Remarks in a meeting with veterans and the Sacred Defence and Resistance activists: - 25 /Sep/ 2024

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful[1]

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon our Master and Prophet, Abu al-Qasim al-Mustafa Muhammad, and his pure, chosen family, especially the one from Allah who has remained on earth.

A warm welcome to you all, my dear brothers and sisters. The brothers and sisters raised very good topics. Some relate to this collection of war memories and Sacred Defence issues, which those individuals should follow up on. Others pertain to government agencies, which our brothers in office should also follow up on to ensure that what was discussed is reviewed and, God willing, what is practical and beneficial will be realised.

Veterans are particularly recognised during Sacred Defence Week due to the value of their pioneering role in important events: 'Race towards forgiveness from your Lord' (Qur'an 57:21)[2]. Being a pioneer and stepping upon uncharted paths is highly esteemed.

Of course, Sacred Defence Week pertains to every warrior, fighter, martyr, their families, and similar groups. However, veterans who entered the field earlier, faster, and more seriously have higher esteem. Whether the veteran is a commander, an ordinary fighter, a doctor, a first responder, a jihadist, or a supporter, they all deserve this special commendation and respect. We have seen various types of veterans during the early days of the Sacred Defence and witnessed their exemplary roles.

Two issues mainly involve the point that would be good to present to the audience today regarding the topic of the Sacred Defence. There is a third issue, of course, but I won't have time to discuss it today. One of the two main topics is the 'why' behind the eight-year war. Our young generation, who did not experience the war or the Revolution, should understand why the Islamic Republic found itself in a conflict that lasted for eight years. Eight years is not a short time, during which all the country's institutions and resources were committed to the defence of the nation. What was the reason for our involvement in the war? We need to know this. Today, I will say a few words about it. The second topic that should be brought to the attention of today's audience is a report on the war. Today, I will also say a few words about the report. Of course, while we are speaking, you, beloved, who are present in this gathering and the huge audience listening from afar, are the immediate audience to which these remarks are addressed. However, the audience is not limited to just you, the young generation, future generations, and your children—everyone must reflect on these topics, work on them, and learn from them. These are the two topics about which I will say a few words. There is also a third important topic that I won't have time to discuss today: the benefits and outcomes that resulted from the Sacred Defence. Fortunately, some of those who spoke here have briefly referenced this topic.

As for the question 'why': 'Why did this war start?' I say that the motivation to attack the borders of revolutionary Iran was not exclusive to Saddam and the Ba'ath Party. It could be said that the motivation of the leaders of the global order to attack Iran's borders at that time was much more significant than, or at least as strong as, Saddam's. At that time, there were two major powers in the world, each with its followers. Those two powers were the United States and the former Soviet Union, and each had its own set of affiliates—governments and political systems. Almost all of these had a stake in this matter. The Islamic Republic of Iran was something intolerable for them. Why? Why was Islamic Iran intolerable? We had not taken any action against anyone at that time. Nowadays, they

say that you provide missiles to certain places or drones to others, but these accusations were not present back then. So, what was the cause of the hostility? That is the crucial point. The reason was that at this sensitive point in the world, a unique popular revolution had emerged that presented a new way of thinking about governing the world. The prevailing global order of that time could not tolerate this new way of thinking; that was the issue. At that time, the world was a world of domination. Although it is still so today, there was no voice, outcry, or explicit stance against this false order that destroyed virtue back then. The global order was one of domination. What does the 'system of domination' mean? It means that the world is divided into two parts: some countries are dominant, and some are subjugated; there is no third option. The Islamic Republic, the Islamic Revolution, and the Islamic system were a clear outcry against this order: What does this mean? Why should domination exist? Why should a particular country have the right to impose its opinions, culture, and demands on a group of countries merely because it possesses advanced military equipment? Why? The Islamic Republic presented a new position against this false order, and the tyrants and those that dominate the world could not tolerate that. They knew that this statement, this idea, could spread globally. They understood it correctly—and it did spread. This idea expanded globally and attracted nations. Later, I will also say a few words about this movement's appeal.

