannot be delivered there. If people are imprisoned in a large place, how long can they tolerate it and not protest or react?

If the Zionist regime stops its atrocities, I think many of the factors that you mention are causing instability will be eliminated.

As for how we can improve our relations with our neighbors, it's simple. We don't have any disputes with our neighbors, our security is their security, and their security is our security. We don't think about creating instability in any country, because if our neighboring countries become unstable, our country will also become unstable tomorrow.

We need to work together to solve regional issues, not just security and terrorism, but also environmental, economic, and social issues. If we work together, we can solve our problems, and we have started this process. We have met with leaders of several [regional] countries and will meet with leaders of other countries. We will definitely visit all countries in the region and neighboring countries, talk to them, and invite them to cooperate. Their territorial integrity and sovereignty are respected by us, and our territorial integrity and sovereignty must also be respected by them. Scientific, economic, cultural, environmental, and mutual capacities are things that we can share and help each other with.

We want to create a society together that puts the slogan of peace and development of the United Nations into practice. Unfortunately, many of the slogans that are given on these platforms are just words, and people say one thing in public and do another thing behind the scenes.

**The Houthis, beyond their reaction to Israel's attacks on Gaza, have been creating insecurity in the region for years, disrupting maritime traffic and reducing the income of some countries, such as Egypt. They have done this with the support of Iran. Will you help to resolve this situation?**

We didn't do this. We will cooperate with anyone who cooperates with us. Iran has a relationship with them, and also with Hezbollah, because they are under pressure. They're also bullying them, trying to kick them out of their homes, and they're just defending themselves. But the fact that they want to make the waterways insecure is unacceptable to us.

Currently, I don't have accurate information about this issue, but in my opinion, if the Zionist regime stops doing what it's doing in the region, the situation will change. Today, even countries like Saudi Arabia are negotiating and resolving their problems. We can resolve our problems through dialogue, not with guns. What they used to do was bomb them every day. They had hired people to force them to do what they wanted, but the Houthis were defending themselves. Now, they are sitting down and talking, and they can resolve their problems through dialogue.

We can resolve many of our problems through dialogue. It doesn't make sense for humans to fight each other. We shouldn't trample on each other's rights, but if the other side is being greedy, we need

to stand up to them.

The United Nations was established to resolve conflicts, and we humans can sit down and talk and resolve our problems. But we're not doing that.

The great powers have multiple bases in the region. They are taking the oil, resources, and facilities. Imagine if there was no oil and gas in this region, would anyone be fighting? Would anyone be defending one side or the other? The resources in this region have turned it into a land of fire, where humans are pitted against each other, so that a group

prevent them from attacking our country so easily. So, we will do whatever it takes to prevent them from attacking our country or taking our land.

We also want to resolve our internal differences. All those who live in our country have the right to participate in politics and decision-making, whether they are women or men, religious or non-religious, Shia or Sunni. We will resolve these issues within ourselves and with our neighbors, and we want to help them, and we want to make peace with the world. We are not at odds



↑ Palestinians bury the bodies of people, who were killed in the Gaza war, during a mass funeral in Rafah, Gaza Strip, on Jan. 30, 2024.  
● FATIMA SHBAIR/AP

can take these resources and carry them off. But what do the countries in the region get from these resources? War and bloodshed.

**You said you are willing to resume nuclear talks and return to a form of the JCPOA, but the US has not yet taken a formal stance on this. If the US is not interested in this, what is your strategy?**

This was the US that first withdrew from the JCPOA. We want to tell the world that we are not seeking nuclear bombs. The US is lying when it says that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. The US is spreading false information about us to the world. We had accepted the JCPOA and were implementing it. If we were seeking nuclear weapons, as the Americans claim, we would not have accepted the JCPOA. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has had the most inspections in Iran, and in practice, they have seen that we have acted within the framework. If we wanted to pursue nuclear weapons, we would not have come to negotiate.

We want to negotiate so that we don't fight. They want to imply to the world that we want to make the world insecure, but we don't want to do that. We won't get anywhere with war, but we can reform ourselves in security. But the US doesn't want us to be secure.

It's possible that in any country, there are problems and differences that lead to protests. Instead of helping, they encourage the protests to bring down the political system. This is a sign of what? They are pouring fuel on the fire, making the region insecure so that they can do their job. Division is not in anyone's interest. If the US wants to create peace in the region, we are seeking peace. We have no designs on any country's territory. Look at history, Iran has not attacked any country in the past 200 years. We are not seeking to attack any country, and if we produce arms and missiles, it's to defend ourselves. When Saddam Hussein attacked us and bombed our cities, and the Americans and Europeans supported him, we were defenseless.

Eventually, we must be able to defend ourselves, and in order to do that, we need to have the power to

with anyone.

Unfortunately, some people want to fight and the words and slogans they use are lies. I don't know how to say it anymore that we don't want to fight! What language can we use to say that we are not seeking nuclear bombs and just want to grow and live in peace and security with everyone? I understand that in this world we live in, we are not alone, and it's not worth it for humans to fight each other for a short time. The value of human beings is higher than that. If we can just understand this, we won't fight each other and we will help each other to enjoy life. We will help each other to make the most of this opportunity that God and the universe have given us to live on this earth for a short time.

**People know you as a moderate, do you consider yourself a reformist and do you use these terms to describe yourself?**

I have a principle, a principle that I believe in is justice, fairness, and equality. I have a criterion for this justice, I am a university-educated person, and therefore I accept justice and equality based on scientific facts and evidence.

To achieve this justice and equality in society, whether in the region we live in or in the world, we need reforms. It's not possible to expect change just by talking.

In every society, the rights of some people are ignored, and in the lands we live in, justice is not present in many places. As a human being, I believe that the rights of all people, regardless of their gender, race, or beliefs, must be restored. This is not just my personal belief, but it's also a divine command. The Qur'an says, "Stand up for justice and fairness, and do not let the evil actions of one group prevent you from doing so." We, as human beings, believe in these principles and need reforms to align ourselves with them. We want to be good people and want to treat others based on their rights and dignity. Others should also treat us based on our rights and dignity. If we create a world like this, it will be a good world, and war and bloodshed will disappear. It's the greed and totalitarianism that pits humans against each other.



↑ Smoke billows over southern Lebanon following an Israeli strike, as seen from Tyre, Lebanon September 26, 2024.  
● REUTERS

are trying to do in the government and administrative system, to create a common language and perspective among ourselves and with those we interact with. Of course, this will take time and effort, and changing behavior is not something that can be fixed in just one or two years.

Scientifically, changing behavior may take a decade or more to align our beliefs with our behavior and act on it. The work we do will take time and will be challenging, because now in society, some people are using these issues as an excuse to undermine the political system in our country. Their issue is not about hijab or no hijab, but to confront the entire system, and this will not be in the best interest of the country.

We must work together, respecting each other and respecting human beings with any belief or faith, to bring our country to unity and solidarity, this was the main slogan and approach I shared with the people when I wanted to become president.

take out our frustrations on the people we are supposed to serve. Our duty is to serve the people and to do everything in our power to solve their problems. Therefore, we should never do anything that would cause people to take to the streets, because it's the result of our actions and behavior that leads to such incidents and the formation of protests.

The more we can improve our behavior and the way we interact with people, the more we will gain the people's support and cooperation, and that's what we're striving for.

**You said you are trying to improve relations with your neighbors, what specific signals have you sent to countries like Saudi Arabia? Do you plan to use your influence to control Houthi attacks on shipping lines?**

The instability in the region is caused by the Zionist regime. If the Zionist regime didn't kill and terrorize, nothing would happen. If the US didn't support the Zionist regime,