

A historic farewell in Najaf, Karbala

Parade of Islamic Ummah's power



By Mohammad Mirzaei

Member of the Cultural Commission of Iran's Parliament

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The funeral procession of the martyred Leader in Holy Najaf and Exalted Karbala was a spectacle of rare parity within the annals of the Islamic Ummah; a multimillion-person convocation that, transcending borders, manifested an unbreakable nexus between Muslim nations and the distinguished station of the "walayah" (guardianship). The fervent presence of pilgrims and devotees from Iraq and adjacent countries, and that magnificent farewell within the sacred shrines, not merely demonstrated heartfelt veneration for the martyred Leader but also transmitted a clear message to the global community: this Ummah, in defense of his ideals and legacy, remains unanimous and resolute. In articulating that which transpired, however, allusion to several noteworthy points is incumbent. Firstly, the funeral procession of the Islamic Revolution's Leader in Iran was of such magnitude that even certain Western media outlets characterized it with words such as "the victory parade" of the Iranian nation and conceded its grandeur and the momentous messages latent within it. Even Iran's adversaries concede that the immensity of this multimillion-person procession signified the profound bond between the populace and the revolutionary ideals, the Islamic Republic's Establishment, and the walayah. In fact, and beyond political currents,

the martyred Imam's funeral transformed into a national and historic epic of the Iranian nation; an epic that constituted a tribute to a lifetime of service by the martyred Leader and the distinguished legacy bequeathed to Iran from his 37-year tenure of political stewardship. The multimillion-person funeral transmitted the message of the Iranian nation's authority and cohesion to the global community, and the people, precisely as the martyred Leader had articulated during the final weeks of his blessed existence, were thus mobilized and said the final word. Another point is that the region's nations have witnessed that the two Imams of Iran's Islamic Revolution, and especially our martyred Imam during their tenure of guardianship, established the Islamic Republic's system in such a way that the economic sanctions and full-scale wars imposed upon Iran could not inflict any detriment upon this country. It was during the stewardship and leadership of the martyred Khamenei that he, from his position as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, designed the possibility of victory in war for Iran, and that with the most inexpensive weaponry feasible. They witnessed how global arrogance, with all its multitudes and materiel, assailed Iran, and how its fighter jets worth hundreds of millions of dollars were vanquished by drones and missiles, constructed at far lower cost by the youth of this very land, and they observed how the enemy's aircraft carriers could not endure remaining in proximity to Iran's territorial waters, and how America's hollow hegemony collapsed throughout the entire region.



The casket holding the purified remains of Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who was martyred by US-Israeli missiles earlier in February, is transported toward the shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), as seen from atop a house in Karbala, Iraq on July 8, 2026.

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All those measures and that sagacious governance by our martyred Leader were what caused not only the Iranian nation to mourn and lament his martyrdom, but also the sting of his martyrdom to settle upon the soul of the Islamic Ummah and all the Muslim nations of the region. To such an extent that not only the freedom-seeking populace and the Shias of Iraq, but, had it been feasible, all freedom-seeking Muslims of the region in various countries would have conducted magnificent funeral ceremonies within their own nations. From another perspective, the immense, multimillion-person funeral of the martyred gentleman of Iran in the holy city of Najaf and Exalted Karbala also possesses historical referents and identifications. Imam Khamenei, following the

example of his master, Imam Hussein (PBUH), acted in the manner of Hussein; just as that martyred Imam in Karbala was also under sanction and siege, and was martyred not within the tent but in the midst of the battlefield. Likewise, the martyred Leader, akin to Imam Hussein, attained martyrdom alongside the beloved members of his family, and did not bow his head before the bullying of arrogance. Such identifications, alongside that unyielding leadership and the generation of authority that Iran's martyred Leader possessed, have now been manifested not only by the Iranian nation but also by the Muslim Ummah, the Iraqi people, and the peoples of other Arab countries in the region, some of whom have succeeded in reaching Iraq to participate in this funeral ceremony.

As in Tehran, too, we witnessed a considerable multitude of sisters and brothers who had journeyed from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other neighboring countries to Tehran to bid farewell to Imam Khamenei. All these people fulfilled their duty in appreciation of the martyred Imam's endeavors; if the Iranian nation, through its presence, insured the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Establishment, the walayah, and this Islamic Republic, then in Najaf and Karbala, this funeral likewise signified the collapse of arrogance's hollow hegemony. The Leader of the Revolution has enjoyed an enormous social base not only in Iran but also in the region's nations.

The Americans today, more than at any time in the preceding four months, have realized the extent of their miscalculation and must now pay the price for their deed. Now, the martyrdom of Imam Khamenei has augmented the knowledge and awareness of all nations in the region, and America no longer possesses any place to remain in the Middle East. Hence, the Iraqi people and all the followers of our martyred Leader in the Middle East, in unison with the Iranians in Najaf and Karbala, demanded retribution for the blood of this martyred Imam. The Iraqi people's reception of Iran's martyred Imam was truly befitting our Imam; our Imam indeed possessed a higher station and base. The funeral and farewell that the Iraqi people conducted exhibited the depth of the Ummah's connection with the Imam and left the global community in astonishment, confronting them with this question: what is this connection that the Muslim nations of the world have with the leadership of their Ummah?