All of them—whether the United States, the Soviet Union, NATO countries following the U.S., or the Warsaw Pact countries following the Soviet Union—were waiting for an opportunity. Saddam provided that opportunity for them. An ambitious, power-hungry, greedy, brazen, ruthless, and reckless individual right at Iran's doorstep, on Iran's borders, was incited and attacked our country. Today, some individuals from within our own ranks criticise the Islamic Republic, saying that the Islamic Republic is hostile to the world and that it is at odds with the world. This is not true; such is not the case. If the intention is to say that we do not engage in political, economic, or other interactions with the world, it is clear that this is inaccurate. We currently work with, interact with, and trade with entities and countries where more than half the world's population lives.

Today, just like at the beginning of the Revolution, we oppose the system of domination and the dominance of the United States. Today, the Soviet Union no longer exists, but the United States is the head of Western countries, acting as the dominant power. We see the results of their actions: the wars they start, the injustices they commit, the discrimination they practice, and the nations they oppress. We oppose them and openly express our opposition. This was the situation that existed then and still exists today. However, at that time, it led to an attack on Iran's borders. Today, thanks to the steadfastness of the Iranian people and their strong presence in various arenas, they no longer dare to attack our borders. Instead, they are engaged in different forms of hostility and malice.

Of course, when I said that no one stood up against that order, years before the Islamic Republic, the Non-Aligned Movement existed. We, too, joined this movement at the beginning of the Revolution, and it still exists today. However, many countries that were members of the Non-Aligned Movement — around a hundred or so countries — had leaders under the superpowers' influence. Some were under the influence of the U.S., and some under the Soviet Union. Some were influenced, while others obeyed out of fear, frightened by the brutality of these major powers. After giving a speech at a Non-Aligned Movement summit, the president of a particular region came to me and said, "Everyone is afraid of America except you." Then he leaned in closer and said, "I, too, am afraid of America!" They were afraid. Therefore, the voice that boldly and clearly rose against the corrupt global order was the voice of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. The centre of this opposition was Islamic Iran, which they were against. They were opposed then, and they are opposed now; that's the issue. We must understand this deeply; some people don't grasp it. The issue isn't about nuclear energy, human rights, or women's rights — these are just excuses. The issue is about introducing a new discourse against the corrupt, unjust, and discriminatory world order that dominates today; that's the real issue. They are opposed to this, and this opposition will not end as long as the Islamic Republic and the Iranian nation refuse to accept their coercion, which we will not do. The issue is about introducing a new discourse against the corrupt, unjust, and discriminatory world order that dominates today; that's the real issue. They are opposed to this, and this opposition will not end as long as the Islamic Republic and the Iranian nation refuse to accept their coercion and never will. I mentioned the "attractions of the Islamic Republic". This has had a significant impact and frightened them. There were and still are two types of attractions of the Islamic

Republic. These two must be preserved because they draw nations toward it and they are a political and a spiritual attraction. The political attraction was precisely the resistance against the corrupt global order. This political appeal exists. Unlike powers and governments, the hearts of the nations are drawn to this political attraction. The fact that they feel there is a system in the world that opposes this unjust global order, the bullying, and the interference of these powers captivates their hearts. You can see that whenever our presidents travelled to any Islamic country, nations welcomed them, paid attention to them, and expressed their respect. It is because of this very reason. There is much to be said on this topic. This is the political attraction.

The spiritual attraction lies in the attention to divine faith and religious belief in the Islamic system. This has a strong pull and a significant attraction. In this materialistic world, even the youth in so-called advanced and civilised countries feel a sense of emptiness. Their own scholars and thinkers are saying this today; they feel emptiness and uselessness, and suicides are increasing day by day. Religious faith gives them a sense of refuge and warms their hearts; this is the effect of religious sentiment. This is also an attraction to the Islamic Republic. Therefore, the reason for staging this military attack, the military aggression on our country and our borders, which led to the eight-year Sacred Defence, is that they were in opposition (to this attraction). The attraction of the Islamic Republic frightened them, and the new message of the Islamic Republic agitated them. This is why they carried out this attack and kept the country occupied for eight years. This is the first point. Of course, there is much more to say about this. Those who are thinkers and writers should speak, write, work, and explain this matter further.

