

Khomeinism

Executive Summary:

Ayatollah [Ruhollah Khomeini](#), founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the country's first supreme leader, is one of the most influential shapers of radical Islamic thought in the modern era.

Khomeini's Islamist, populist agenda—dubbed “Khomeinism” by scholar Ervand Abrahamian—has radicalized and guided Shiite Islamists both inside and outside Iran. Khomeini's legacy has directly spawned or influenced major violent extremist organizations, including Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as well as Lebanese-based terrorist organization and political party Hezbollah, and the more recently formed Iraqi-based Shiite militias, many of which stand accused of carrying out gross human rights violations. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Atlantic](#), [Reuters](#), [Washington Post](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Constitution.com](#))

Khomeini's defining ideology focuses on a variety of themes, including absolute religious authority in government and the rejection of Western interference and influence. Khomeini popularized the Shiite Islamic concept of *vilayat-e faqih*—which translates to “guardianship of the Islamic jurist”—in order to place all of Iran's religious and state institutions under the control of a single cleric. Khomeini's successor, Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), relies on Khomeinist ideals to continue his authoritarian domestic policies and support for terrorism abroad. (Sources: [Al-Islam](#), *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, Ervand Abrahamian, pp. 15-25, [Islamic Parliament Research Center](#), [New York Times](#))

More than 25 years after his death, Khomeini's philosophies and teachings continue to influence all levels of Iran's political system, including Iran's legislative and presidential elections. In an interview with Iran's Press TV, London-based professor of Islamic studies Mohammad Saeid Bahmanpoor said that Khomeini “has become a concept. He has surpassed his bounds of individuality.” As noted by Iranian scholar Ali Reza Eshragi, “politics in Iran are largely defined by attempts to claim Khomeini's legacy. Staying faithful to his ideology has been the litmus test for all political activity in the Islamic Republic.” (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [New Republic](#), [Press TV](#), [Asia Times](#))

Khomeinist Doctrine

“If you do not surrender to the nation, the nation will put you in your place.”
- Ruhollah Khomeini, February 1979

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini believed in the supremacy of Islam. He framed his revolutionary state—the Islamic Republic of Iran—as the guardian of Islam, protecting the religion against what he perceived as blasphemy from the West. (Sources: [Al-Islam](#),

Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic, Ervand Abrahamian, p. 23-25, [Islamic Parliament Research Center](#))

Charged with this responsibility, Khomeini sat atop this regime as the country's so-called supreme leader, wielding absolute authority over Iran's economic, religious, and military policies. Since his death in 1989, The Iranian regime has continued to use Khomeinist doctrines to justify its policies of harsh domestic suppression and support for global terrorism. (Sources: [Al-Islam](#), *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, Ervand Abrahamian, p. 23-25, [Islamic Parliament Research Center](#), [Constitution.com](#))

Vilayat-e Faqih (“Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist”)

“God has formed the Islamic Republic.
Obey God and his Prophet and those among you who have authority.”
- Ruhollah Khomeini, 1941

Khomeini claimed absolute power as Iran's first supreme leader. In so doing, he relied on a re-interpretation of the ninth-century Shiite philosophy of *vilayat-e faqih*—guardianship of the Islamic jurist. Khomeini said that an appointed jurist should have final authority over Iran's political and religious spheres in order to ensure compliance with “divine law,” since only then could such a government be “accepted by God on Resurrection Day.” Khomeini's controversial interpretation of *vilayat-e faqih* differed greatly from traditional Shiite interpretations, in which scholars believed that in an Islamic state a learned jurist could be endowed with religious authority while leaving political authority in the hands of the state. The regime's implementation of *vilayat-e faqih* was the first of its kind in a modern nation-state. (Sources: [Al-Islam](#), [Hudson Institute](#), [New York Times](#), [Oxford Dictionary of Islam](#), [Oxford Dictionary of Islam](#), [Oxford Dictionary of Islam](#))

Per Khomeini's revival of the concept, Iran has enshrined *vilayat-e faqih* into its constitution, thereby justifying the authoritarian role of the country's supreme leader. Iran has also used this doctrine to retain the loyalty of its army and terrorist proxies. Iranian law makes “belief and commitment to” *vilayat-e faqih* a prerequisite for membership in the country's repressive IRGC forces. Shiite militias such as Hezbollah, Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and Asaib Ahl al-Haq also subscribe to *vilayat-e faqih*, with members swearing allegiance to Iran's supreme leader. (Sources: [Constitution.com](#), [Islamic Parliament Research Center](#), [New York Times](#), [Christian Science Monitor](#))

In 1979, Khomeini established the practice of *vilayat-e-faqih* in Iran, endowing himself with unprecedented power as the first “guardian jurist.” Since then, Iranians who challenge the authority of the supreme leader face ostracism, lengthy prison sentences, or worse. In 1989, Khomeini dismissed Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri as his heir-apparent for criticizing Khomeini. Montazeri and other ayatollahs—like Grand Ayatollah Seyed Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari—were ultimately placed under house arrest for publicly opposing or criticizing the supreme leader. (Sources: Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions*, p. 209-228, [Amnesty International](#), [Telegraph](#), [Telegraph](#),

[Associated Press](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Telegraph](#), [International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#))

Iran's authoritarian and repressive regime has continued under Khomeini's successor, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. As with Khomeini's regime, those who opposed Khamenei's positions have typically been met with harassment and intimidation. In 1997, Human Rights Watch condemned the physical harassment of reformist Iranian scholar Dr. Abdol Karim Soroush by what were believed to be government-sanctioned mobs. Khamenei also created a network of so-called "clerical commissars," agents loyal to Khamenei that were installed in multiple levels of the government, military, and clergy. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), [U.S. Institute of Peace](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [Human Rights Watch](#))

