

Imam Khomeini Still Loved By Iran

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TEHRAN: Twenty-one years have passed since the passing away of Iran's revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, remembered as Imam Khomeini. The revolution led by Imam Khomeini saw the overthrow of Shah of Iran, Mohammed Raza Pehalvi, with the monarchy being replaced by an Islamic Republic on March 31, 1979. After the revolution, through a national referendum Khomeini became the highest ranking political and religious authority of Iran. He held this position till his death (June 4, 1989). To this day, he is remembered, loved and also hailed highly by Iranians as well as non-Iranians from different parts of the world. This was indicated by the zeal with which the people gathered in Tehran last week to mark the 21st death anniversary of Imam Khomeini. The occasion was also used by Iranian leaders and visiting foreign delegates to display their support for Khomeini's views and Palestinians' right to their homeland. The latter point is marked by their strong criticism of United States and Israel.

Interestingly, while Iran has been in news and has faced strong criticism across the world primarily because of its anti-US & Israel approach and its nuclear policy, attending the functions in Tehran last week brought this scribe face to face with other largely sidelined aspects. While strongly criticizing United States and Israel over their aggressive policy towards Israel, the speakers at different gatherings also laid stress on the need for ending war and war-crimes. This trend was evident in Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speeches too. Israel's aggressive approach towards Palestinian hit headlines last week following a deadly attack on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, killing at least nine and injuring dozens. It was the first formal, officially declared and direct attack by Israeli army on foreign activists. The Israeli-attack was focused on by practically all speakers in Tehran.

Addressing the millions gathered at Khomeini's shrine, before the Friday prayers, Ahmadinejad said: "I am telling the Zionist regime's leaders that 60 years of atrocities are enough and I am warning you that any new aggression means certain death for the Zionist regime." During the same address, he asserted that Iran has no intention to backtrack from its nuclear policy. United States introduced a draft resolution, last month, for imposing new sanctions on Iran for pursuing its nuclear program. "We are standing in the face of enemies. To defend the rights of the nation, we will pull out any resolutions from the mouth of enemies," Ahmadinejad said.

While addressing the visiting foreign delegates (June 3), Ahmadinejad strongly criticized Israel for having senselessly targeted human rights activists who were bringing food and medicine to help Palestinians in Gaza strip. The attack had triggered a strong wave of protest and criticism which will continue until the "thought of Zionism" is eradicated, he said. He pointed out that people across the world, including Iranians, want peace and friendship except for Israel. "All of us favor friendship, including Iran. But Jews don't want to be friends." "Today, resolution of all global issues is interlinked with resolution of Palestinian issue. The establishment of peace, justice, freedom and real equality in the world necessitates a resolution of Palestinian issue," he said. Ahmadinejad also stated that justice demands punishment

for all who indulge in criminal activities, indicating that Israelis must not be spared for their war-crimes.

During the gathering of foreign participants, “Lady” Michele Renouf from United Kingdom said that Imam Khomeini “should be a role model for the West.” The West “needs to change” its approach, she said.

Against the backdrop of recent Israeli attack, the delegates used the forum to strongly display their support for Palestine, in keeping with what Imam Khomeini had said. Quoting the late Imam, a delegate said that the key source of problem in today’s world was Israel. “How can we tolerate these intolerable actions that deny the right of Arab people? We have to defend Palestinians,” he said.

At a conference held earlier in the week on Imam Khomeini and Foreign Policy, Rudolf Grobkept (Germany) raised questions such as: “What makes people hate each other? What makes governments prepare for war leading to millions of casualties?” Answering these questions, he said: “All those who deny help are war mongers, preparing for the next war. Your enemies would turn into friends, once you talk to them with peace and harmony” being your main aim.

Elaborating on “Just and Unjust War,” Loana Maeles (Romania) said: “International organizations must not justify aggressions, just or unjust.” “No state or a group of states has the right to interfere in other countries,” she said. Intervention and/or aggression in other states were described by her as “colonial intervention.”

Imam Khomeini’s revolutionary fervor, apparently, continues to hold great importance for Iranians, supporters of Palestinians and critics of neo-imperialism pursued by United States and its allies. These people and Iranians do not seem to be moved strongly by “threat” of sanctions from United States. The appeal that Khomeini still has for masses was evident in people turning up in large numbers to visit his shrine and attend the Friday function. Besides, large posters and hoardings of Imam Khomeini were pasted all over Tehran. What was notable was the passionate fervor with which the Iranians displayed in solemnly remembering Imam Khomeini and also in loudly shouting anti-America and anti-Israel slogans. Iran certainly is not faced by any diplomatic isolation nor is the government alienated from its own people. The 21st anniversary of Imam Khomeini symbolizes that revolutionary zeal is still visible in Iran and among the Iranians. Definitely, the revolution retains its diplomatic and political appeal for the people and the Iranian government!