The Speech of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Imam Khamenei, for the Talented and Elites - 17 /Oct/ 2023

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may Allah's blessings be bestowed upon the Prophet Mohammad and his exalted family, especially Imam Mahdi (ajtf).

I extend a warm welcome to all of you. I am truly glad to be once more in the company of a group of elites. Thank you for the critical remarks and noteworthy issues you've put forth; however, two points should be considered.

First, all but one or two of the issues raised are related to administrative affairs, which the government and executive departments should pursue and carry out. Without question, I will also follow up to ensure that these issues are gathered, summarised, and submitted to the relevant sections of the government. Meanwhile, I suggest you [the elite] also bring up these topics in your meetings with the government so that, God willing, problems will be resolved, and progress will be made. Fortunately, the administrative authorities are active; our president is hardworking and follows up on issues.

Secondly, I would remind you that, at specific periods in the past, a significant divide existed between the elite and the governmental authorities, but now, the situation is different. Today, many youths, such as you [the elites], hold various positions in administrative sections of the government, as ministers or deputy ministers, or at middle management levels. Why are these critical issues abandoned here and not submitted to the authorities? You, who stand here and announce your viewpoints! You are still young, not yet middle-aged or elderly! Those like you [the elite] should create relationships and establish connections! Why is there no chain along which these words can be transferred among different organisations? Consider this issue.

Take, for example, the topic of automobiles [which was just mentioned]. The issue of automobiles—an important one—should be put forth to the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade, where many energetic and talented young individuals are employed. Another topic discussed in this session was the issue of divested and deprived regions. Well, the government has made special considerations for such regions, and a group of youth (mainly students) are taking action in this field. Bring up this issue with them. The suggestions and comments presented here are precious; however, they should not just be kicked about and put aside. God willing, I will also follow up on this topic and ask those in authority to do so. I might even speak with the President in person on this issue. Most definitely, I believe you should go ahead and take more practical steps regarding the issues brought up here today.

I have noted several points to share with you about scientific progress, eliteness, and the elite. First, a scientific movement has been active in Iran over the past two decades or more—a good beginning. Notable changes and activities have been made. The slogans that spread among the academia and students were influential. Slogans such as "Passing Scientific Borders" and "Software Movement." The idea has become a reality! After the issue of scientific progress was brought up in academic environments and the [above-mentioned] slogans became widespread, the campaign sprang up and began making scientific changes and progress in academic fields. This movement was not just a sentimental action set to rise suddenly and then just as suddenly decline. Happily, it continued! At that time, international scientific centres claimed Iran's scientific growth rate was twelve or thirteen times higher than the global average. This event was significant! I also remember discussing the high rate of our scientific progress and growth at various academic gatherings during that time. Nonetheless, we should not overthink this tremendous scientific progress and inflate ourselves with pride. Despite the fantastic initial progress, we have

now fallen behind [and still have much to attain] in science. I have previously quite thoroughly explained the issue of ‘backwardness’ and falling behind and do not intend to elaborate on it again. Iran has been held back for years [maybe even centuries]. During the selfish and cruel monarchies—such as the Ghajars and Pahlavis—Iran ranked at the bottom of the pack in science! Despite its former cultural and scientific history, Iran had nothing; Iran was nothing.

I hereby declare, now and today, that we must prepare ourselves for a new chapter of scientific stimuli. We have experienced incredible scientific growth and progress and currently enjoy a relatively high global scientific ranking—this is a reality. However, now we need our country's scientific and academic institutes to take an ingenious step forward to prevent us from lagging behind. Yes, we have improved and gone on, but so have others. Some neighbouring countries, spotting Iran’s progress, have been encouraged to make a change, though they had once fallen behind. They, too, have made significant progress, and now, there is an actual probability that we will fall behind in the global competition for scientific progress.

This threat does exist! I have repeatedly quoted the [golden] saying, “Knowledge is power.” If we want to protect our country, Iran, from harm commonly faced by all countries, the first and most vital step is to have scientific growth. If we fall behind, we will be vulnerable. Thus, we should do our best not to fall behind.

At first, there must be [financial and] material investments. The government should pursue new ventures in science and scientific progress. I have repeatedly asserted that such investment does not result in significant expenses. Such an investment is, in fact, the catalyst for doubling and tripling incomes or perhaps even more. The private sector, too, should be encouraged and even pressured to invest in scientific fields. Thus, both financial investment and scientific investment are necessary. Those in scientific spheres should be innovative and ingenious, and they should seek shortcuts in science. Iran urgently needs a new scientific movement, a new leap, and it should take place with the cooperation of the government, the youth in authority, and the elite, several of whom have gathered here today.