Khamenei also exerts near-total control over Iranian political figures, including Iranian presidents. From 1997 to 2005, Khamenei obstructed many of the reform efforts by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, who sought to loosen the judiciary and other state organs from the supreme leader's control. In August 2000, Khamenei instructed the parliament to end a debate over whether Iran's press laws were suppressing the media. Khatami announced the failure of his reform agenda in 2003 and left office in 2005. He has continued to advocate for government reform in spite of opposition from Khamenei's government. Iran's justice department declared media blackouts on Khatami in 2010 and again in 2015, despite promises by President Hassan Rouhani to loosen restrictions on the media and freedom of expression. (Sources: [Chicago Tribune](#), [National Interest](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [Guardian](#))

Khatami was not the only target of Khamenei's government. The regime has placed other reformist officials under house arrest, and security forces have responded to peaceful protests with violent crackdowns. After contested presidential elections in 2009, IRGC commander [Mohammad Ali Jafari](#) told Iranian media that anyone speaking against the government would be labeled an enemy of the state. Indeed, the IRGC's Basij militia—a paramilitary organization tasked with maintaining domestic support for the Revolution—reportedly used clubs and chains to attack anyone suspected of protesting. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Human Rights Watch](#))

Dissidents continue to suffer in Iran today. A 2015 U.S. State Department report noted the Iranian government has "banned, blocked, closed, or censored publications deemed critical of officials." Iran also enforces the death penalty for "insults against the memory of Imam Khomeini and against the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic." As recently as March 2017, the Iranian government continues to arrest journalists and online activists for crimes such as insulting state authorities, insulting religious officials, and insulting the supreme leader. (Sources: [International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#), [Committee to Protect Journalists](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), [U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#))

Ahead of Iran's May 19, 2017, presidential elections, Khamenei again asserted his supreme authority by warning that he would intervene if the Iranian people did not accept the elections outcome. Despite Iran's claims of free and fair elections, all candidates must first earn Khamenei's approval to enter the race. In April 2017, former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad declared his intention to run again, dismissing Khamenei's recommendation against it as "just advice." A week later, Iran's Guardian Council, beholden to Khamenei, disqualified Ahmadinejad and more than 1,600 other candidates from participating in elections. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#), [Reuters](#), [CNBC](#))

Khamenei wields similar influence over Iran's legislative elections, where legislative candidates are also vetted by the Guardian Council, half of whose members are appointed directly by Khamenei. The supreme leader also appoints Iran's judiciary chief, who nominates candidates to the parliament for the remaining six positions in the Council. Although there were some 12,000 people registered to run in the country's February 2016 parliamentary elections, for example, the Guardian Council had the authority to whittle the list down to 6,000 candidates. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Deutsche Welle](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. Institute of Peace](#), [Constitution.com](#))

Blasphemy

"I hereby inform all proud Muslims worldwide that the author of the book 'The Satanic Verses,' ...as well as those publishers who are aware of its contents, are sentenced to death."

- Ruhollah Khomeini, 1989

Khomeini believed that his 1979 revolution restored Iran's Islamic character. As such, he charged Iran with defending Islam against blasphemy and "expanding the influence of Islam in the world." Khomeini's attitudes have translated into human rights violations both at home and abroad. In Iran, "enmity towards God" is a crime punishable with the death penalty. At least nine people were executed in 2014 for this broadly interpreted "crime." According to the U.S. State Department, journalists and political dissidents are frequently charged with "enmity towards God" and are accused of "struggling against the precepts of Islam and against the state that upholds those precepts." The government's self-perception as a guardian of Islam has also inspired the regime to seek out perceived apostates outside Iran's borders for punishment. (Sources: [Al-Islam](#), [New York Times](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Iran Human Rights Documentation Center](#))

In 1988, six months after British novelist Salman Rushdie published his controversial novel *The Satanic Verses*, Khomeini issued a fatwa sentencing Rushdie and his publishers to death in absentia on charges of insulting Islam. According to Khomeini, the book—inspired by the life of the Islamic prophet Muhammad—ran counter to the tenets of "Islam, the Prophet and the Koran...." Days after Khomeini issued his fatwa, Rushdie issued a public apology for "the distress that [his] publication has occasioned to sincere followers of Islam." Khomeini promptly rejected the apology. Days after Rushdie's

response, Khomeini renewed his call to violence, urging Muslims around the world to “send [Rushdie] to hell.” (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [United Press International](#))

The global response to Khomeini’s fatwa was a mix of concern and criticism. Rushdie went into hiding under police guard. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter called *The Satanic Verses* a “direct insult” to millions of Muslims, but condemned the fatwa as an “abhorrent response.” Author Roald Dahl accused Rushdie of “sensationalism” to “get an indifferent book on to the top of the bestseller list.” (Sources: [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#), [Los Angeles Times](#))

Nonetheless, the fatwa succeeded in inspiring individuals around the world to violence. Since 1988, there have been at least four attacks against Rushdie and others involved in publishing, translating, and distributing the book worldwide.

Lone-Wolf Violence Inspired by Khomeini’s Fatwa Targeting Salman Rushdie

On August 3, 1989, an unidentified 21-year-old man of Lebanese descent died in an accidental explosion in a London hotel room while reportedly preparing a bomb to use against Rushdie. A cenotaph in his honor was later erected in Tehran, describing him as “the first martyr to die on a mission to kill Salman Rushdie.” (Source: [Times of London](#))

On July 3, 1991, Ettore Capriolo, the Italian translator of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, survived a stabbing attack in Milan. Police say the assailant claimed to have a “connection” to the Iranian embassy in Rome. Weeks later, on July 12, 1991, Hitoshi Igarashi, a professor of comparative literature and the Japanese translator of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, was stabbed to death in Tokyo by an unidentified attacker. (Source: [New York Times](#))

Attacks continued for years. On October 11, 1993, unidentified attackers shot William Nygaard, CEO of a Norwegian publishing house that had printed Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, near his home in Oslo. He was wounded but survived. His attackers were never caught, although Nygaard believes the attack was related to Khomeini’s fatwa, noting: “One of the suspects in the case bought a one-way ticket to Iran in cash the day after the attack, and possessed the same kind of weapon and the same kind of ammunition as those involved in the shooting.” (Source: [Times of London](#), [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#))

In addition to inspiring assassination attempts, Khomeini’s fatwa also set a dangerous precedent regarding global Islamist violence toward satirists, cartoonists, and authors.

