



Khamenei Warns Veterans of Declining Revolutionary Fervor

OE Watch Commentary: When Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980, Iranian revolutionary fervor was at its peak. Many young revolutionaries volunteered their service to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and deployed to the trenches and the frontlines to take part in the so-called “Sacred Defense.” The paramilitary Basij famously sent 14-year-olds with plastic keys to paradise across minefields in order to clear them. Many died, but others survived. Such revolutionaries coalesced into the *usulgarayan*, literally, those who uphold the principles [of the Islamic Revolution]. Often depicted in English as hardliners in a reform-hardline dichotomy, their revolutionary mettle makes them much more in the Iranian context.

Generations change, however, and aging Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is worried. In a speech to war veterans, war wounded, and families of martyrs in Khomeinishahr, a central Iranian town called Hodayunshahr before the revolution, Khamenei warned veterans to maintain their revolutionary fervor, which he depicted as a gift from God. Khamenei’s warning about declining fervor suggests he is worried. That he would have to warn war veterans about not losing their revolutionary values and enthusiasm suggests the regime faces a crisis of legitimacy among the very class of people who once embodied and sacrificed for revolutionary change and values.

There could be several reasons for changing attitudes among the revolutionary elite. Many Iran-Iraq War veterans feel the regime abandoned them following the 1988 ceasefire; they neither received adequate medical care nor pensions enough to sustain them. Others leveraged their service into comfortable bureaucratic positions, only to become disillusioned by clerical corruption. Still others had children who did not share their revolutionary ambitions, hence the number of senior regime officials whose sons and daughters study in or migrate to Europe. More than youthful reformism, the disenchantment of this revolutionary elite is a trend to watch. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Young Iranians both volunteered or were pressed into service during the Iran-Iraq.

Source: Masjed.ir, <http://www.masjed.ir/en/newsagency/32940>

“Our war veterans showed the spirit.”

Source: “Biyarat dar Didar Dastandarkaran Kongereh Tajlil az Razmandagan va Isargaran Khomeinishahr (Statements at a Meeting in Khomeinishahr of the Veterans and those Sacrificing),” *Khamenei.ir*, 16 December 2019. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=44517>

Statement to Veterans in Khomeinishahr

...Martyrs receive special kindness from God. This kindness has not been given to those who have not been martyred yet, but they might be martyred later on thanks to their efforts. There were certain disabled war veterans of the Sacred Defense Era who were martyred later on as a result of the side effects. However, being a war veteran is a value in itself. Therefore, we should hold this value in high regard. If a society and country are devoid of the spirit of being prepared to stand up against evil and to show resistance on the path of the truth, that society will be ruined. Being ruined does not mean that it will be completely eradicated, rather it means that it will lose its honor, dignity, independence and reliance on its willpower and that it will be others who will rule over its fate. Such societies and countries will either suffer from domestic dictatorship or foreign interference.

This spirit of resistance and steadfastness is very important and our war veterans showed this spirit. However, my advice is that they should preserve that spirit because it is a divine provision and it will be a pity if they lose it. Some individuals were fairly young during the Sacred Defense Era. They were enthusiastic and dynamic and they moved forward in certain arenas, but later on, various attractions swayed them here and there. This is a pity. This is really losing a true value and a provision. It is losing a treasure.

If God the Exalted helps someone carry out a good and great feat, they should always be thankful to Him. And being thankful shows itself by continuing this path because without it, it is not possible to be thankful. Therefore, we respect the dear war veterans who made many endeavors during the Sacred Defense Era and we hold them in high regard, but we also advise them to do their best to preserve that spirit.