

Imam's Friday Prayer Leaders' Duties Discussed in Nationwide Meeting; - 16 /Jan/ 2024

In a meeting with Friday prayer leaders nationwide, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution stressed that the people's presence, will, and action are fundamental principles in Islam. He praised the Iranian people for their loyalty, patience, enthusiasm, intelligence, and selflessness. He said, **"These people, even if they appear different, are believers, and their hearts are with God. One must truly recognise their worth and deeply cherish them with love."**

He also saw the resilience and exclusive reliance on God by the oppressed people of Gaza as a subject of global admiration, promoting Islam and drawing attention to the Holy Quran. He recognised the efforts of the Yemeni people and the Ansarullah government in defending the people of Gaza as a significant example of jihad in the path of Allah.

At the beginning of this meeting, Ayatollah Imam Khamenei spoke about the month of Rajab as one of the year's most spiritual times. He urged all the people and believers to make the most of this divine blessing, engage in meaningful prayers, and stressed the importance of supplication, seeking intercession, repentance, and seeking forgiveness in this time.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution considered the leadership of Friday prayers as one of the most challenging tasks. This is because the Friday prayer leader must not only be dedicated to the divine duty of leading the congregational prayer but also because they must seek the satisfaction of the Almighty and prioritise the interests and satisfaction of the people.

He considered focusing on the people during the Friday prayers as a sign of the central position of the people in Islam and highlighted their significant role in the life and movement of Islam. He said, **"The essential role and right of the people in the Islamic system, as stated by Imam Ali (peace be upon him), is that if the people do not want to and do not come forward, the duty (to take on governance) is also relieved from a rightful person like himself. However, if the people have the desire, that responsibility becomes obligatory for him to undertake."**

The Leader referred to a verse from the Holy Quran regarding assisting the Prophet (PBUH). He said, **"God elucidates that the help and support of believers is on the same level as the victory and aid that He gives to His Prophet. This indicates that anyone in any position or rank requires the assistance of the people in fulfilling their duties."**

Referring to the different duties of officials and influential individuals to attract and engage the people, he said, **"The divine wisdom behind Friday prayers is to ensure the principle of the people's presence and to enhance and expand that presence. For this reason, the Friday prayer leader must address and engage with the worshipers in sermons, offering them ideas, guidance, and planning."**

Looking at preaching in the broad sense of the word as the central theme of Friday prayer sermons, Ayatollah Khamenei added, **"Preaching is not limited to spiritual and ethical matters; it also includes political and social issues as well."**

He said that informing the people about domestic and global issues, conspiracies and enemy plots, as well as the

needs and realities of society, should be the essential content of the sermons. Giving examples of social preaching, he said, **“The necessity of population expansion and strengthening the country's human resources, explaining the issue of the importance of marriage at an appropriate age, and elaborating on the importance of avoiding extravagance are indeed important subjects that require social preaching.”**

The Leader considered ethical sermons to be highly essential in contributing to spiritual refinement. Summarising this subject, he said, **“The goal of sermons and preaching, whether they be political, social, or ethical, is to enrich the intellectual understanding of the audience so that their minds be strengthened in dealing with issues and solutions of individual and social life.”**

Elaborating further on the requirements of Friday prayer sermons, the Leader emphasised the importance of needs assessment and audience analysis. He said, **“Friday prayer audiences include a spectrum of women and men, old and young, with varying literacy and awareness levels. The skill of the Friday prayer leader lies in presenting content that can benefit each audience segment.”**

He saw it necessary to respond correctly to the needs of today's youth, who are exposed to many influences and diverse opinions. To do so requires an understanding of their mentalities. He said, **“To assess needs and to accurately understand the minds of the audience, the Friday prayer leader needs to engage with the people and be part of the community.”**

Ayatollah Khamenei said that reading and attachment to the Holy Quran, Hadith, and books of spiritual knowledge and giving accurate responses to the audience's needs are crucial to the enrichment of Friday prayer sermons. He said, **“Another essential requirement for the important role of leading the Friday prayer is sincerity, compassion, and showing love for the people.”**