In 2004, Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered by an Islamic extremist who considered van Gogh’s film *Submission*—exploring violence against women in Islamic societies—to be an insult to Islam. In 2005, Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published

a series of cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad, a move that spurred violent attacks targeting the paper, the cartoonist, and Danish interests in the Middle East. In the surrounding controversy, Hezbollah leader [Hassan Nasrallah](#) aligned himself with the assailants, claiming that if a Muslim had succeeded in assassinating Rushdie, “this rabble who insult our Prophet Mohammed in Denmark, Norway and France would not have dared to do so.” (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

The influence of Khomeini’s fatwa can be seen as recently as the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris. On January 7, two gunmen operating on behalf of [al-Qaeda](#)’s Yemeni affiliate—[al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#)—attacked the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in retaliation for the magazine publishing Muhammad cartoons. Following the shooting, Iran’s semi-official Ansar-e Hezbollah militia praised the attacks as “legitimate punishment” of those who had insulted the Islamic prophet. (Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#))

The influence of Khomeini’s fatwa can also be seen in the successful terrorizing of artists into self-censorship. In 2009, filmmaker Roland Emmerich reportedly cut a scene from his disaster film *2012* blowing up Islam’s holiest mosque because his co-writer feared repercussions. Director Kevin Smith also reportedly cited concern of a “death warrant” in his decision to abandon an Islam-centric sequel to his 1999 film *Dogma*. In 2010, cable network Comedy Central censored an episode of *South Park* that portrayed Muhammad after death threats were made against the writers. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#), [New York Times](#))

Khomeini’s principles are also used to justify crackdowns against speech deemed to be insulting to Islam or God. According to Oslo-based non-profit group Iran Human Rights, 25 percent of Iran’s 969 executions in 2015 were for crimes of *moharebeh*, waging war against God. As of February 2016, two heavy-metal musicians faced the possibility of execution for charges of blasphemy. In August 2016, Iran executed 20 Kurds accused of belonging to a terrorist organization. They were officially charged with enmity against God. (Sources: [Iran Human Rights](#), [Fox News](#))

Though former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami rebuked the Rushdie fatwa in 1998, Khomeini’s successor, Khamenei, clarified in 2005 that the death sentence remained in effect. When the United Kingdom knighted Rushdie in 2007, Pakistani radicals—including members of the government—clamored for his death. In February 2016, 40 Iranian state-run media outlets offered a \$600,000 joint reward for Rushdie’s murder. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [USA Today](#))

Anti-Imperialism as an Excuse for Terrorism

“The foreign hands must be cut off from this nation. How much should the United States loot this country? How much Britain and other powers? We must resurrect ourselves, wake up, and take back our freedom.”

- Ruhollah Khomeini, February 6, 1979

Khomeini blamed Iran's perceived social, political, and economic problems on foreign interference and nurtured terrorist movements like Hezbollah under the guise of fighting imperialist oppression. Khomeini accused Western imperialist powers of exploiting Iranian resources and impoverishing its people through exploitative trade and commercial policies. Khomeini justified Iranian support for international terrorism as part of an effort to "smash the hands and the teeth of the superpowers" and free other nations from so-called Western manipulation and exploitation. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Guardian](#))

Iranian support for terrorism dates back to at least 1982, when Iran provided material and financial support for Hezbollah. Later, in 1987, Khomeini pledged Iranian support for "all Islamic struggles of nations and courageous and Moslem young people." Since then, Iran has continued to justify its adversarial role with the West and support for terrorism as resistance to Western imperialism and oppression. Indeed, Iran's constitution enshrined Khomeini's anti-imperialist views in a clause calling for "entrusting the destinies of the people to the people themselves" against "the system of oppression," seemingly providing constitutional justification for supporting violent revolutionary groups. (Sources: *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, Ervand Abrahamian, p. 122, 124, [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works](#), [PBS](#), [New York Times](#), [Constitution.com](#))

A prime example can be seen through Iran's aid to Hezbollah. Khomeinist networks began infiltrating Lebanon in the 1970s ahead of Iran's revolution in order to promote anti-shah activities unhindered. Despite the popular belief that Hezbollah was founded to repel the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, these cells laid the groundwork for Hezbollah a decade before the group officially formed. Khomeini's government created the Office of Liberation Movements (a precursor of the IRGC's Quds Force) to liaise with foreign so-called revolutionary movements, beginning with these Lebanese networks. In 1982, the IRGC began providing financial and material support to Lebanese Shiite militants who later would form Hezbollah. (Sources: [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#), [Weekly Standard](#))

This proto-Hezbollah group began attacking U.S., French, and Israeli forces in Lebanon. Representatives of the group—which later called itself Hezbollah—traveled to Tehran to receive Khomeini's official blessing of their activities. In 1985, Hezbollah announced its formation and declared its allegiance to Khomeini. In the manifesto released later that year, Hezbollah declared its commitment to "save Lebanon from its dependence upon East and West, to put an end to foreign occupation and to adopt a regime freely wanted by the people of Lebanon." (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#), [Weekly Standard](#), [Al-Akbar](#), [Atlantic](#), [PBS](#), [Asharq al-Awsat](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#))

Since Khomeini's death in 1989, the IRGC has continued to heed his directive to support so-called liberation groups fighting against perceived imperialism. Beginning in the 1990s, Iran has provided financial and material support to Hamas and Palestinian

Islamic Jihad (PIJ), which have carried out horrific suicide bombings and other attacks in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip. Following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Iran has supported Iraqi Shiite militias in carrying out attacks against U.S. coalition forces.

