Ayatollah Khamenei meeting with the visiting Azeri President Ilham Aliyev in Tehran - 23 /Feb/ 2016

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on Tuesday, referred to good political relations and numerous commonalities between Iran and Azerbaijan, particularly religious and denominational commonalities between the two nations, adding: "Promoting Islamic teachings and showing respect for religious manifestations and rituals will be welcomed by people and cause them to support [government] in the face of threats."

During the meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei described the Islamic Republic's view of Azerbaijan's people as based on brotherhood and beyond normal friendship and neighborly relations, saying: "Political stability, security, tranquility and public welfare of the people of Azerbaijan are very important to us and in the light of the wholehearted understanding [that exists] between the two nations, economic exchanges and cooperation must increase in different sectors."

Referring to religious commonalities between Iranian and Azeri people, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution said: "The Islamic and Shia beliefs of Azerbaijan's people are a valuable asset and the more the government shows respect for and positive attitude towards these religious manifestations and beliefs, the more will be people's support for the government and their resistance against the hostility of certain superpowers."

Ayatollah Khamenei said countering seditious efforts of Takfiri groups among nations hinges on bolstering Islamic activities, adding: "Religiously speaking, the Azerbaijan region is deep-rooted and the birthplace of some senior Muslim scholars, and the people of Azerbaijan are aware and vigilant people, and the government's encouragement and assistance in religious activities could be very influential in attracting their [positive] view and [winning] their hearts."

Ayatollah Khamenei also endorsed the Azeri president's remarks that most threats posed against the two countries come from the same source, adding: "Promoting Islamic teachings and Shiism will attract the assistance of God and the favor of the Infallible [Shia] Imams in the face of problems and threats."

In this meeting, which was also attended by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev referred to close relations between Tehran and Baku and while describing his negotiations in Tehran as very important and constructive, added: "Shared culture, religion and history have created deep-seated bonds between Iran and Azerbaijan."

He referred to the signing of more than 10 cooperation agreements between Tehran and Baku, and after highlighting bilateral relations between the two sides as brotherly and very excellent, said: "Good steps have been taken in the field of [expanding] trade, transport, energy and industrial cooperation and we are trying to [strengthen] unity and broaden relations between the two countries in all fields."

The Azeri president said Tehran and Baku share similar stances on international issues, adding: "Iran plays a very important role in establishing peace and stability in the world and we consider Iran's security as our own security."

Mr. Aliyev noted that threats against the two countries stem from the same source, saying: "During this visit, it was agreed that in cooperation with Iran, we would fight against terrorism so that peace and stability would be established in the region."

Emphasizing the need to respect Islamic values, he highlighted the Azeri government's religious services and added: "During the period of the independence of Azerbaijan, 2,000 mosques have been built [in the country], half of which have been [constructed] during my term in office."

The Azeri president also decried anti-Islamic moves, mentioning people's religious beliefs as the root cause of enmities against his country and saying: "Islam and Shiism are favored by people in Azerbaijan and the presence of a great personality like you in the region gives us a lot of force and energy."