Supreme Leader Meets with Veteran Athletes, Coaches and Medalists - 11 /Mar/ 2013

Ayatollah Khamenei the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution met Monday morning with a group of veteran athletes, champions and medalists in international competitions and the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic competitions. Speaking at the meeting, His Eminence described the champions of the country as the ambassadors who represent the Iranian nation's identity, dignity, firm determination, intelligence, faith and commitment to sharia. He reiterated: "Champions are like a mountain peak. They prepare the ground for the movement of all people, particularly young talents, toward peaks."

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution stressed that winning sporting competitions is not possible without firm determination and high intelligence, adding: "Champions are the manifestation of the capabilities of a nation and they raise national self-confidence."

Ayatollah Khamenei stated that the presence of athletes in international arenas, accompanied by morality and good sportsmanship, promotes national values. He added: "An example of this is the presence of woman athletes who wear hijab in international arenas. This is very important and valuable."

His Eminence mentioned many examples of murder, harassment and threats that Muslim women who wear hijab are faced with in Europe, reiterating: "In such conditions, it is a great achievement for a Muslim Iranian woman who wears hijabto stand on the medal platform and make everyone respect her."

He added: "Everybody should appreciate from the bottom of their heart the value of woman athletes who participate in international sports arenas with hijab and modesty."

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution referred to the achievements that disabled athletes make and stressed: "When a disabled athlete stands on the medal platform - despite physical disabilities and all the difficulties - this shows the firm determination of that athlete as well as the firm determination and great dignity of his or her nation."

Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated: "The messages that I issue to show my gratitude towards international achievements of our athletes stem from an honest and genuine feeling and I believe that athletes render services to their nation and their country. By winning these competitions, they convey the message that the Iranian nation is a determined, steadfast and religious nation."

Referring to champions who chant religious and spiritual slogans in international arenas, His Eminence said, "I express my deep gratitude to athletes who mention the name of our infallible Imams (a.s.) in international arenas, prostrate themselves, pray and say adhan after conquering the peak of success. I also express my gratitude to woman athletes who wear hijab."

He stated that his feeling of gratitude is because of the fact that Iranian athletes give prominence to spirituality in a world in which young people are oriented towards decadence, further reiterating: "For this reason, our athletes should appreciate their value and they should try to preserve and strengthen spirituality and good sportsmanship."

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution pointed to young Iranian athletes who refuse to compete with Zionist athletes, adding: "This move is very valuable and it is an important effort to confront the usurping Zionist regime."

Ayatollah Khamenei mentioned that since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the ground has been prepared for the cultivation of young talents in different arenas: "The progress and achievements of Iranian athletes in different sports signify that Iranian youth have great capacities and talents in different areas. We should invest on building and developing these talents until they can win different competitions."

His Eminence described the great capabilities of Iranian youth in areas relating to science, technology and research as an undeniable fact, stressing: "The history of Islamic Iran is a clear proof of this issue and the emergence of outstanding personalities such as Ibn Sina [Avicenna], Zakariya Razi, Farabi, Saadi and Hafiz shows that enormous capacities exist in this area of the world."

He added: "If people turn to sports activities, many social and behavioral problems - such as addiction, family rows, financial and psychological problems and other such problems - will be solved. Many of our problems will be solved if sports activities become truly common among all the people in our country. Of course, today the situation is a lot better than the past, but we still need to improve this. You can play a role in this regard. That is to say, you can

strengthen morality and promote Iranian traditions."

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution described morality in sports as a very important issue, stressing: "Fortunately, our athletes are morally healthy. But when there is a lot of media attention on an international level, a young athlete may be in serious danger of becoming immoral and he should take care of himself."

Ayatollah Khamenei added: "Moral virtues which are necessary for an athlete includebeing humble, being loyal and sympathetic to the people and exercising good sportsmanship. Athletes should try to preserve and strengthen these moral virtues."

His Eminence reiterated: "Naturally, a champion has great self-confidence. He does not need to do things that weak people do. He does not need to flatter, lie and cheat. He does not need to be hypocritical."

Criticizing people who try to destroy the sporting environment of the country by making accusations, causing rows, spreading false rumors and damaging the reputation of individuals, he said: "Unfortunately, the media which broadcast sporting events have played a major role in committing these illegal actions and I warn them in this regard."

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution reiterated: "Some media networks which broadcast sporting events try to make interviewees say inappropriate things by magnifying trivial issues and causing rows. This is an inappropriate course of action and the exact opposite should be promoted by media networks."

Ayatollah Khamenei called on officials in charge of sporting activities to prioritize sports, stressing: "A number of sports which have deep historical roots should receive more attention and there should be more investment in such sports."

His Eminence stated that one of the necessary things which should be done is to adopt a scientific approach towards sports, further reiterating: "Efforts should be focused on developing research-based guidelines and carrying out research in this regard and we should not just rely on research that is carried out in other countries."

He added: "When our young experts have the capability to make great and astonishing achievements in complex scientific areas, they can also come up with innovative ideas and carry out research in areas related to sports."

Addressing champions and veteran athletes, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution said, "You are very popular among the people of Iran and I hope you will remain popular forever."