(Sources: [New York Daily News](#), [ABC News](#), [Reuters](#))

The Iranian government also uses Khomeini's anti-imperialist views as domestic propaganda in projecting an image as the leading challenger to Western domination. In April 2016, for example, Khamenei claimed that the so-called "Imperialist Front" of the West was bringing its culture into Iran in order to destroy the "spirit of the Revolution" and the country's moral character. Months earlier, Khamenei had ordered the IRGC to confront Western influence by "increasing its persuasive, logical and expressive strength regarding the Islamic Revolution." (Sources: [Tasnim News Agency](#), [Mehr News Agency](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

In line with Khomeini's anti-imperialist stance, the Iranian government continues to blame foreign interference for its domestic problems. For example, the government blamed U.S. and U.K. intervention for the country-wide protests that erupted after Iran's contested 2009 presidential elections. Basij commander Mohammad Reza Naqdi has specifically accused the United Kingdom of seeking to "return to the black era of colonialism by sowing discord and creating distance between the Iranian people and the pivot of Islam and unity." (Sources: [Fars News Agency](#), [Fars News Agency](#), [Christian Science Monitor](#))

Iran's Primary Enemy: the United States

"All our troubles today are caused by this America."

- Ruhollah Khomeini, October 26, 1964

Khomeini called the United States "the foremost enemy of Islam," casting it as the root cause of Iran's troubles and the leader of an international anti-Islamic front. In response, Iranian-sponsored terrorist groups and actors have frequently targeted U.S. interests, beginning with the 1979 hostage crisis and continuing through the present day. In addition to nurturing anti-U.S. terrorist activities, the Iranian government has also propagated anti-American rhetoric domestically and abroad, including through leaders' oft-repeated mantra, "Death to America." (Sources: [Al Seraj](#), [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works](#))

1979 Hostage Crisis

Khomeini returned to Iran from his 14-year exile in February 1979, shortly after Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi left the country for medical treatment. After mass protests and bloody battles between Khomeini's followers and the Iranian military, Khomeini announced the new Islamic Republic of Iran on April 1, 1979. (Sources: [PBS](#), [BBC News](#))

In October 1979, Mexican doctors recommended that Pahlavi receive treatment in the United States, where the shah was soon given refuge. On November 4, 1979—the 15th anniversary of Khomeini's exile from Iran—students protesting U.S. support of the shah stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The assailants took 90 people hostage, including 66 Americans. Later that day, Khomeini issued a statement in support of the students, who demanded the shah's extradition. (Sources: [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

The conflict quickly escalated. On November 5, Iran canceled its military treaties with the United States and Soviet Union. Khomeini released 38 hostages in the following months, but retained 52 Americans. After the shah died of cancer in July 1980, Khomeini demanded that the United States unfreeze Iranian assets and transfer the shah's wealth to Iran in exchange for the hostages' release. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum](#))

The crisis finally ended on January 20, 1981, when the remaining 52 hostages were released after the United States and Iran signed the Algiers Accords. Iran agreed to release the hostages in exchange for U.S. pledges to free Iranian assets and desist from interfering in internal Iranian affairs. The United States and Iran did not agree to restore formal diplomatic ties, and have instead maintained an adversarial relationship since the crisis. As a reminder of the incident, the former U.S. embassy in Tehran has been preserved as an Islamic culture center and museum, outside of which Iranians are frequently recorded chanting, "death to America." (Sources: [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [PBS](#), [CNN](#))

Since the hostage crisis in 1979, Iran has continued to support anti-American terrorist groups. The United States has, for example, accused Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah of the 1983 Marine Barracks attack in Lebanon, which killed 241 U.S. service personnel. U.S. military officials have also blamed Iran and its proxies for the deaths of more than 500 U.S. soldiers in Iraq between 2005 and 2011. In 2011, the IRGC allegedly worked with Mexican drug cartel Los Zetas in failed plots against the Saudi ambassador and Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Al Seraj](#), [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [Washington Times](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [CNN](#))

In addition to targeting U.S. interests abroad, the Iranian government targets Iranian-American dual citizens in Iran. According to the U.S. State Department, the government frequently arrests Iranian-Americans on charges of espionage or disrupting national

security, if they are ever charged at all. These prisoners are often held in maximum-security prisons and given limited-to-no access to legal counsel, an approach that has led American media outlets and government officials to label them hostages of the Iranian regime. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [NBC News](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Iranian authorities rarely justify the arrests when they are made, according to media reports. In August 2016, the U.S. State Department warned American citizens against traveling to Iran because of the “risk of arrest and detention of U.S. citizens, particularly dual national Iranian-Americans” by the Iranian government, which continues “to unjustly detain and imprison U.S. citizens.” (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [NBC News](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [NPR](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Among those held by Iran was Iranian-American *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian, arrested with his Iranian wife, Yeganeh Salehi, in July 2014. Salehi was soon released, but Rezaian was convicted of what the *New York Times* called “vague charges of espionage” in October 2015. Rezaian was part of a January 2016 prisoner swap that resulted in the release of four imprisoned Iranian-Americans. In October 2016, Rezaian filed a lawsuit in U.S. federal court accusing Iran of torture, and of using him as leverage in its nuclear negotiations with the West. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [CNN](#))

Since Iran signed its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, at least four dual Iranian-U.S. citizens have been arrested on vague charges of threatening national security, as the government does not always publicize or justify the charges. Karim Sadjadpour of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace believes that the arrests of Iranian-Americans serve to discourage Iranian diaspora businessmen from competing economically with the IRGC’s business ventures, while also sabotaging government moderates. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [NPR](#), [Washington Post](#))

