

the necessity of developing Iran's defensive capabilities, particularly in the missile domain, and the importance of supporting this strategic sector to ensure the nation's national security. What remains in my mind above all else was his precise perspective on the country's strategic issues. Ayatollah Khamenei listened attentively to the explanations and posed questions that demonstrated his particular mastery and sensitivity regarding the various dimensions of the subject. At that juncture, perhaps few could grasp the significance of the missile capability's role in Iran's future defensive architecture as clearly as is understood today, but he, with a vision transcending day-to-day matters, attended to the necessity of reinforcing the country's deterrence infrastructure. The history of the Islamic Revolution is a history of connections, trusts, and collaborations among figures who, at fateful junctures, bore the burden of the country's responsibility. Among these influential connections, the relationship between the martyred Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani holds a particular place; two longtime companions who, from the years of struggle against despotism and arrogance through the era of the Islamic Establishment's consolidation, the Sacred Defense, and the country's reconstruction, played their

roles alongside one another. In this relationship, subsequent to the Revolution, I also have several particular memories of him. First, the time of his assassination attempt in July 1981, which occurred before the event of the Seventh of Tir [June 28, 1981]. Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani was then occupied with inspecting the coal mines of Kerman; immediately upon being informed, he returned to Tehran, and we went to the hospital, and like a brother, and perhaps closer than a brother, he cherished Ayatollah Khamenei and was concerned for his condition. After the event of the Seventh of Tir, one of my father's spiritual challenges was how to convey the news of the martyrdom of Ayatollah Beheshti and 72 others to Ayatollah Khamenei. For our family, the recollection of Ayatollah Khamenei's name has always been intertwined with the memory of an ancient friendship. My father recounted that his first acquaintance with Ayatollah Khamenei was formed in the advanced jurisprudence (kharaji) class of the late Ayatollah Damad. A friendship that, during the years of struggle against the Pahlavi regime and especially in Iraq, deepened and transformed into brotherhood, and continued after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in the great arenas of responsibility and the country's governance. This friendship was not merely a polit-

ical relationship. It was rooted in trust, mutual understanding, and years of shared struggle. Both were among the closest companions of Imam Khomeini and, at the most critical junctures of Iran's contemporary history, stood beside one another, and many of the country's great crises were overcome through their consultation and cooperation and under the guidance of the departed Imam. The martyred Ayatollah Khamenei is no longer among us, but his intellectual, political, and managerial legacy continues to flow through the life of the Islamic Republic and the historical memory of the Iranian nation; a legacy manifested in resistance against threats, a sense of responsibility toward the nation's destiny, continuous effort to preserve stability and national security, and faith in Iran's future. Figures of this caliber cannot be measured merely within the framework of political disputes and daily judgments. Just as my father frequently emphasized, the record of great historical figures is properly understood only when evaluated on the broad horizon of national transformations and in relation to the conditions and exigencies of their own era. The final judgment concerning them is rendered not by the clamor of daily politics but by the passage of time and the historical memory of nations.



The Iraqi people pay tribute to martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei by circumambulation his coffin — a ritual practice in which practitioners walk clockwise around the sacred shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH) — in Karbala, Iraq, on July 8, 2026. khamenei.ir

Iran transcends factions, tastes, and political rivalries, and the survival of the Islamic Revolution depends on preserving national unity, rationality in decision-making, and harnessing the capacities of all forces loyal to the country. Today, the most important tribute to his memory and legacy is the endeavor to build a future in which national unity prevails over division, rationality over extremism, hope over despair, and national

interest over transient political conflicts. This is the very ideal that he and his longtime companion, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, with all the ups and downs of history, strived for years to realize; the ideal of a powerful, secure, and stable Iran, developed and pure, possessing national solidarity, capable — by relying on its human and historical capital — of continuing the path of progress and glory.

By Reza Mirabian
Expert on West Asian affairs

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The funeral of the martyred Leader in Iraq, unquestionably, is an exceptional, unprecedented, and noteworthy phenomenon in the history of relations between the two countries. If we return only a few decades, we will observe that Iran and Iraq endured eight years of heavy warfare. A war that left thousands of dead, martyrs, and devastation for both nations. At that time, no one could have imagined that a day would arrive when this same Iraqi nation, with insistent and extensive reception, would demand the presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Leader's remains on their own soil, to perform the funeral prayer for him beside the sacred shrines and to bid him farewell with a magnificence of rare occurrence. This event can scarcely be compared with any parallel in contemporary history. In fact, we are confronted with an entirely exceptional phenomenon that surprised many observers, especially Western and American analysts. It should not be forgotten that Iraq has been under occupation and subsequently under American pressure and influence for more than two decades, and it was natural that Washington would have no desire for the holding of such a ceremony. Hence, this magnificent reception can be interpreted as a resounding "no" from the Iraqi nation toward American policies vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. A clear message that they consider Iran a neighborly, brotherly, co-religious, and co-sectarian country and are unwilling to act against the Islamic Republic under American political pressure.