Now, to the second point: the account of the war. There are two types of reports and two ways to describe the war. One type, which I refer to as a descriptive report, is a form of reporting that narrates the outward aspects of the war: how the war started, how it continued, where it ended, and the situation on both sides—this is one type of report, the descriptive report. Another type of report, which I consider more important, is the explanatory report. It reveals and explains the war's essence, the front's nature, and its spirit. Today's youth need to be informed in both areas, and efforts should be made to convey this. I will point to these topics and mention the main points. Work and effort must be dedicated to them. Of course, thankfully, good work has already been done, but it must continue.

The descriptive report on the war goes like this: An aggressive army attacked our borders. On one side was the aggressor, completely equipped with a prepared plan. The side that wants to attack our borders makes plans in advance, while we, who are attacked, are caught off guard without any plan, especially since it was the early days of the Revolution. They enter the field with a plan; their equipment is complete, their organisation is orderly, their plan is prepared, and their support is continuous. They have a strong engineering organisation, robust communications, and modern weapons. At that time, Saddam's army had the best tanks and planes available. There was endless money, endless money! They had billions at their disposal; the very ones you know and recognise were providing it. The U.S., the Soviet Union, and Europe fully supported and provided everything needed, and they replaced outdated weapons. The French government provided Saddam with their best aircraft and fighter jets. The German government supplied Saddam with the chemical materials he needed. The U.S. continuously provided battlefield intelligence. Neighbouring countries also gave money and resources. The Persian Gulf was a constant route to Iraq for trucks and trailers carrying weapons and equipment. That was one side, the attacking side. I read in a report that Saddam's number of fighter jets after the war was more than those at the beginning of the war! Despite losing so many aircraft, the number of his planes after the war was higher, meaning he continuously received support and supplies. This was the situation of the attacking side.

The side under attack, meaning us, was the exact opposite; our equipment was insufficient, our resources were depleted, and we had no replacements. At the beginning of the war, some of the tanks from the 92nd Division facing the enemy were looted and taken over by the invaders, and no replacements could be provided. I went to Ahvaz; a brigade of the 92nd Division had about fifteen or sixteen tanks, while organizationally, it should have had over fifty tanks! That's how it was—nothing was replaced; whatever we lost was gone, finished! Our combat organisations were severely impacted. The war overwhelmed the military organisation; many senior commanders lacked control over military assets. The late Martyr Fallahi and the late Zahir Nejad—the heads of the army— were unaware of

many things within the army; the reason was that before the Revolution, their management area was minimal. Now, they found themselves at the head of the army. The Revolutionary Guards had not yet been properly organised. At the beginning of the war, the Revolutionary Guards did not have a brigade organisation; they were formed into companies of two to three hundred people with limited structure and resources. Sometimes, they didn't even have enough individual weapons; we had seen instances of a shortage of personal arms! This was the situation on the defending side.

So, what should the result have been? According to ordinary material standards and rules, the opposing side, as predicted, would have crossed Khuzestan within a week, or at most a few weeks, and would have entered the heart of the country, heading towards Tehran; however, it did not turn out that way. Despite its limited resources, this (defensive) force began to show its successes and brilliance after about a year into the war. It inflicted successive, devastating blows on the well-equipped, wealthy army with all the support it had. In the end, after eight years, it drove that army out of the borders in disgrace. This is a summary of the war over eight years. Now, the main factors behind this progress and victory—such as faith, perseverance, and similar elements—are well known and are available to you.

