# The Leader’s remarks in meeting with thousands of people from East Azarbaijan province - 15 /Feb/ 2017

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

(Arabic prayer)

Dear brethren and sisters! You are very welcome. Every year, the 29th [day] of [the Iranian month of] Bahman is one of our epic and glorious days at this Hosseiniyeh [religious place of worship] because of your presence. For me, who am keen on meeting with the dear people of [the northwestern city of] Tabriz and Azarbaijan [province], this is an opportunity, so that, if I cannot meet with all those dear people, [at least,] I can meet with a group of youths, officials, venerable clerics, and various walks of life here at this Hosseiniyeh. You are very welcome! Convey my greetings to the rest of the dear people in Tabriz and in other cities of Azarbaijan. Convey my greetings to your other citizens.

The issue of [what happened on] the 29th [day of the Iranian month] of Bahman [in the Iranian year 1356 (February 18, 1978)] is not simply a historic issue, [but] is a lesson [to be learned, [and] is a [major] topic [for discussion]. Let me say this to you, young people: not only in the case of the [Islamic] Revolution and the 29th of Bahman – and of course the 29th of Bahman turned into a driving force for the victory of the revolution on the 22nd of Bahman of the following year (February 11, 1979); it was a driving force in order to make this [victory of the revolution] possible; it was a driving force – but also since about 120 years ago, [or] 130 years ago, the people of Azarbaijan and the people of Tabriz have been one of the most important axes of struggles with regard to all important social developments in the country and important political developments. Our dear youths must know this, [because] this is the identity of Azarbaijan. Both in the case of the [prohibition of the consumption of] tobacco and [what] late Hajj Mirza Javad Mojtahed Tabrizi [did in this regard], [and] in the case of constitutionalism – and as you know the constitutionalist developments related to Azarbaijan are famous – and in the case of the national movement for taking [Iran’s] oil industry back from Britain, Azarbaijan has been one of those important [and] influential places. Both in [the case of] the Islamic Revolution, and during the [eight-year Iraqi] imposed war [against Iran], and in what happened before the war in Tabriz itself and in Azarbaijan itself, it was the people of Azarbaijan who played a [very important] role.

Early in the revolution, some people started a move in opposition to the revolution [and] to create divide [and] to oppose what the revolutionary people of Iran believed in. They assumed in their own imagination that Tabriz was a good place to do this – and this has been always among old policies of Britain and anti-Iran elements – [and] they went there and stoked unrest. I was a member of the Revolution Council; there were discussions in Tehran, [and] some people were concerned, [but] the Imam said nobody must be concerned, [because] the people of Tabriz would give an [appropriate] answer to them; this actually happened and there was no need to anybody else [to interfere]. The people of Azarbaijan are like this. During the time of [Iraqi imposed] war [against Iran], the Ashura Division [of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps] was among the first divisions to engage the enemy. It was not only that division, [because] Azarbaijan’s clerics, various walks of life in Azarbaijan, [and] logistical organs in Azarbaijan were all present in the arena. This is the history of Azarbaijan. Azarbaijan has always stood up alone in the face of avarice of those who have set their sight on creating ethnic divide in the country and [the people of Azarbaijan] are still taking the same steps at the present time.

Well, different languages are spoken in our country, [and] our country is made up of different ethnic groups; there are Turks, there are Persians, there are Arabs, there are Baluch people, there are Lors, [and] there are Kurds. This is some form of diversity and this diversity is an opportunity, [but] the enemy has always set its sight on making this [diversity] a means of [creating] gaps [among the nation]. Big Iranian ethnic groups themselves, and of course better than all, the people of Azarbaijan, are taking the bull by its horns and are standing against this evil policy of

enemies. Our dear youths across the country must pay attention to this [point] that the enemy keep a sharp lookout and intends to take advantage of any fault line, which they assume can create a quake [in the Iranian society] in order to destroy the fundament of this country's independence and the fundament of the revolution. It wants to take advantage of all possibilities, [and to do this,] it looks around to find fault lines, while there are no fault lines, [because Iranian] people are unanimous, [and] people are united.

