

Everyone Who Is Interested in Iran and Its Security Should Participate in the Elections

The following is main points delivered on February 5, 2020 by Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with people from various social backgrounds.

In the last era before the Revolution – during the Pahlavi dynasty and a little before that, during the Qajar dynasty – things were even worse. In those days, not only did the people not have any role, but they also used to be trampled underfoot as well. The country's sources of wealth were looted for the pockets of foreigners. Corruption had engulfed the whole government. The situation was like that before the victory of the Revolution.

Under the leadership of our magnanimous Imam Khomeini (RA) – the role of such a leader is one that cannot be compared with any other leader throughout our long history and in my opinion, it is unique in the whole world – the Iranian nation exercised their willpower and made a decision.

What does democracy mean? It means that since the beginning, the system was formulated through the votes of the people. It was they who determined who should prepare the Constitution – in other words, the Assembly of Experts on the Constitution. After the candidates elected by the people prepared the Constitution, the Constitution itself was put to the vote of the people.

In the same fashion, the legislative and executive branches, various councils, the Leadership itself, and the Assembly of Experts who select the Leader, are chosen by the people. After that, they elect a leader. This means that everything is referred to the votes of the people. This way of running the country is what defines a democratic government. So, this ten-day period is one that is not comparable to any other period of the year for us. The ten-day Fajr ceremony is the manifestation of national determination.

Of course, the Islamic government is a popular government, but it is not only characterized by that. Our government is based on faith, religion and Islamic democracy. It is Islamic as it builds individuals like Shahid Soleimani. It is Islamic as it encourages families to send their youth and their flesh and blood to the frontlines

during the Sacred Defense Era in order to engage in jihad in the way of God, while families feel proud of it.

Elections are an opportunity for our country and our nation and it is a threat for our enemies. Elections should not be underrated. We should not underplay the fact that some people say whatever they want about elections, discouraging the people with their words. Elections are an opportunity for our country: first of all, if it is held in an enthusiastic way and if all the people go to ballot boxes, this will ensure the security of the country. Why? Because the enemies who threaten the country and the nation are more afraid of popular support than our armaments. Although they are afraid of our missiles, they are more intimidated by the Islamic Republic's popular support. Presence in elections indicates the people's support for the system. That is why elections ensure security.

Secondly, they indicate the determination and power of the Iranian nation. Well, there are certain problems in the country and they themselves are aware of them. Their sanctions, as well as some negligence on our part, have brought about certain problems for the people and they have some complaints. However, because elections, the reputation of the system and the security of the country are at stake, they show their presence in the arena. This shows national determination, national power and national insight. This was another point in this regard.

Another point is that elections solve many of our international problems. The judgment of international spectators about countries and their outlook towards them depends very much on these things. They look at parliaments in different countries – if they have any – and the heads of countries to see how and with what level of participation they are elected. These issues are influential.

Besides, presidential and parliamentary elections are an opportunity for the arrival of new thoughts and new methods in the cycle of decision-making and decision-building. New thoughts will emerge. In particular – later on, I will expand on this matter, God willing – if we manage to find and elect eligible people, this will be influential as we will witness the arrival of new thoughts in the cycle of the country's decision-making and decision-building. Such individuals will be able to present new solutions to the problems of the country and they will give their expert opinion.

The issue of the economy is very important and I have always stressed it. The issue of culture and the issue of developing science and furthering progress are very important as well, but it is elections which provide the basis for all these. If we benefit from strong, proper and public elections, then in my opinion, all the problems of the country will gradually be resolved. This shows the significance of elections.

Therefore, elections are the most fundamental issue in the country. This fundamental issue should not be undermined with peripheral matters, various comments and discouraging and disheartening words. Unfortunately, such words are uttered sometimes. Of course, the enemy is active and this is not a recent phenomenon. Since the very first years, the enemies have always put a question mark on our elections. They sometimes said that there had been violations of the rules in such and such elections and they sometimes said that they had been engineered. Foreigners used to say such things all the time, but they were not of any avail and the people were not influenced by them. The people do not trust such and such a treacherous radio that describes the millions of people on the streets as “a few thousand” and that describes 200 individuals who engage in sabotage on the streets as “the Iranian nation”. This is clear. However, this depends on us not giving weight to their statements from the inside. This is what I wish to emphasize.

The elections in Iran are among the healthiest elections in the world. Of course, some countries in the world have good elections, but they are not better than ours. And in some countries, rigged elections are common. And there are some countries whose rules do not allow for the existence of democracy in the true sense of the word, including the United States itself! In the US, which is supposedly the center of democracy, even if we exclude the propaganda efforts that they make to change the path of people’s votes with money and the power of capital - this is another matter, but I do not want to discuss it now – their legal system has been shaped in a way that a person who has garnered fewer votes than another becomes president! This is how their system works! The rival candidate to the current President, who managed to hold office in the elections two, three years ago, had apparently received a few more million votes, but their regulations specified that the latter become president. Well, is this democracy? Is this the rule of the majority?