However, the next report, which is explanatory, is more important in my opinion. The explanatory report says this war was not just about defending the homeland. Of course, defending the homeland is a value—there is no doubt about that—but the issue of this war went beyond that; it was about defending Islam and acting upon the commandments of the Qur'an. This war was on a path described in religious expressions and religious literature as "jihad in the way of God"; the Sacred Defence was a jihad in the way of God. The Sacred Defence kept the Revolution alive, preserved Islam, honoured the Iranian people, promoted spiritual vitality in the country, and revived the true human and essence of faith in the youth. The young men who went to the battlefield were transformed from ordinary individuals into divine saints; those who entered the battlefield with a simple and ordinary view of religious matters emerged as divine and spiritual mystics. Our great Imam was a profound mystic and a lofty person. He generally addressed many prominent figures by telling them, "You have worshipped for seventy years; may God accept it from you. Go read some of the wills of the martyrs!" This means that a young person who had gone to the battlefield, fought for a period, and put his life at risk for God's sake had traversed the spiritual path of the wise and learned mystic in a short time. This was the essence of the Imam's message.

This is the essence of our war period. The goal was Islam. Hence, the entire battlefield was a place of worship. People of all kinds participated in this overarching concept of turning the battlefield into a place of worship. In the middle of the night, we visited the area, and I saw an army officer or non-commissioned officer standing next to a tank, performing night prayers! From the night prayers of an officer next to his tank to the spiritually fervent gatherings of the IRGC and Basij (volunteer forces) in their headquarters and even the plea of an army officer to join the night jihad groups of Martyr Chamran. In the early days of the war, when we had just arrived in Ahvaz, an officer came to see me one night—he was either a second lieutenant or a captain; I don't remember exactly. He said he had a request. At first, I thought he might be asking for leave because of personal issues in his hometown. However, he told me his request was to be allowed to join the group of Martyr Chamran, who went out at night to hunt tanks, as they described it. He was a man, around forty or fifty years old, begging to be allowed to join these young men and go out at night with Chamran's group to target tanks with RPGs. Consider this: alongside the teenager who falsifies his age on his ID to go to the front lines or one who cries and begs his parents to let him go to the war, we saw these kinds of things. Devout prayers, midnight tears, selfless service, or a commander who wakes up in the middle of the night to polish his soldiers' boots and wash their clothes—such things do not exist in any army or battlefield in the world; they are unique to the Islamic Republic. In the final moments of his life, someone refrains from drinking water so that his thirsty comrade does not die of thirst; he gives the water to his comrade, and himself dies thirsty. These are the stories we have read in history, have seen up close in this war, or have heard from those who witnessed them.

Under enemy artillery fire, a young man who would later become a martyr writes his will, including a

recommendation about hijab; this shows the extent of his spirituality, religiosity, attachment to Islamic law, and Islamic faith. In my view, this report on the war, this perspective on the war, is more important than the descriptive report. It is here that the Almighty God shows His power through the victory of His righteous servants; it is here that it becomes evident that the Divine will for righteous servants is that "Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah; He gives it as an inheritance to whom He wills of His servants" (Qur'an 7:128)[3]The righteous servants of God receive divine support. They endured hardships during the eight-year defence. The Iranian nation endured significant difficulties; the youth, families, fathers, mothers, and spouses all suffered. However, following these hardships, the Almighty God granted dignity, victory, and support.

Well, both types of reports need to be documented and recorded. Some people know, have seen, or are aware of these things and should express them; others should turn these into engaging productions upon which some work has already been done. Last year, I said that what has been done should be increased a hundredfold[4]; the reality is that this is true. We are lacking in this area. If we had had promotional facilities during the same period of the Revolution and the same period of the war, the country's progress would have been much more significant than what was achieved. We had limited promotional facilities; on the contrary, the enemy had unlimited promotional resources, and today, it is almost the same. Today, we must increase our facilities as much as we can. Well, this is related to the Sacred Defence.