In addition to arbitrarily arresting U.S. citizens, the Iranian government continues to espouse and promote anti-American rhetoric. Like Khomeini, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei claims that the United States seeks Iran’s “submission and surrender.” In June 2015, on the 26th anniversary of Khomeini’s death, Khamenei praised his predecessor for labeling the United States “the Great Satan.” Khamenei has himself labeled the United States the head of “the oppressors’ front,” which can be confronted only through “battle and jihad.” In 2014, Quds Force head [Qasem Soleimani](#) implored God to damn the United States, “the chief propagator of injustice and oppression in the world,” and “any oppressor” that supports Israel. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Jakarta Post](#), [MEHR News Agency](#), [Fars News Agency](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Washington Free Beacon](#), [Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs](#))

Mimicking Khomeini’s suspicion of U.S. and Western influence in Iran, Khamenei has also warned Iranians against foreign influence and corruption. In a January 2016 letter to President Hassan Rouhani, Khamenei warned of the “deceptions and breaches of promises by arrogant governments, in particular America.” In September 2015, Khamenei warned Iranians to be vigilante against “the enemy’s political and cultural

infiltration.” He charged the IRGC with increasing its “persuasive, logical and expressive strength regarding the Islamic Revolution” to defend against this infiltration. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [New York Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

Iran’s attitude toward the United States—in action and rhetoric—remains a reflection of Khomeini’s 1979 slogan that “America can’t do a damn thing against” Iran. Indeed, the Iranian government has continued to invoke this tagline. In May 2015, Khamenei bragged that the U.S. military “can’t do a damn thing” to Iran, while in July 2016—just months after the implementation of Iran’s nuclear agreement with world powers—Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif boasted that the United States “cannot do a damn thing” to interfere in Iranian affairs. (Sources: [Foreign Policy](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Times of Israel](#))

Iran’s Second Enemy: Israel

“As I have often warned both before and after the revolution, I once again remind everyone of the danger of the prevalent, festering and cancerous Zionist tumor in the body of Islamic countries.”
- Ruhollah Khomeini, 1987

After the United States, Khomeini considered Iran’s second enemy to be Israel. Khomeini presented Israel as a manifestation of Western imperialism in the region as far back as 1964, when he said that Israel “derives [its existence] from America.” In 1987, Khomeini again warned Muslims against “the danger of the prevalent, festering and cancerous Zionist tumor in the body of Islamic countries.” In that same speech, Khomeini called on Muslim governments to unite against Israel, pledging Iran’s financial and material support to “all those dear ones who continue to deal blows to Israel and its interests.” (Sources: [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works](#), [Al Seraj](#), [New York Times](#), [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works](#), [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works](#))

Drawing on Khomeinist themes of independence and Western imperialism, the Iranian regime has continued to adopt anti-Israel rhetoric. Like his predecessor, Khamenei has labeled Israel a “cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut” from the world. He has repeatedly decried “bullying world powers” who “installed” Israel in the Muslim Middle East. Khomeini himself promised Iranian support “for all Islamic struggles of nations and courageous and Moslem young people toward the liberation of Jerusalem.” In 2012, Khamenei reiterated Khomeini’s promised support to any nation or group willing to “confront” Israel. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Telegraph](#), [Washington Free Beacon](#))

Beyond rhetoric, the Iranian government has continued to actualize Khomeini’s anti-Israel directives as financial and material support for violent anti-Israel extremist groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and PIJ. In 1998, a U.S. federal court held Iran responsible for sponsoring the 1995 PIJ bus bombing in the Gaza Strip that killed New Jersey resident Alisa Flatow. The same U.S. court later held Iran responsible for sponsoring Hamas’s 1996 Jerusalem bus bombings that killed Sara Duker of New Jersey and Matthew

Eisenfeld of Connecticut. In 2006, Iran reportedly transferred thousands of short-range rockets, longer-range rockets, and unmanned aerial vehicles to Hezbollah. Israeli intelligence estimated that Iran had also directly provided Hezbollah with more than \$1 billion between 2006 and 2009. (Sources: [New York Daily News](#), [ABC News](#), [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Foreign Affairs](#), [Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs](#))

The regime appears to have no qualms publicizing its support of violent anti-Israel groups. The IRGC's Jafari admitted in 2012 that his organization had provided Hamas with long-range missile technology. In a July 2014 message to the leaders of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hamas's Qassam Brigade, and other Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Quds Force's Soleimani praised Iranian support of Palestinian "resistance" as a "religious duty." That October, Khomeini called the battle against Israel a "war of destiny." IRGC deputy leader Hossein Salami announced in July 2016 that there are 100,000 missiles in Lebanon—and tens of thousands more around the Middle East—pointed at Israel and "with the push of a button a sinister and dark dot on the political geography of the world disappears forever." (Sources: [CBS News](#), [Islamic Republic News Agency](#), [Fars News Agency](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

The Iranian government continues to inculcate Khomeinist anti-Israeli rhetoric into Iranian society. Beginning on August 7, 1979, Iran has marked the last Friday of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan as Quds Day ("Jerusalem Day"), a day for Iranian leaders to make anti-Israel and anti-U.S. statements in front of crowds chanting "death to Israel." Tens of thousands of people—many wearing bandanas emblazoned with the phrase "I love fighting Israel"—reportedly marched through Tehran on Quds Day in July 2016. The ritual has also spread beyond Iran's borders to Khomeinist acolytes such as Iraqi militia Kata'ib Hezbollah, which also mark Quds Day. (Sources: [Islamic Republic News Agency](#), [Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting](#), [BBC News](#), [NBC News](#), [Thompson Reuters Foundation](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Fars News Agency](#))

Mistrust and Mistreatment of Minorities

"Christian, Jewish and Baha'i missionary centers are spread in Teheran to deceive people and to lead them away from the teachings and principles of religion. Isn't it a duty to destroy these centers?"
- Ruhollah Khomeini, 1979