The second important issue regards the opportunity before Iran, which is now at the present. Of course, a talented nation can improve; however, the opportunity to progress does not always present itself. I aim not to cause any misunderstanding or make you pessimistic about the future. In my opinion, the future is bright and full of hope; the future horizon is bright. Nevertheless, experience and history have shown that one should grasp opportunities when they conduct themselves and gain the ultimate advantage. On the paths nations traverse, whether political, social, scientific, or other, difficult situations arise in which one desires to act but does not have the ability. One has the will to do what one should, but the necessary infrastructures and facilities are unavailable. On some occasions, the will does not exist, perhaps due to despair, self-cynicism, a lack of confidence in one’s abilities, or unfamiliarity with the situation. Therefore, there are times when the motivation for movement does not exist! Progress was considered impossible in some periods, such as the Pahlavi era. Most assuredly, there have been other such periods as well. You must have heard of the ‘pitcher’ narrative. This story goes back to the time when the nationalisation and independence of the oil industry were taking place. I was a child back then, but I remember the events. It was before Mosaddegh became prime minister. A minority of the national parliament insisted on nationalising the oil industry, which, at that time, was in the hands of the British. The Pahlavi prime minister of that time ridiculed the plan's supporters to nationalise the oil industry, saying, “How can we Iranians have the oil industry under our control and power when we cannot even make a suitable pitcher?” Do you know what I mean by “pitcher”? I saw one a very long time ago. In the past, in some villages, people made a special kind of jug called a ‘pitcher’ not with copper or iron but with clay. The Pahlavi prime minister believed that we could only make clay ‘pitchers’ and were incapable of managing our oil industry. Thus, this phrase that Iranians can only make clay pitchers became popular among the common folk.

What was the condition of the oil industry at that time? How did its management become an issue of conflict? The conflict centred on the control of the refinery in Abadan. The claim was that Iranians could not manage it. They believed this was true! Such incidents may occur, and such assumptions may prevail again, though not as seriously as

in this case. There might be occasions in which, during various stages, the will to take action is weakened.

Thanks to Allah, my observation of Iran's general situation today leads me to believe that such problems do not currently exist. The 'will' to move and the 'ability' are there. The ability I am talking of is not just words; it is a reality. We have millions of pupils, students, and graduates. The statistics are apparent. Millions! This wealth should not be underestimated. And most of them, if not all, are motivated. A revolutionary mentality exists in Iran. The statements of the youth here today, the claims that they are ready and have suggestions, are truly priceless.

Therefore, now that we have the will, the motivation, the decision, and the ability to make progress and instigate movement, we should put them to use. If we do not take advantage of the opportunity of the will and power that exist, we will become oppressors. Whose duty is it to take the most benefit? The responsibility belongs to everyone: officials, the elite, and scientific centres. If we don't, we will be oppressors; we will wrong our country and our history. We are all responsible: the government, all those in authority, and even myself. You, young elites, and all those in authority at scientific ministries and centres are responsible. We should all try to propel this scientific movement forward to realise innovative moves, shortcuts, and new leaps. This is my expectation. It is an obligation we all must shoulder.

Regarding responsibility, it is worth pointing out that knowledge leads to accountability, just like all other belongings and properties, whether intellectual, financial or might and power, knowledge, too, results in responsibility. For whatever asset the Glorious Almighty bestows upon you, a responsibility is also designated. Knowledge is one of those precious properties, and having knowledge makes one responsible. What does this mean? It denotes that one should use their knowledge and its credit for the benefit of others. Sometimes, a scholar can benefit others with his reputation and good name in ways unrelated to his field of study or specialisation. In this way, he is fulfilling his "responsibility." If you specialise in nuclear science, medical science, physics, management or any other field, you should use your knowledge and reputation to serve the people.

Amir-al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him), has famously put an end to any discussion on this topic, saying: "Allah has obligated scholars and scientists not to tolerate the greed and avarice of the cruel, nor the starvation and desperate state of the oppressed" (6). In other words, one should react and take measures against such situations. Today, we are obligated to take action regarding Gaza. Many people are hungry, they are being bombarded, and they are being martyred by the thousands. Among the various favouritisms that exist around the world, scholars in our country, whether at universities or Hawzah [i.e., religious seminaries], should first try to recognise the truth of the situation and then support and defend the truth. Scholars cannot be indifferent to and unmoved by the situation of the oppressed!