Well, you, who are yourselves from Tabriz and from Azarbaijan, you are aware of your own sentiments. This poem, which you read out here that "By the Quran, we are loyal to our allegiance to you," I know this [is true and] this is something beyond doubt. The people of Azarbaijan have proven this not only in words, [but also] in action, and have shown that they stand in the face of the tempting and divisive enemy. My dear ones, the rest of the Iranian ethnic groups [are] also, fortunately, like this; people of Khorasan are like this – despite religious differences in eastern part of Khorasan province – Kurdish people are like this, [and] Baluch people are like this. There have been clerics among Baluch people, who stood tall in the face of the enemies of the revolution in early [years following victory of the Islamic] Revolution. I have been there for a long time, [and] I knew clerics [who were active] there. Let me mention their names, so that, people would know them: late Mowlavi Abdolaziz Sadati from [the southeastern city of] Saravan [was one of them]; [he was] a skinny old man who stood against those who opposed the revolution, those who criticized the revolution, and those who tried to find fault with the revolution, and defended the revolution; he was also a Baluch and Sunni Muslim.

In Kurdistan, [there was] late [Mohammad] Sheikholeslam; he delivered a strong and powerful speech in [the city of] Sanandaj. They were Sunnis – [because] Kurds follow Shafi'i denomination [of Sunni Islam] – but they defended the revolution, because they saw that the revolution has hoisted the flag of Islam. [However,] counterrevolutionary [elements] martyred Sheikholeslam because of the same speech, [and] because of the same positions. In Khuzestan, Arab youths stood against the invasion [of the country] by the regime of [former Iraqi dictator] Saddam [Hussein]. They [Iraqi invaders] were Arabs, [and] these [Iranian youths] were also Arabs, but this latter Arabs stood [against the invasion]. The name of martyr Ali Hashemi – the young Arab commander from Khuzestan and [the city of] Ahvaz – and the names of these [people] will never be forgotten, [because] these [brave men] stood [against the enemy]. He [the Iraqi invader] spoke Arabic, and this [Iranian youth] also spoke Arabic, but this latter one understood the truth, recognized the enemy's plots and stood [against them]. The same is true about the rest of Iranian ethnic groups. [However,] ahead of all and better than all are the people of Azarbaijan. Now, [let enemies to] continuously hatch plots, to continuously deliberate, to continuously talk, to continuously spend money, [and] to continuously take out petrodollars from coffers of tycoons and spend them on creating division in the country; they will not be able [to achieve this goal].

The nation is united and consolidated. Today, I will talk about this issue, will also talk about [the demonstrations on] the 22nd day of [the Iranian month of] Bahman [which marks victory of the Islamic Revolution], [and] will also talk about officials and their responsibilities. All these [factors] must be seen in one place. The Iranian nation is standing [against enemies], and [people] are consolidated. Now, a group has been repeating such terms as "national reconciliation, [and stresses on] national reconciliation." In my opinion, such remarks are meaningless, [because] people [of Iran] are like a single hand, [and] are united together. When it comes to [protecting] Islam, when it comes to [protecting] Iran, when it comes to independence [of the country], [and] when it comes to resistance in the face of the enemy, people stand fast with all they have. It is possible for two people to have different viewpoints on any given political issue, [but] it does not affect [the unity among people]. Why you keep saying reconciliation? Are people estranged [to one another] to need reconciliation? Newspapers clamor over such terms, [and] they do not realize that they are causing problems [for the country]. When you say reconciliation, it is like that there is some estrangement [among people], [while] there is no estrangement. Yes, our people are estranged to those who insulted the [sanctity of] the day of Ashura. The nation is estranged to those, who on the day of Ashura, disrobed a Basiji youth on the street and beat him with brutality, with tomfoolery, [and] shamelessly. We will not reconcile with these [people] at all and with those people who are averse to the essence of the revolution, say 'the essence of the [Islamic] establishment is our target', [and] say 'elections are just an excuse for us [to stoke unrest]'; of course, these people are a small group, are a few [and] are just a drop in comparison with the huge ocean of the Iranian nation; they are nothing. [The people who form] this ocean are consolidated and united with one another; this unity does exist and must exist and must be bolstered on a daily basis.

Thank God, the Azarbaijani elites have always been paying attention to these points. The zealous youths of Azarbaijan, [and] the people of Azarbaijan from all walks of life, have always been paying attention to this point and have stood against the enemies' plots, the enemies' temptations, [and] the enemies' activities; have [always] defended the national unity and have laid down their lives for it. You, in the first place, and us and all officials and members of the nation must appreciate Azarbaijan. Azarbaijan is a point of strength for the revolution and for the Islamic establishment. This is the first point.

