



## Commander of Iranian Armed Forces: Khamenei is the Ultimate Authority

**OE Watch Commentary:** That Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as supreme leader of the Islamic Republic, is also the commander-in-chief of the Iranian armed forces is nothing new. As Mohammed Bagheri, chief of the Armed Forces General Staff states in the accompanying excerpted article from the *Fars News Agency*, Article 110 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic makes clear that the Supreme Leader has that role and that he can hire and fire military commanders from both the regular army and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). What is interesting, however, is that it seems Bagheri felt the need to remind the Iranian military that they must follow the orders of the Supreme Leader - apparently new public rhetoric.

Regardless, as the Islamic Republic nears a transition in leadership—Khamenei is 79 years old and has had prostate cancer—the fear that the IRGC could defy the religious leadership, if not stage an outright coup, is growing among ordinary Iranians. Elsewhere in his speech, Bagheri offered advice to commanders and personnel to ensure that they act as a “soldier of *velayat* [Islamic guardianship as enshrined by the supreme leader],” act in a revolution manner, demonstrate piety, reject the temptation of wealth, and be “merciless” as they confront enemies foreign and domestic.

This illuminates the subject of what motivates the IRGC as an entity and individuals choosing to join it. While Iranians and outside analysts regularly describe factions within Iranian politics, seldom is factionalism among the IRGC as recognized, even though it is clear that it is not ideologically homogenous. Anecdotally, some IRGC members are true believers in the Islamic Republic’s revolutionary ideology, while others join the IRGC for the privileges. Bagheri is reminding them of the proper motivation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Sardar Mohammad Bagheri in Great Prophet Wargame (2016).

Source: Tasnim News Agency [CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sardar\\_Mohammad\\_Bagheri\\_in\\_Great\\_Prophet\\_Wargame\\_in\\_April\\_2016\\_by\\_tasnimnews\\_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sardar_Mohammad_Bagheri_in_Great_Prophet_Wargame_in_April_2016_by_tasnimnews_(cropped).jpg).

**“The Armed Forces...are under the command and control of the Supreme Leader.”**

**Source:** “Niru-haye Mosleh Tabegh Ghanun-e Asasi taht Farmandahi Rahbari Nizam Qarar Darad (The Armed Forces Act according to the Basic Law under the Command of the Supreme Leader),” *Fars News Agency*, 25 August 2018. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13970603000274>

*Gen. Mohammed Bagheri, chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, said that according to a recent decree by the Supreme Commander of Armed Forces about managing the Armed Forces vis-à-vis the Leadership; that is, how the Leadership manages the Armed Forces, a statement on “the Status of the Armed Forces” has been address to commanders, officials, managers and staff of the armed forces.*

*The text of this statement is as follows:*

*...The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran...while recognizing the separation of powers, states that the Armed Forces, in accordance with Article 110, are under the command and control of the Supreme Leader, and that during the 40 years of the Islamic Revolution, there have been numerous sacrifices on the part of the army, law enforcement, and Basij, but the military has always occupied a special place for the leadership...*