Khomeini has accused Iran's religious minorities—particularly Christians, Jews, and Baha'is—of distorting Islam and fomenting unrest in pursuit of imperialist causes. In his book *Islamic Government*, Khomeini wrote of the "duty" to destroy Christian, Jewish, and Baha'i religious centers, which he accused of leading Iranians astray. Khomeini's distrust of minorities has resulted in discriminatory Iranian laws, under which authorities frequently charge minorities with espionage and moral subversion while disproportionately enforcing punishments—such as the death penalty and flogging—against minorities. The U.S. State Department, under advisement of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), has labeled Iran a "country of particular

concern” since 1998 because of its treatment of minorities. (Sources: [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#))

Baha’is

According to Iranian law, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians are constitutionally protected minorities—albeit as second-class citizens. The Baha’is, on the other hand, reportedly remain the most persecuted minority in Iran, a status that can be traced to Khomeini’s anti-Baha’i propaganda. During the early days of the Iranian revolution, Khomeini reportedly told future U.N. Special Rapporteur Richard Falk that Baha’is are not a “genuine” religion and as such have “no place in Iran.” Since Khomeini came to power, Iranian authorities have killed or executed more than 200 Baha’i leaders, according to the USCIRF, while more than 10,000 Baha’is have been fired from government or university positions. (Sources: [Constitution.com](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [CNN](#), [Religion News Service](#), [U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights](#))

Khomeini has continued his predecessor’s anti-Baha’i decrees. According to a May 2016 column by the USCIRF’s Robert George and Katrina Lantos Swett, Baha’is are “prohibited from attending colleges, chartering their own worship centers or schools, serving in the military, and obtaining various kinds of jobs.” More than 850 Baha’is were arbitrarily arrested between 2006 and 2016, according to George and Swett. In 2008, Iran arrested seven Baha’i leaders and convicted them on charges of espionage, sentencing each to 20 years in prison. In January 2016 alone, 24 Baha’is were arrested and sentenced to a combined 193 years in prison for practicing their religion. In 2013, Khomeini issued a fatwa declaring the Baha’is “deviant and misleading,” and calling on Iranians to avoid “dealings” with them. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Religion News Service](#), [U.S. Congress](#), [U.S. Congress](#), [U.S. Congress](#))

Christians

The Iranian constitution labels Christians a protected minority, but the document did not assuage the fears of Iranian Christians in 1979. That same year, an English translation of Khomeini’s book *Islamic Government* revealed his belief that Christian and Jewish missionary centers in Iran sought to lead Muslims astray. Khomeini’s rhetoric set an example stronger than Christians’ constitutionally protected status. In 1980, the head of the Episcopal Church of Iran told the *New York Times* that his church had been subjected to a year of persecution and harassment, including vandalism, the murder of an Episcopalian pastor, and attempts on his own life. He accused groups claiming to represent local Islamic revolution councils of looting churches and taking over church property. (Sources: [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#))

Khomeini also had an uneasy relationship with the Vatican. In November 1979, days after the beginning of the hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy, Pope John Paul II offered to mediate a resolution. Khomeini chastised the pope for not intervening during the shah’s brutal rule. “Those who are pretending to be Christians in the big countries should stop

using the name of Christ to cover their treacheries,” Khomeini said in a public speech that month. Though denied by Iran and the Vatican, Mehmet Ali Agca—the man who shot and wounded Pope John Paul II in 1981—has alleged that Khomeini ordered him to assassinate the pope. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [News.com.au](#))

Influenced by Khomeini’s distrust of Christians, the Iranian government has continued to arbitrarily arrest and persecute Iranian Christians, despite their protected status. In 1990, Iran executed Hossein Soodman, who converted to Christianity in 1960, for apostasy. In 2008, the Iranian parliament passed legislation calling for the death penalty for male Iranians who convert out of Islam and life imprisonment for female converts. In 2010, Christian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani was sentenced to death for apostasy for converting to Christianity. He was acquitted in 2012, but rearrested in May 2016 along with his wife and three church members. Nadarkhani and his wife were released, but the church members remained in prison. As of February 2016, about 90 Christians were either imprisoned, awaiting trial, or otherwise detained because of their religious beliefs, according to the USCIRF’s 2016 annual report. The USCIRF recorded at least 550 Christians that had been arbitrarily arrested or detained since 2010. In 2015, the USCIRF reported “numerous incidents of Iranian authorities raiding church services, threatening church members, and arresting and imprisoning worshipers and church leaders, particularly Evangelical Christian converts.” (Source: [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#), [Telegraph](#), [CNN](#), [American Center for Law and Justice](#), [Fox News](#))

Jews

While in exile in France, Khomeini said in a 1978 interview that Jews in his envisioned Islamic republic would “enjoy all rights and full religious freedom.” Iran’s constitution—ratified the following year—labeled Jews a protected minority in the new Islamic republic, per a fatwa issued by Khomeini. Nonetheless, Khomeini made known his distrust of Jews well known. In 1963, Khomeini reportedly told an Iranian crowd, “I know that you do not want Iran to be under the boot of the Jews.” Later that year, Khomeini claimed that the shah was an undercover Jew who took orders from Israel. In his book *Islamic Government*, Khomeini blamed the Jews for “distorting the reputation of Islam” and attempting to lead Muslims astray. (Sources: [Constitution.com](#), [Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#))

Prior to the revolution, Iran’s Jewish community numbered an estimated 100,000 people. As of 2015, the community numbered about 9,000, according to Iranian census information. Hodayoun Sameyah Najafabadi, an Iranian Jewish community leader told the *Forward* newspaper in August 2015 that while Jews may not face systematic forms of oppression like other minorities, “there are limitations.” For example, voicing support for Israel is illegal in Iran. Though many in Iran’s Jewish community have family in Israel, those who travel to the Jewish state face fines or imprisonment upon their return. And though Jews are allowed to maintain Jewish schools, Muslims are required to serve as principals. According to Najafabadi, a Muslim who kills a Jew has to pay reparations, but a Jew who kills a Muslim faces the death penalty. (Sources: [Constitution.com](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#), [Forward](#))