Another point I want to mention is one I've discussed several times: the standard procedure for publishing scientific articles (7). I thought my former discourses on this issue had been enough and the erroneous routine had been corrected, but sadly, it was not. I do not believe there is any logic behind requiring the publication of scientific articles as a prerequisite for official promotion. This is truly unacceptable. I do endorse our scholars' participation in international scientific competitions; without a doubt, we should contribute to this field. However, we should not compel our faculty staff and scholars to publish their scientific research in specific international journals or famous scientific centres to qualify for a promotion. Of course, writing articles is excellent. I completely agree that the scientific efforts of our distinguished scholars in their fields of study and the publication of citable articles in reputable journals are quite valuable pursuits. Such activities should be encouraged. Good articles can enhance the scientific reputation and validity of our country globally. Scientific authorities should find convenient methods to prevent our global scientific rankings from falling. However, the promotion of faculty members should not be based on such requirements, and such activities should not be demanded of all scholars. Such an obligation is not logical.

I have always claimed that the main aim of our production of scientific articles, research essays, and dissertations should be to help solve our problems (8). Remember: participation in global scientific competitions is necessary.

The intention behind such activities, however, is to help resolve our complex difficulties, problems announced here [by the elite] concerning environmental, traditional medicine, and automobile issues, such problems and issues and hundreds more. To resolve our problems scientifically and with knowledge, such research and scientific essays are necessary; thus, our articles and students' dissertations should focus on solving these issues.

All fields—hygiene and health, housing, security, nutrition, family, environment, governmental structures and international relations—are opportunities for scientific work and research. We should not limit ourselves to journalistic work only, such as writing articles about international relations or political issues for publication in magazines. Good scientific work should be done.

One last facet of this topic that I would like to emphasise is the duty of the government. Fortunately, the vice president, ministers, and other officials are present now. In short, the authorities should create an atmosphere where the elite can feel useful. One reason for immigration, a subject spoken of frequently among the common folk and in the newspapers, and one that is often exaggerated, is that the elite think they are doing nothing here. As I have said before (9), an elite has two expectations from the authorities: first, that they provide them with occupations, enabling them to be busy at some job, and second, the possibility to continue their education. The elites are attracted to immigration by the research facilities and prospects for advancement which are available abroad. Thus, I say to the authorities: Provide what the elite need here, in Iran. Concisely, the elites expect to have a sense of usefulness in Iran.

There are ways to achieve this. One of the best ways to give the elite a feeling of usefulness is to establish knowledge-based companies, which will bring economic progress, livelihood, and scientific progress to the country; they maintain the elite and use them for the country. Fortunately, today, knowledge-based companies and institutes have been mentioned by name several times, and I have noted them. Therefore, I insist that these knowledge-based institutes be reinforced. One way to do that is to stop importing from abroad what can be produced locally. I have recently received complaints from knowledge-based companies claiming that products they can make are imported from abroad by specific government organisations that require them. Why should this be so? We should all learn and adapt to consuming domestic products, particularly the primary consumers of these products, particularly the governmental organisations. I repeatedly pointed out that government authorities and organisations must address this issue. Government organisations must use domestic products, especially the products of knowledge-based companies.

To conclude my speech, I must offer just a few words about the current events in Palestine and Gaza. What Palestine is experiencing before the very eyes of the world is the crime of genocide by a usurping regime. The whole world is sitting back and watching. Some world leaders have talked to Iranian officials in support of the arrogating Zionist regime, complaining about the killing of civilians by the Palestinians. First of all, this claim is unsubstantiated and untrue. Those living in the cities and towns of the usurping regime are not all civilians; they all are armed, and of those who are civilians, how many are killed? A hundred times more Palestinian civilians are now being killed by the usurping regime—women, children, old, and young. Gaza buildings do not shelter military forces; the military are in their locations and hideouts, and they [the Zionists] know this. Those being massacred in Gaza are ordinary people. The Zionists chose populated areas and bombarded them. Thousands of Palestinians have been killed in Gaza in recent days. These crimes are being committed before the eyes of the world. The Zionists must be stopped, and the usurping Zionist regime should be prosecuted today.

As several sources have reported this week, the current policy of the Zionist regime is being arranged by the US. This means that the policymakers are American officials, and whatever is being done is the policy of the American government. The American government should also be held responsible for its obvious role in this event. Most importantly, the bombardment must be stopped immediately! Muslim nations are angry – genuinely furious. Their outrage is evidenced by the gatherings and demonstrations of people not only in Islamic countries but also in Los Angeles, Holland, France, and other European countries. In Western countries, people—Muslim and non-

Muslim—are gathering to protest. The situation in Islamic countries is obvious: The people are angry. If these crimes continue, Muslims will lose their patience; resistance forces will become impatient. No one will be able to stop their reaction. This should be known. [Later on] no one should expect others to prevent a group from doing whatever it does. No one can stop them if they become impatient. This is a reality. Nothing the Zionist regime can do will compensate for the fiasco and disgraceful defeat it has undergone (10). [The crowd shouts out the slogan of "Down with Israel" a number of times.] Well…You have had the last word. Thank you. May Allah bless you all.