Today, a similar event is happening in Lebanon and Palestine. The events in Lebanon and Palestine are like the events of our imposed war and Sacred Defence; this is also a jihad in the way of God. An Islamic country, meaning Palestine, has been usurped by the most malicious disbelievers in the world; the definitive religious ruling is that it is obligatory for everyone to strive, help, and return Palestine to the Muslims, to its rightful owners, to return Al-Aqsa Mosque. A divine movement is taking place here; the people of Palestine and Gaza, who are genuinely striving, are, in fact, engaging in jihad in the way of God. Those who are helping them are aiding in jihad in the way of God; Hezbollah in Lebanon, which puts itself in danger for the sake of Gaza and faces these bitter events, is engaging in jihad in the way of God.

In this battle as well, the malicious and infidel enemy has the most advanced equipment because the U.S. is behind them. The Americans say they are not involved and are unaware, they are lying. They are aware, they are involved, and they need the Zionist regime to succeed. This current U.S. government needs to show, for the upcoming elections, that it has supported the Zionist regime and made it victorious. Of course, they also need the Muslim vote in America, so they pretend that they are not involved, [but] they are involved. So, the enemy has access to money, weapons, resources, and global propaganda; on the other side, the believers, the fighters in the way of God, do not even have a fraction of those resources. Yet, despite this, the victorious one is the fighter in the way of God; the Palestinian resistance is victorious, and Hezbollah is victorious. Up till today, the victory has belonged to Hezbollah and the resistance forces; the evidence of this is the (Zionist regime's) killing of innocent people. If the filthy Zionist regime had been able to defeat the resistance forces, whether in Gaza, the West Bank, or Lebanon, it would not have needed to portray itself to the world as being so dark and ugly and commit these crimes against homes, schools, hospitals, children, and women. It has not been able to; because it couldn't defeat the resistance forces, it is forced to pretend to have won by attacking women, children, defenceless people, cars on the road, schools, and hospitals. So, up until now, it has been defeated.

Yes, they inflict damage; they martyred some valuable and influential members of Hezbollah, which was undoubtedly a loss for Hezbollah. However, it was not a loss that could bring Hezbollah down. The organisational and human strength of Hezbollah is far greater than that. Their power, capabilities, and resilience are much stronger than to be fundamentally weakened by these martyrdoms. Yes, of course, losing someone, especially if they are a commander with a history of jihad in the way of God, is a loss; there is no doubt about that. Therefore, up to now, they have been victorious, and with divine grace and power, the final victory in this battle will belong to the Resistance Front and Hezbollah.

My final point in today's discussion is that our fighters, our warriors, sacrificed their lives and made great sacrifices so that the enemy's flag would not be raised on our borders. Young fighters and martyrs have left their families in mourning so that the enemy's flag does not rise on the borders of this country. The Iranian people cannot accept that the same flags be raised within the country by infiltrators or deceived individuals! This flag, representing the enemy's cultural infiltration, lifestyle, and hostile temptations, should not be raised within our country or in our various institutions! Vigilance is required; everyone is responsible. The Ministry of Education must be vigilant. Vigilance is needed in the media, the press, and the Ministry of Science and Health, where young people are educated. There, the enemy was defeated by our fighters; we must not allow that defeated enemy to continue its activities and schemes within the country through various tricks and tactics. We hope that Almighty God will keep all our officials, men, women, and active members in various sectors fully alert against the enemy's conspiracies.

And may peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of God.

[1] At the beginning of the meeting, six individuals active in sacred defence culture presented their remarks; Brigadier General Bahman Karimi (Head of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Sacred Defence Works and Values) also provided a report.

[2] Surah Al-Hadid, part of verse 21: [To attain] forgiveness from your Lord, and to strive in competition with one another ...

[3] Surah Al-A'raf, part of verse 128: ... The earth belongs to God; He grants it to whoever He wills from among His servants …

[4] Statements made during a meeting with veterans and activists of the Sacred Defence and Resistance on 20/09/2023.