The Iranian government has further ingrained anti-Semitism into its dogma through the sponsorship of Holocaust denial-themed conferences and contests. In 2006, an Iranian newspaper, *Hamshahri*, began holding the now-annual International Holocaust Cartoon Contest, which invites cartoonists to illustrate the “Holocaust myth.” In a 2007 address at Columbia University, then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad questioned “why is there not sufficient research that can approach the topic [of the Holocaust] from different perspectives?” In 2013, Ahmadinejad called Holocaust denial “a taboo topic that no one in the West allowed to be heard. We put it forward at the global level.” Iran’s history of Holocaust denial can be seen as a direct result of Khomeini’s attempts to delegitimize Israel. As demonstrated so prominently during Ahmadinejad’s 2007 Columbia speech, the Iranian regime couches its Holocaust denial in the belief that the Palestinians have paid the price for Europe’s purported crimes during World War II. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Newsweek](#), [Washington Post](#), [Times of Israel](#))

Gays

Discrimination against gays and lesbians is enshrined in Iranian law, which punishes homosexuality with the death penalty as per Khomeini’s instructions. In a 1979 interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, Khomeini compared Iran’s mass executions of homosexuals, prostitutes, and adulterers to cutting off a gangrenous limb. “Do you let the whole hand, and then the body, become filled with gangrene, or do you cut the finger off,” he told Fallaci. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#))

Khomeini’s anti-gay positions continue as government policy. According to the U.S. State Department, homosexuals in Iran face harassment and arbitrary arrests by Iranian security forces, though they are reportedly vague about publicizing the specific charges of sodomy and homosexuality. In July 2016, Iran hanged a gay teenager for a crime he allegedly committed as a juvenile. In 2008, the British government granted asylum to a gay Iranian teenager, citing estimates that Iran had executed between 4,000 and 6,000 gays and Lesbians since 1979. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [BBC News](#), [International Business Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Daily Beast](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Telegraph](#), [Independent](#))

Relations with Saudi Arabia and Sunni Arab Nations

Although Khomeini reserved his most virulent rhetoric for the United States and Israel, Arab governments were not spared Khomeini’s wrath. In March 1979, Khomeini accused Egypt of treachery after it signed a peace accord with Israel. Khomeini also accused “vile and ungodly Saudis” of being “like daggers that have always pierced the heart of the Moslems from the back.” (Sources: [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works](#), [New York Times](#))

Khomeini simultaneously framed Iran as the defender of all Shiite Muslims in the predominately Sunni Middle East and the representative of all Muslims. He called for unity between Shiites and Sunnis “against Western and arrogant powers.” Khomeini’s

antagonism toward Saudi Arabia derived from the historical divisions between Shiism and Sunnism, as well as from Saudi support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. As evidenced by his demands for the Muslim world to revoke Saudi Arabia's guardianship of Islam's holy places, Khomeini's rivalry also stemmed from his desire for Iran to supplant Saudi Arabia as the leader of the Islamic world. (Sources: [Atlantic](#), [New York Times](#), [Wilson Center](#), [New York Times](#))

The Iranian government continues to promote Khomeini's antipathy for Saudi Arabia through anti-Saudi rhetoric and financial support for anti-Saudi extremist groups. For example, the Iranian-sponsored Hezbollah al-Hejaz group is suspected of carrying out deadly attacks in Saudi Arabia, including the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing. The Iranian government has also armed Houthi rebels fighting against Saudi forces in Yemen and issued anti-Saudi statements, such as September 2016 calls by Khamenei for the global Muslim community to challenge the "heartless and murderous Saudis" for custodianship of Islam's holiest mosques. Also that month, Khamenei condemned reported Saudi-Israeli meetings, accusing Saudi Arabia of stabbing the Muslim community in the back. In April 2015, the IRGC's Jafari promised that the "traitor Saudi Arabia" is "on the edge of disintegration and collapse." (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Times of Israel](#))

Exporting Khomeinism: Support for Global Extremism

"Our war is one of ideology and does not recognize borders or geography. We must insure the vast mobilization of the soldiers of Islam around the world in our ideological war."

- Ruhollah Khomeini, July 1988

Khomeini directed his followers to spread the ideals of Iran's Islamic revolution throughout the world. Iran has actualized these efforts through financial, ideological, and material support for global terrorist proxies loyal to Iran's supreme leader. (Sources: [Foreign Affairs](#), [Rand Corporation](#))

IRGC (Iran)

The [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC)—specifically, the Quds Force—is Iran's primary instrument for liaising with global extremist organizations. Khomeini created the IRGC to serve as a "people's army," constitutionally charged with "extending the sovereignty of God's law throughout the world" by acting as the government's representative to international terror groups. The IRGC has provided funding, weapons, and training to groups such as Hezbollah, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and others considered terrorist organizations by the United States and other governments. (Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Constitution.com](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#))

The IRGC continues to develop new regional terrorist groups to serve as Iranian proxies. In April 2016, Israeli media reported that the IRGC was working to create a Hezbollah-like force in the Gaza Strip. The IRGC was reportedly moving funds to the group through

a charity named after Khomeini. In May 2015, the IRGC's Jafari said that Iranian-supported Houthi rebels fighting in Yemen's civil war are inspired by the Islamic Revolution. According to Jafari, "regional and trans-regional enemies" have failed to stop the revolution from being a role model for other nations. He credited "the blood of our martyrs" for "exporting the Islamic Revolution to the world." (Sources: [Times of Israel](#), [Iranian Students' News Agency](#), [Tehran Times](#), [Fars News Agency](#))

Hezbollah (Lebanon)