As for the 22nd [day] of [the Iranian month of] Bahman, first of all, I must thank the entire nation of Iran from the bottom of my heart. This year's [nationwide demonstrations on] the 22nd of Bahman gave credit to the revolution, to the Islamic establishment, and to the Islamic Iran. The estimate offered by domestic officials and those people who usually give an estimate of the crowd on the streets [saying] that how many people were there, indicated that in the big cities of the country and in 70 percent of the country's [smaller] cities, the crowd [taking part in the revolution anniversary] demonstrations, in comparison to past years, was higher in some cases, much higher in some cases, and double [the previous years] in some cases. This has been said by those people, who are our domestic estimators; [and] it was not only said by them, [because] the foreigners have also said this, [and] the enemies of the revolution have said this [as well]. The same people, who disdained the Bahman 22 demonstrations every year and said [only] a few thousand people have come into the streets, used terms like million[-strong rallies] this year. Yes, it is true. Millions of people across the country poured into the streets. I am short of words [how to describe this], [and] I am not important enough to thank [the people], [because the revolution] belongs to people themselves. It is God, who must be thanked, [and] it is God who must be praised for having oriented people's hearts in this direction.

The important point is that throughout the year, hundreds of media [outlets] talk against Iran with the money [provided to them by] the [US] CIA [spy] organization, and [Israeli] Mossad organization, and British intelligence and spy agencies, and [also through] petrodollars supplied [to them] by tycoons. Throughout the year, they are busy [doing anti-Iran propaganda] day and night. They also find scores of bankrupt [and] fugitive political [figures], who have fled Iran, [and] pay them money in order to write analyses, write news, [and] prepare speeches against the revolution and against the [Islamic] establishment with the purpose of disdaining [everybody] from the Imam to [all] Iranian people, to various activities of the revolution – to which I will make a reference later – [and to] accuse the revolution, accuse the establishment, and undermine [the Islamic establishment]. They endeavor for an entire year, then on the 22nd day of Bahman this downpour of divine blessing, [and] this huge popular presence pours down like rain and clears this contaminated and misty atmosphere. It flows into the streets like a blessed current, cleanses people's mind and clears it of contaminations. This is [what] the 22nd of Bahman [does].

We have a 22nd of Bahman, we have a Quds day, and each one of them has its own meaning, [and] has a goal. People understand this concept very well and enter the arena in view of that concept. Now, who are in the arena? This is a very important point. You, in the city of Tabriz or in other cities or here in Tehran, just have a look at this huge crowd, which is moving most of these [demonstrators] are not [even] 37 years old – while the revolution is 37 years [or] 38 years old – [and this means that most demonstrators] were not there in early post-revolution years, have not seen the Imam, have not seen the period of the Sacred Defense [the Iraqi impose war against Iran], [and] have not seen the dark and bitter time of the monarchial regime's repression, but they take part [in the anniversary of the revolution]. Once on the streets, they clench their fists and chant slogans and shout with the same enthusiasm, with the same sentiment, with the same knowledge, [and] with the same intellectualism and insight [as the revolutionary generation]. What does this mean? It means that the revolution is still alive; [and] it means that the revolution continues to thrive, is growing, [and] these are new cases of growths of the revolution. It is these third and fourth post-revolution generations, who are coming [into the arena] and stand in the face of the enemies and make their categorical statement. This is very important.

The enemies are trying – of course they are beating the air – to prove that the revolution is inefficacious; well, we have problems, [but] where in the world and in what country all the problems have been set right and solved in full? Problems exist everywhere, we also have them – now I will explain about them – [and] we do not deny them either; problems exist without a doubt, but the enemy tries to ignore the advances made by the revolution in the face of these problems. The revolution and the Islamic establishment have taken a great step during these about 38 years. I have a list at my disposal of the main plans of the revolution [which have been implemented] during these [past] 38 years, [which shows] what [great] efforts have been made for the country. Such efforts are not made by capable and

