



Iran: Khamenei Speaks on Corruption

OE Watch Commentary: Corruption remains endemic in Iran. According to Transparency International's 2019 corruption rankings, the Islamic Republic ranks 146 out of 180 countries, on par with Mozambique and Nigeria, and below many other sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries. In the excerpted remarks to the judiciary, posted on the Supreme Leader's website, Ali Khamenei addresses the need for the judiciary to tackle corruption. He notes that in many American films and television shows, judges are depicted as honorable and incorruptible but in Iran's own cinema, judges are often seen as cruel or corrupt. That Khamenei must address the topic openly and to the judiciary itself shows the severity of the problem. After all, corruption was a major factor around which Iranians rallied in the run-up to the Islamic Revolution. So if Khamenei feels the issue is unavoidable and undeniable even though acknowledging the problem now is politically embarrassing, then corruption is severe.



Khamenei Speaks by Video to the National Conference of the Judiciary, June 27, 2020.
Source: Khamenei.ir, <https://english.khamenei.ir/d/2020/06/27/4/22935.jpg>

There may also be a political component to Khamenei's remarks, however. Ebrahim Raisi, the head of the Judiciary, is one of the major candidates positioning himself to succeed Khamenei. By implying that Raisi's judiciary is corrupt, Khamenei may hope to better the odds that his son Mojtaba Khamenei could be his successor.

That Khamenei is delivering speeches via teleconference also shows that COVID-19 remains widespread in Iran and that, contrary to its early months, Iranian officials are abiding by social distancing and other precautions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“You should begin to combat corruption inside the judiciary branch itself..”

Source: “Biyarat dar Ertebat-e Tasviri ba Hamayesh Sarasari Qavah-e Qaday’i (A Statement on the Video Conference with the National Conference of the Judiciary),” *Khamenei.ir*, 27 June 2020. <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=45974>

A Statement to the National Conference of the Judiciary

I would like to raise some points about corruption as well. Thankfully, attention to the issue of corruption has reached its peak in the judiciary branch. Of course, it began in the previous term, but now, it has thankfully reached its peak and it is receiving good attention. When the people look at it, they see that you confront corruption, that you do not show any consideration and that you enter the arena in a decisive manner. Therefore, they really become happy and hopeful. This is because corruption and corrupt individuals deal a grave blow to the people's lives, morale, faith and belief. Financial corruption – as well as other forms of corruption: but in the present time, it is financial and economic corruption which is at the top of the agenda of the judiciary branch – is a grave plight and dangerous virus, just like the coronavirus. It is epidemic like the coronavirus as well. It is extremely contagious and transmittable. In other words, corruption in one area rapidly and acutely spreads to other areas. A corrupt person does not only corrupt himself. He drags others into corruption with various reasons as well. In the case of the coronavirus, dirty and infected hands transfer the virus. In the case of corruption too, dirty and impure hands cause corruption to be transferred hand-in-hand. However, in the case of the coronavirus, if we use soap to wash our hands, the issue is resolved, but in the latter, the issue is not resolved by using soap on our hands. There is no solution other than cutting off the hands of the corrupt! Therefore, the issue is a very important one.

The mission of the judiciary branch is obviously to combat corruption in the whole of society. In other words, your intention is to combat corruption in the whole of society, but more importantly, you should begin to combat corruption inside the judiciary branch itself. I have frequently discussed this matter in my annual meetings with you dear ones in the judiciary branch and I have placed great emphasis on it. If some corruption is witnessed inside the judiciary branch, the harm that it does is several times larger than corruption outside the branch. It is like the poem “They pour salt on everything that might spoil, but woe is us the day salt itself spoils!” In other words, we cannot fight it the way we fight against other forms of corruption. The blow that it delivers is grave and therefore, it requires serious confrontation based on expert opinion. Therefore, you should primarily focus on corruption inside the judiciary branch itself. Of course, when I say, “primarily”, this does not mean that you should wrap up this matter and then attend to other areas. No, as I said before, all these areas should be pursued in a simultaneous and balanced way.