

Mythic moment of Iran

West fails to respect nation in mourning



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OPINION

The Israeli plot to assassinate Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei — which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tricked US President Donald Trump into joining, despite overwhelming American opposition to waging war on Iran — was just the latest move in a long and blood-soaked tradition, as chronicled in journalist Ronen Bergman's boastful treatise *Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations* (2018).

Ayatollah Khamenei was a head of a state, and the spiritual leader of millions of Shia Muslims. But amid their vicious occupation of Palestine, the Israelis appear willing to target any head of state; any figure they deem hostile to their settler colony. What's stopping them from going after future leaders of France, Germany, the UK or even the US?

Where is the outrage? The New York Times covered the murder of Ayatollah Khamenei as if reporting the weather. In fact, when there is inclement weather in the US — too hot or too cold — the country's media uses larger and scarier fonts than those used to report on Ayatollah Khamenei's assassination.

There was no outrage, no opposing-side equivalent to Bret Stephens or Thomas Friedman, going on a tirade about the murderous Israelis. Why?

Ayatollah Khamenei was the patriarch of a people. He was the supreme leader of a system of governance modelled on an ancient monarchy that predates Islam and Shiism.

Martyrdom of a patriarch

He was the leader that a political culture, a nation, a country, a homeland had placed at the head of a state that emerged from a massive social revolution.

To this day, there are millions of people who loved and cherished him like a saint. It has nothing to do with the rulers of Israel — a murderous gang of psychopathic Zionists still engaged in a genocide in occupied Palestine, alongside barefaced land theft in Lebanon and Syria.

All political leaders have their supporters and their detractors. Neither Trump, nor any head of state anywhere in the world, is unanimously loved or hated. Does that authorise Israeli war criminals to assassinate them?

Ayatollah Khamenei was definitive to an ancient political culture. He should have died the dignified martyrdom of a patriarch on the fertile soil of his homeland.

Yet after Israel crossed the border to kill Ayatollah Khamenei and his family members, including his 14-month-old granddaughter, the New York Times displayed more concern about a controversial World Cup match between Belgium and the US.

As Ayatollah Khamenei's funeral preparations were underway in Iran and Iraq, another Zionist stooge, commentator Laura Loomer, called for Israel to attack the mourners, who turned out in their millions. Those who continue to blindly back Israel have lost the plot. Their hubris prevents them from seeing how the whole world, and Americans in particular, detest them. Americans were burning Israeli flags during Fourth of July celebrations this year, demanding their country's independence from the European settler colony. Even some corrupt American politicians appear to have finally gotten the message, and have started running away from Aipac money to save any shred of decency that might still be left in them.

Creative counting

This brings us to the utterly inane reporting of the New York Times from Tehran,



Iranian men mourn the martyrdom of their Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated by US-Israeli missiles earlier in February, at the Grand Mosalla in Tehran on July 4, 2026.

● [khamenei.ir](#)

which appears to have had only one purpose: to downplay the crowd and divide Iranians between those who "exalted" Ayatollah Khamenei and those who "despised" him — entirely oblivious to the impacts of the Israeli-instigated military onslaught, and what it has done to Iranians' perceptions of their own government.



The newspaper began its creative counting by assuring readers that only "tens of thousands" of mourners had gathered. Apparently realising this was ridiculous, with the world fully aware of the millions gathering, they quickly updated it to hundreds of thousands. They are shameless charlatans.

Ayatollah Khamenei was not despised. The most despised settler colony on this planet, Israel, instigated a war on the Iranian people, slaughtering scores of innocent children, destroying national infrastructure, and triggering Trump to threaten to annihilate Iranian civilisation. These events changed everything.

Then came this piece of jewellery: "The public mourning ceremonies have been highly choreographed and tightly controlled by the government." Of course they have been; all state funerals are, whether for former US presidents Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, or the Pope. Was the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II entirely spontaneous, or was that, too, "tightly controlled" by police and security services? Will this disgusting, racist thuggery ever end when it comes to reporting on the public grief of other nations?

Iranian women mourn the martyrdom of their Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated by US-Israeli missiles earlier in February, at the Grand Mosalla in Tehran on July 4, 2026.

● [JACK HILL/THE SUNDAY TIMES](#)

The New York Times, along with other western media outlets that have produced similar atrocious coverage, appears set on denigrating and diminishing those who are coming out to mourn Ayatollah Khamenei.

Mythic moment

What the New York Times and its ilk failed to see unfolding in front of their eyes at the funeral ceremonies for Ayatollah Khamenei was the mythic moment of a nation and a culture dissolving their shared destiny into a collective

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consciousness.

This is a classic case of the Persian passion play, known as Ta'zieh, whose origins go

back to the rituals of mourning for Siavash in the *Shahnameh*. It was performed on a massive transnational stage, not just in Iran and Iraq, but for millions of Shia watching around the globe. The importance of the event has been lost on those who limit their knowledge to the wretched propaganda pages of the New York Times. More than 25 years ago, my late colleague, the eminent Polish scholar Peter Chelkowski, and I published a book titled *Staging a Revolution*, documenting the unfolding of the Shia drama during the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s. What the world has witnessed this month during Ayatollah Khamenei's funeral is on a vast scale of similar proportions.

How NYT paved way for apocalyptic war

Consider the magnitude of the event: a six-day funeral procession that was set to move through Tehran and Qom in Iran, before travelling to Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, and then returning to Iran for burial in Mashhad, with millions of mourners paying their respects.

The New York Times leads American and European media in dividing Iranians into "religious" (regime supporters) and "secular" (opponents), in an apparent attempt to justify Israel's murderous attack. But this binary does not work, and has never worked, in Iran.

Evidence of this can be found in a filmed conversation with a learned Shia religious leader, who reminisces about an encounter with the late scholar Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, one of the most learned Shia philosophers of the 20th century and the author of the monumental Quranic commentary *al-Mizan*.

Here we learn how Tabatabai, while listening to a poem by Iraj Mirza about Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his martyrdom in Karbala, was sobbing inconsolably, and then confessed to his friends — to their utter astonishment — that he would happily give his entire Quranic commentary to Mirza in exchange for just this one poem. His friends were baffled, as Mirza is notorious for his obscene satirical poetry. Tabatabai gently responded: "Yes, I know; I have his collected works right here in my library, but still."

The rich, powerful, living and unfolding Iranian and Islamic cultures — from poetry to philosophy, from ancient Iran to the vast tapestry of Islamic intellectual history — are terra incognita for much of the western media, who do not read these works, let alone attempt to explain them to their audiences.

The full article first appeared on Middle East Eye.