active governments [even] in a hundred years.
We [must] compare [these efforts] with what was done before the revolution. With regard to infrastructural issues – and clearly these infrastructural issues are very important for the future of the country and for the progress of the country – in some cases, the progress of the country during revolution years has been 1,000 percent [higher compared with pre-revolution era]; I mean ten times. In some cases, [the progress made after the revolution] has been 2,000 percent to 6,000 percent, that is, sixty times [more than what was before the revolution]. With regard to the number of university students, the amount of scientific progress, the infrastructural work done, numerous and huge cultural issues, [and] national prestige and dignity, we compare [the present time] with [the situation] before the revolution, with the time of the monarchial regime, with the period of America's domination [on the country], [and] with the time that Tehran was a resting place for Zionist elements, who when they felt exhausted, they came here in the garden of Shiyan, which was their resting place then, to have a good time, stay [for] seven days, eight days, [or] ten days and go back; we compare this with that. The country has progressed, [and] has moved [forward]; it has undergone a [growth] spurt. At that time, the country was run by a subdued government. The monarchial government was a subdued government, [which was] subdued to America, subdued to Britain, [and] subdued to [other] big governments. It had made the nation abject and obsequious, had totally shut down the country's potentialities, [and] had given control of some [of those potentialities] to the enemy. The revolution took place and activated many of those potentialities, [and this is why] our country is dignified now.
Today, across the region, almost with regard to all regional issues, nothing will happen as long as Iran does not want, [and] as long as Iran is not present and does not make a decision. The Iranian nation has shown that it is a resistant nation; our enemies say all these [facts] in their analyses; they say that the Iranian nation cannot be confronted and countered, [because] it is a resistant nation, [which] resists [and] does not submit to the enemies; this is [true] dignity. You compare this dignity with the period of humiliation that they [the enemies] had imposed on this nation, [and] on this country. Yes, it is clear that this is a cause of happiness and delight for the youths, who come into the arena. This is the [real meaning of] the 22nd of Bahman; the 22nd of Bahman is a divine bounty, [and] is a divine opportunity for the nation to show itself, [and] to cry out its determination at the top of its voice. Everything that is in the heart of this nation, they become evident in their slogans on the 22nd of Bahman across the country. We seek progress, seek Islam, [and] seek an Islamic establishment emanating from people, which will be able to solve people's problems; this is the slogan of [the demonstrations on] every year's 22nd of Bahman and [proves that] the nation is standing fast. The nation will undoubtedly reject any official who wants not to be with the nation and does not stand fast. Well, this is about the issue of the 22nd of Bahman.
The next point I want to mention here is addressed at esteemed officials of the country. I tell the officials not to take this popular presence in [the nationwide demonstrations on] the 22nd of Bahman to mean that they have no complaints about the activities of us, officials. People have grievances, [and] people have grievances about many things that happen in the country. People are averse to discrimination. Wherever they see discrimination, they feel upset and suffer. Anywhere they see underperformance [of officials, they feel] likewise, wherever they see inattention to problems [they feel] likewise, [and] wherever they see work is not done [by officials, they feel] likewise; [in short,] people have grievances.
The 22nd of Bahman should be seen in its own capacity. Steadfastness of people in the face of an enemy, which is lying in ambush to devour Iran, is one thing, which shows itself on the 22nd of Bahman, but their expectations from us, officials, is something else.
Well, [at the beginning of the new Iranian year] I said that [this year would be] the year of "Economy of Resistance, practical steps and action." [This year] is coming to an end; it is [almost] the end of the [11th Iranian month of] Bahman, [and it is time when] practical steps and action must be shown [to the people]. I also said at the beginning of the year that state officials – both officials of the executive power and administration, and officials of the judiciary, and officials of the Majlis [parliament], makes no difference, all of them – must show at the end of the year that what they have done for [the realization of] the practical steps and action during the current year; they should not say 'this must be done', but must say 'this was done'; this must become clear.
Today, we are plagued by problems, [and] the problems of people and grievances of people cannot be overlooked; officials must take [these problems] seriously. The problem of unemployment is important, the problem of recession is important, [and] the problem of high prices is important. These are among those problems that exist [in the

country]. Of course, officials are making efforts [to solve them], [and] we see this, but capacities [to work] are higher than these [measures taken so far]. Now, I will, God willing, explain about this in due time; we are not in a deadlock, [and] we are not facing a deadlock with regard to economic problems. There are problems, from two sides, three sides, [and] four sides, there are problems, but the way out of the problems is also clear. How can we get out of these problems? Officials must try [to do this].

Four [or] five years before this, I said in my New Year speech that today the gaze of the enemies of the Iranian nation is fixed on the issue of economy. They are trying to put pressure on the economy of the country, and put such pressure on the economy of the country that people would be afflicted with [all kinds of] problems. When people are plagued with problems, they become disillusioned, [and] lose heart; [and] this is what the enemy wants. The enemy wants the people to be discouraged about their revolution, their establishment, their administration, [and] their country. Therefore, they put pressure on the issue of economy [and] mount pressure [on this sector]. Officials must pay attention to this point.