This is not how it works in our country. In our country, there is a thorough system. If someone gathers votes slightly higher than 50 percent – even if it is one tenth

more in those elections where 50 percent is the criterion - he will become president. We have acted like this throughout all these years. In different terms, various people wrote letters to me saying that there had been violations in parliamentary elections. Very well, we appointed a board to follow up the matter and carry out research. And when they examined the matter carefully, they saw that the person who delivered that report was wrong and that he was not aware of certain things.

Elections in our country are healthy. I am surprised when some people who have built their career through elections question them. How come elections are healthy and proper when they turn out to be to your advantage and they are unhealthy when they are not to your advantage? "But if the right is on their side, they come to him with all submission" [The Holy Quran, 24: 49]. The Holy Quran says that if the law rules in their favor, they will accept it, but if it is not in their favor, they will not accept it. After that, it says, "Is it that there is a disease in their hearts?" [The Holy Quran, 24: 50]. It asks if they suffer from any disease in their hearts.

Elections are important. The Islamic Consultative Majlis, which is a legislative center, should become strong. When will it be strong? It will be strong only when it is formed with a high turnout. When it has such a strong source of support, it will be strong.

I will tell you that anyone who is interested in Iran should vote. I have said this before as well, but I wish to repeat it again. There may be someone who does not like this humble person. That's alright, but do they love Iran, their country, or not? Therefore, they too should participate in elections. Anyone who loves the security of the country, who loves to see the problems of the country resolved, who loves to see a proper cyclical change of elites in the country should participate in the elections. Everyone should participate.

First of all, candidates should be religious. You should vote for those who are religious. It is faith that prevents deviation and setting foot in the wrong places. It is faith that prevents temptation from influencing you. Some people are good in the beginning, but when they set foot in certain arenas, various temptations sway them here and there. If they have strong faith, they will be immune from these deviations. So, they should be pious.

Secondly, they should be revolutionary. They should be really attached to the Revolution in the true sense of the word and they must accept the Revolution in the real sense of the word. You should vote for such people. After that they should be brave. An MP who is afraid of speaking against such and such a foreign power does not deserve to represent the people of Iran who are so dignified and brave. Of course, the current MPs did a good job. Recently, after the martyrdom of Shahid Soleimani, they made a good move against the US. One should act with courage. This is because no task will move forward with fear, trembling and anxiety. One should act in a courageous and of course, intelligent and wise manner.

They should enjoy a jihadi spirit and they should work day and night. They should be efficient and advocate justice in the true sense of the word. Our country needs justice. Humanity needs justice as well. However, justice has been oppressed and abandoned in the world. The Islamic Republic has raised the flag of justice. We should not let this flag be lowered. We should advocate justice – economic, legal and political justice - in the true sense of the word. Justice should be implemented in all these areas.

Well, if we can identify these individuals, we will vote for them. If not, we should benefit from insightful and trustworthy individuals. No one should say, “Very well, these are the conditions for parliamentary candidates, but I do not know such individuals. Therefore, I would better not vote.” No, you should certainly vote, but you should refer to insightful and trustworthy individuals in whom one has confidence. You should ask for their opinion and if they provide guidance, you should accept it so that all the people will enter the arena with pure intentions and with reliance on Allah the Exalted, God willing.

Some information about Elections in Iran

The next legislative election in Iran is scheduled for 21 February 2020, four years after the previous legislative election in 2016.

Electoral system

The 290-seat Islamic Consultative Assembly has 285 directly elected members and five seats reserved for the Zoroastrians, Jews, Assyrian and Chaldean Christians and

Armenians (one for Armenians in the north of Iran and one for Armenians in the south).

The 285 directly elected seats are elected from 196 constituencies, which are a mix of single and multi-member. In single-member constituencies the leading candidates must receive at least one-fourth of the votes in the first round. If no candidate passes this threshold, a second round is held with the two highest-vote candidates. In multi-member constituencies, voters cast as many votes as there are seats available; candidates must receive votes from at least one-fourth of the voters to be elected; if not all the seats are filled in the first round of voting, a second round is held with twice the number of candidates as there are seats to be filled (or all the original candidates if there are fewer than double the number of seats).

Voters must be Iranian citizens aged 18 or over, and shall not have been declared insane.

Qualifications

According to Iranian law, in order to qualify as a candidate one must:

- Be an Iranian citizen
- Be a supporter of the Islamic Republic, pledging loyalty to constitution
- Be a practicing Muslim (unless running to represent one of the religious minorities in Iran)
- Not have a "notorious reputation"
- Be in good health, between the ages of 30 and 75.

A candidate will be disqualified if he/she is found to be mentally impaired, actively supporting the Shah or supporting political parties and organizations deemed illegal or been charged with anti-government activity, converted to another faith or has otherwise renounced the Islamic faith, have been found guilty of corruption, treason, fraud, bribery, is an addict or trafficker or have been found guilty of violating Sharia law. Also, candidates must be literate; candidates cannot have played a role in the pre-1979 government, be large landowners, drug addicts or have convictions relating to actions against the state or apostasy. Government ministers, members of the Guardian Council and High Judicial Council are banned from running for office, as is the Head of the Administrative Court of Justice, the

Head of General Inspection, some civil servants and religious leaders and any member of the armed forces.

Source: Khamenei.ir