Indissoluble bond of two nations



Iraq's Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi (front-3rd R), alongside Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (front-4th R) and other high-ranking officials, prays for the soul of martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei upon their arrival at the Najaf Airport, Iraq, on July 7, 2026. khamenei.ir

This solidarity is not limited merely to the funeral ceremony. In recent years, especially in the battles of the Resistance Axis, Iraq has played one of the most brilliant and influential roles. Iraq's resistance forces, alongside the Islamic Republic of Iran, whether in confronting counter-revolutionary groups based in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region or against the threats and hostile actions of certain regional countries, have had an active and decisive presence. They have demonstrated in practice that, at critical junctures, they stand fully beside the Islamic Republic of Iran.

If we analyze these developments within the framework of prevailing international equations, perhaps no analogous example can be found. What has occurred transcends conventional political calculations, and for this reason, this valuable capital must be appreciated. The historical, cultural, religious, and doctrinal bonds between the two nations have today manifested themselves more than ever before, and it is hoped that these relations will become increasingly robust. The extensive participation of the Iraqi people in this ceremony demonstrated that they perceive their future and destiny as intertwined

with the Islamic Republic of Iran and interpret this convergence in the confrontation with American policies in the region. If we cast a glance at the history of Iran-Iraq relations, we realize that, at various junctures, many of the governments ruling Iraq endeavored to place this country in opposition to Iran. This policy is not confined solely to the era of Saddam. Even during the Ottoman period and thereafter, numerous wars and provocations were undertaken with the aim of creating a schism between the two nations. During the Imposed War, too, despite the fact that the majority

of Iraq's population consisted of Shias, the country's rulers attempted to employ these same Iraqi youth in the army ranks against the Islamic Republic of Iran. This approach demonstrates that foreign powers and dependent governments have always sought to generate confrontation between the two nations. Nevertheless, by virtue of the awareness of the region's nations, the blood of the martyrs, and the martyred Leader's leadership, many of these mental and political boundaries crumbled. Had the leaders of the Baathist regime been told years ago that the Iraqi people would one day, with fervor and enthusiasm, hold a funeral for the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, they would undoubtedly have deemed such a statement unbelievable. Today, however, this historical reality has occurred and has become a symbol of the profound transformation in the relations between the two nations. It is natural that such an event would be displeasing to America. Even before the ceremony's holding, reports were published indicating that the US State Department, by dispatching directives to certain of its embassies in the region, had pressured governments regarding participation in this ceremony and had warned them against involvement at a high level. Despite these pressures, many countries participated in the ceremony, and more importantly, the Iraqi people, through extensive and rare participation, demonstrated that the will of nations transcends pressures and the political considerations of foreign powers. This very extensive participation constituted the most important message of this ceremony. A message that indicates the solidity of the historical, religious, and strategic bonds between Iran and Iraq and shows that these relations have today entered a new and decisive phase.

Farewell to the sun

By Eskandar Momeni
Iran's Minister of the Interior

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The farewell to the martyred Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Imam Khamenei transcends a national mourning, constituting an event of immense international dimensions. His comprehensive personality and saga-

cious leadership traversed geographical boundaries and captivated innumerable hearts across the globe, the Islamic world, and especially within the strategic depth of the Resistance Front. Hence, a portion of the unparalleled magnificence and grandeur of this venerable rite is indebted to the presence and solidarity of the devotees who, from various countries of the world, renewed their allegiance to the ideals of that exalted martyr, and this epic presence conveyed the message of the fortitude

and vitality of the movement of the two Imams of the Revolution to the world's ears. This magnificent and historic ceremony, simultaneously, depicts a unique and enduring manifestation of unity, concord, and cohesion. The unified presence of various groups, ethnicities, and tastes from across Islamic Iran, alongside brothers and sisters from other Islamic countries, displays an indissoluble nexus among the individual members of the nation and the great Islamic Ummah. This profound empathy

and solidarity will constitute a line drawn through all the divisive conspiracies of the enemies and demonstrates that the martyrdom of the Ummah's Leader itself constitutes a new axis for the cohesion and integration of society and the consolidation of the Islamic Ummah's ranks against the arrogant powers. By divine favor, the holding of numerous sessions for coordination, synergy, and support of the popular farewell and funeral rites among various institutions, and the preparation of necessary ar-

rangements, have provided a secure and orderly environment so that this historic farewell can be conducted at the highest possible level and befitting the exalted station of the revolutionary Leader's martyr. The extensive presence of the people in this ceremony was, in practice, a renewal of allegiance to the Leader of the Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei.

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