He identified the unique qualities of the Iranian people as revolving around their deep likeability, saying, **“Our people are very good and are believers, even those who may not practice certain outward religious acts have hearts connected to God, spirituality and spiritual elucidations. While not being committed in action exists to some extent in some of our behaviours, the overall essence of our people is virtuous.”**

The Leader indicated that distinctive characteristics of the people are their loyalty and readiness to participate in various arenas to defend Iran and the Islamic system against various hostile attacks, whether they appear in the form of propaganda, actions, political manoeuvres, or economic challenges. He said, **“Whenever the country and the revolution needed defence, our people have demonstrated their loyalty by taking to the streets, showing forbearance, chanting slogans, providing support, and even going to the battlefield. For this reason, the esteemed Imam unequivocally stated that the faith of our people is stronger than the faith of the early Islamic community.”**

He added, **“In the true sense, we must appreciate Iran's believing, enthusiastic, loyal, and intelligent people and deeply cherish them. Loving the people is like an elixir that will make your words impact upon the hearts of the people.”**

Ayatollah Khamenei did not confine the exhortation to piety in Friday prayer sermons to personal matters alone, saying, **“The Quran advocates collaboration and cooperation in righteous deeds and piety, so piety is also a social matter.”**

He underscored that Islam is a socio-political religion, and all Muslims should be present in the political arena. He said, **“However, the political arena is a slippery one, and to prevent slipping, it is essential to equip oneself with political piety, self-awareness, and open-mindedness, which can neutralise the psychological warfare of the enemy.”**

The Leader considered reproach and condemnation in response to any good word or deed as examples of psychological warfare by the enemy. He said, **“According to the command of the Quran, one should not fear reproach.”**

Ayatollah Khamenei saw it as necessary in the Friday prayer sermons to encourage the general public to participate in various political and social arenas. He said, **“It is essential to encourage people to engage in social welfare activities, for example, contributing to the construction of schools and hospitals, aiding the release of needy prisoners, or promoting participation in the field of politics, such as elections.”**

He held participation in elections as both a duty and a right of the people, saying, **“The people's participation in elections is a genuine necessity; however, elections are not merely an obligation but a right of the people to choose lawmakers, law administrators, or members of the Assembly of Experts.”**

The Leader said that the explanatory jihad is very effective in encouraging people to participate. He did not consider mere verbal invitation as sufficient but added, **“Actions, pleasant deportment, responsive communication, and being present in various social groupings, especially those of the youth, are essential.”**

In conclusion, Ayatollah Khamenei said that today, the hand of God is observable and evident in the international issue of Gaza. He said, **“The oppressed and resilient people of Gaza have managed to influence the world through their struggle, and today, the world looks upon these people, their fighters, and the resistance groups with admiration.”**

He regarded the conspicuousness of the oppression of the people of Gaza in the eyes of the world and their triumph at the same time, showing the effects and blessings of their patience and trust in God. He said, **“Today, no one in the world believes in a victory by the oppressive and malicious Zionist regime in the war. From the point of view of the people of the world and their politicians, this regime is seen as a ruthless, bloodthirsty, failed entity on the verge of destruction.”**

The Leader mentioned that through their steadfastness, the people of Gaza have popularised Islam in the eyes of inquisitive people worldwide and promoted the Quran. He prayed for the continuous triumph and success of the fighters of the Resistance Front, especially the people and warriors of Gaza.

He also praised and commended the outstanding efforts of the Yemeni people and the Ansarullah government in supporting the people of Gaza. He said, **“The Yemenis struck a blow to the vital interests of the Zionist regime and were not afraid of U.S. threats; this is because a God-fearing person fears no one but God and their actions truly exemplify jihad in the path of Allah.”**

Finally, vocalising his hopes, Ayatollah Khamenei said, **“With the permission of the Almighty, these efforts, the resistance, and such activities will continue until victory, and may God bestow His support and assistance upon all those who act in the path of His satisfaction.”**

Before the Leader's remarks, Hujjat al-Islam Hajj Ali Akbari, the head of the Policy Council of Friday Prayer Imams, reported on the twenty-sixth meeting of Friday Prayer Imams nationwide, attended by nearly 900 Friday Prayer Imams.