Commonalities transcending politics



By Mohammad-Ali Abtahi

Member of the Combatant Clergy Association

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The funeral rites of the martyred Leader in Iraq can be examined from two divergent yet mutually complementary perspectives; firstly, from a religious perspective, and secondly, from a political and strategic one. Each of these two angles bears messages that render the significance of this ceremony superior to a mere formal and ceremonial farewell.

From a religious perspective, the funeral and circumambulation of the Leader's remains in the proximity of the sacred shrines of the Immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) in Iraq possesses a particular semantic significance. In the long-standing Shia tradition, the custom has always been that the remains of great scholars and clerics, whenever feasible, are circumambulated beside the mausoleums of the Immaculate Imams or interred in their vicinity. This tradition is considered an indication of the profound spiritual bond between religious scholars and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

In Iraq, too, this tradition possesses a lengthy antecedent, and for years, the remains of numerous faithful and religious figures from various parts of the Islamic world have been transported for circumambulation to the sacred shrines of Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra. From this perspective, the presence of the martyred Leader's remains,

as a marja (a top cleric authorized to make legal decisions), in these sacred sites, and his subsequent funeral beside the mausoleum of Imam Reza (PBUH) in Mashhad, constitutes a link in this same historical and religious tradition and shows his particular station among the Shia community. However, perhaps the more significant message of this ceremony should be sought in the political dimension and the relations between Iran and Iraq. Here, the subject is no longer merely a religious marja, but rather the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran; a figure whom, for years, certain media and political currents endeavored to interpret Iran's influence and connection with Iraq solely within the framework of "proxy forces" or political and military interventions. The extensive participation of the Iraqi people in the funeral ceremony presented another image of these relations. This participation demonstrated that the bond between the two nations, more than being a product of political relations, is rooted in shared religious, cultural, and historical beliefs. The popular reception of this ceremony indicates that a considerable segment of Iraq's Shia society, irrespective of prevailing political analyses, has established a profound and doctrinal connection with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the station of the marja'yya.

Another noteworthy point is the presence of movements and groups that have not always been counted among the official supporters of Iran's policies. Their participation in the funeral ceremony showed that this event, transcending political and factional borders, trans-

formed into a unifying occasion for various segments of Iraqi society. This very matter redoubles the political value of this ceremony and demonstrates that Iran's social capital in Iraq is not limited merely to aligned groups.

On the other hand, the presence of official Iraqi dignitaries in this ceremony also bore a clear message. Although a portion of this presence can be assessed within the framework of diplomatic formalities and the coinciding visit of Iran's President, the holding of a ceremony with this level of magnificence for the leader of another country on Iraqi soil is not a common occurrence in international relations. This event indicates the privileged and special relations between Tehran and Baghdad; relations that have been formed on the basis of religious, cultural, historical, and security commonalities and have now entered a deeper stage.

The funeral of the martyred Leader in Iraq, in truth, was not merely the farewell of a prominent figure; rather, it represented a manifestation of the deep-rooted ties between the two nations and the two countries. A tie that can, in the future as well, lay the groundwork for greater convergence, the strengthening of political and security cooperation, and an increase in empathy between the Iranian and Iraqi nations. If this social and historical capital is properly preserved and reinforced, Tehran-Baghdad relations will undoubtedly enter a more robust phase, and its achievements will be noteworthy not only for the two countries but also for the Islamic world.



Iraqis mourn for the martyrdom of Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei during his extended funeral in Najaf, Iraq, on July 8, 2026.

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Paying tribute to martyred Leader



By Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani

Head of the Central Council of the Executives of Construction Party

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei constitutes a calamity for the Islamic world and the devotees of the Islamic Revolution. He was among the prominent disciples of Imam Khomeini's school and one of the influential figures of Iran's contemporary history, who spent his life in the struggle for and preservation of the Islamic Revolution's ideals.

Unwavering faith, endurance in the face of adversities, courage in sensitive arenas, and an unwavering spirit in discharging

weighty responsibilities were among the salient features of his character. Ayatollah Khamenei played a decisive role in preserving the country's stability, security, and authority, and rendered his name enduring in the historical memory of the Iranian nation. I retain numerous memories of the martyred Ayatollah Khamenei. Memories, each of which reveals an aspect of his conscientiousness and sense of responsibility. One of these memories dates back to the late days of 1990. At that time, after the conclusion of the Iraqi-Imposed War and the liberation of prisoners, in my capacity as a member of the Board of Directors of the Defense Industries Organization and Deputy for Coordination of the Missile Group, I went to meet with him to present a report on the condition of the country's military industries. In that session, I spoke about