Of course, it is not like that our problems are simply limited to the economic problems. Everybody knows that I am very sensitive about the cultural problems, [and] am very sensitive about the issue of science, but when I look at the priorities over limited periods of time, the issue of the country's economy appears as first priority, because the enemy is aware of this. Today, they are still doing the same things; everybody [must] pay attention to this. Both under the former American administration, and under the present administration, one of the ploys used by the [American] enemy has been to keep threatening [the country] with war; and [that] the military option is on the table and the likes of this. That European official also tells our officials that if it was not for the JCPOA [Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 group of countries], war in Iran would be inevitable, [and] there would certainly be war, [but] this is a sheer lie! Why they talk about war? [They do this] in order to deflect our focus toward [military] war, [but] the real war is something else; the real war is the economic war, the real was is [the imposition of] sanctions, [and] the real war is to conquer the areas of work and activity and technology inside the country; this is the real war. They threaten us with the military war in order to [make us] ignore this; [to forget that] the real war is the cultural war. So many different television [channels] and various online networks are working in order to take the hearts and minds of our youths away from religion and sanctities and chastity and modesty and the likes of these. They are seriously at work, [and] spend a lot of money for this purpose! This is the real war.

Officials must be vigilant. I told the esteemed president 'give notice to your managers to combine [their] management with transparency, [and] combine [their] management with supervision'. A [state] manager must [also] do supervision, [and] must follow up on the work [he is supposed to do]. That we merely say a given task must be done, [and] the opposite side says 'yes', that task would not be done. It must become clear in the field and on the ground that whether a task has been done; these [issues] are among those things, which are needed by us and attention must be paid to them.

I believe that in the venerable verse [of the Quran, which says:] "And prepare against them using whatever power you're enabled with," most probably the meaning of "power" is not just military power; of course, military power is part of it, but it is not limited to military power. [The Quran says:] prepare against them using whatever power you're enabled with. [It means] strengthen yourself from inside as much as you can. This is the meaning of strengthening the internal structure of the country, which I have frequently talked about. [You must] increase your power from scientific viewpoint, increase your power from technological viewpoint, increase your power from the viewpoint of domestic production, increase your power from the viewpoint of influencing into foreign markets, [and] increase your power from the viewpoint of discovering numerous potentialities that exist in this country and have not been tapped yet, and take advantage of these potentialities.

When I announced, in defining [general] policies [notified to the administration], that the country should achieve an eight-percent [economic] growth, some people said it was not possible! Then specialists and experts said if we took [the existing] potentialities into account, a growth of more than eight percent would be also possible to be realized in the country! [This does] not [mean] growth in the sense that we would sell more oil – of course, this is useful, but this is not what I mean – [it actually] means growth in domestic production of the country, [and] economic strength of the country; this means the same [concept of] the Economy of Resistance on which I have frequently emphasized and have repeated. Then some people come and highlight shortages, exaggerate [them], magnify [those shortages], and say nothing about advances, nor they talk about solutions [to the existing problems]! It happens that these are the

same people, who had persuaded the enemies to impose sanctions on Iran; they had persuaded [the enemies] to impose sanctions [on the country]. [Now,] these people highlight weaknesses more than anybody else – less so inside [the country], [and] more so outside.
Dear brethren, dear sisters, youths of Azarbaijan, o brave people of difficult arenas, who have passed your test! Let me tell you this: [you must] know that if we continue [our march] according to this style of movement and, as they commonly say, on this very track, the victory will certainly belong to Iranian nation. Everybody [must] think, everybody [must] endeavor, everybody [must] persevere, everybody [must] take the future into consideration, everybody [must] keep ideals before their eyes and move toward those ideals, [and] everybody [must] keep this sacred hope warm in their hearts. We thank God, who has kept this beam of hope alive in our hearts that [has not allowed us to] lose hope on the future of the country for a single moment and thank God, we have achieved better than what we had hoped for and more than that. However, this is not the final limit to our aspirations, is not all we demand; [and] also is not all God demands us to achieve. We have just taken a short step, [but] we must take longer steps and go ahead and, God willing, achieve what the Islamic establishment has promised, which is the creation of a just, progressive, powerful, dignified and strong Islamic society, and we will certainly achieve it, God willing and with the permission of the Almighty God. God willing, the Almighty God would protect you, [and] the Almighty God would keep you safe.

Peace be unto you and so may the mercy of Allah and His blessings