[Hezbollah](#) is first and foremost an instrument of the Iranian regime. The Lebanese-based Shiite terrorist group pledged allegiance to Khomeini in its 1985 manifesto and modeled its ideology on Khomeini's Islamic revolution. The group explicitly states that it "was made victorious by God in Iran." Per its manifesto, Hezbollah is explicit in its submission and compliance to the dictates of "one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and faqih (jurist) who fulfills all the necessary conditions: [Ayatollah] Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini." Hezbollah's devotion to Khomeini's Islamic revolution and Khomeinist ideals has led analysts such as Foundation for Defence of Democracy's Tony Badran to label Hezbollah "the most comprehensive and developed export of the Iranian model." (Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Cairo Review of Global Affairs](#), [Weekly Standard](#))

Khomeini's influence in Lebanon spread during his exile from Iran in the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, Khomeini learned and taught at Shiite religious institutions in Iraq alongside Shiites from around the world. In this way, Khomeini cultivated a following of students, including not only Iranian followers, but Lebanese Shiites who returned home indoctrinated to Khomeini's teachings. (Sources: [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#), [Weekly Standard](#), [PBS](#), [Wilson Center](#))

Faced with persecution, Iranian anti-shah Shiites also began making inroads into Lebanon in the early 1970s. In 1975, Iranian-born Lebanese cleric Musa Sadr created the Amal party in Lebanon, an armed militia that included many Iranians. Sadr also worked with the anti-shah Lebanese-based Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), which included Iranian figures such as Mostafa Chamran, who would later serve as Khomeini's first defense minister. Through these networks, Shiite members of the PLO—including future Hezbollah military commander Imad Mughniyeh—helped the Khomeinists acquire weapons and military training. (Sources: [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#), [Weekly Standard](#), [PBS](#), [Wilson Center](#), [BBC News](#), [Asharq al-Awsat](#))

After Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, a group of hardline, Khomeinist Amal members broke off from the group to organize a more militant response with other Lebanese Shiites. This proto-Hezbollah group carried out the 1983 attack on U.S. barracks in Beirut and other attacks on U.S., French, and Israeli forces. In 1985, the newly formed Hezbollah declared its loyalty to Iran's supreme leader in its official manifesto. The manifesto also demanded the expulsion of "aggressive Israeli forces" from Lebanon, called for Israel's destruction, and demanded the creation of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Hezbollah's deputy secretary-general [Naim Qassem](#) called Khomeini's philosophy of

vilayat-e faqih “the reason for Hezbollah’s establishment.” Iran, in turn, viewed Hezbollah as an opportunity to extend its influence, and Khomeini’s government provided the group with funding, training, and weaponry. (Sources: [Wilson Center](#), [Los Angeles Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [Al-Akbar](#), [Atlantic](#), [PBS](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#))

Hezbollah has since maintained its loyalty to the regime of Khomeini’s successor, Supreme Leader [Ali Khamenei](#). For example, Hezbollah and the IRGC reportedly agreed in January 2010 to cooperate in attacking Israeli, U.S., and Western targets. In 2012, Hezbollah pledged to defend Iran against any attack by the United States or Israel. The group has also joined the IRGC in its ongoing fight to support the Assad regime in Syria. In turn, Khamenei has pledged Iran’s continued support for Hezbollah, a “source of honor for the Muslim world.” (Sources: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [Daily News Egypt](#), [BBC News](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

Badr Organization (Iraq)

The [Badr Organization](#) is a Shiite political party and paramilitary force that reportedly serves as “Iran’s oldest proxy in Iraq,” according to Reuters. The Badr Organization adheres to the Khomeinist ideal of vilayat-e faqih, pledging loyalty to the Khomeinist leadership and institutions of Iran. One Iraqi official has described the group as “easily” the most powerful force in Iraq, stronger even than Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. Given the group’s deep ties to Iran and its political and military preeminence, analysts have compared the Badr Organization in Iraq to Hezbollah in Lebanon. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [Reuters](#), [Globe and Mail](#))

Formed in 1983 under the name “the Badr Brigades,” the group originally served as the military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), an Iraqi Shiite political party aimed at bringing Khomeini’s Islamic Revolution to Iraq. During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, SCIRI’s Badr Brigades fought alongside the IRGC against the Iraqi military. From 1983 to 2003, the Badr Brigades continued to operate out of Iran, carrying out intermediary attacks in southern Iraq. When SCIRI reemerged in Iraq in March 2003, the group insisted that it was not pushing for an Iranian-style government, despite the group’s name and ongoing ties to Tehran. (Sources: [Middle East Forum](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [BBC News](#))

The Badr Organization consistently demonstrates its loyalty to Iran’s supreme leader. In 2011, Badr members celebrated the end of the U.S. military presence in Iraq by plastering the walls of government buildings with posters of Khomeini and Khamenei. In early 2015, Badr leader [Hadi al-Amiri](#) reaffirmed his support for Iran’s supreme leader, extolling Khamenei’s “qualifications as an Islamic leader. He is the leader not only for Iranians but the Islamic nation.” (Sources: [Fox News](#), [Reuters](#))

Kata’ib Hezbollah (Iraq)

[Kata'ib Hezbollah](#) (KH) is an Iranian-sponsored, anti-American Shiite militia operating in Iraq. During the U.S.-led war in Iraq that began in 2003, KH earned a reputation for planting deadly roadside bombs and using improvised rocket-assisted mortars to attack U.S. and coalition forces. According to U.S. diplomat Ali Khedery, KH is responsible for “some of the most lethal attacks against U.S. and coalition forces throughout the [U.S.-led war in Iraq].” The group’s leader, [Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes](#), is the alleged mastermind behind the 1983 U.S. and French embassy bombings in Kuwait and the 1985 assassination attempt on Kuwait’s emir. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [U.S. Government Publishing Office](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [Rand Corporation](#))

KH’s loyalty to Iran is key to the group’s ideology. A RAND Corporation report claims that “Kata’ib Hezbollah, like Lebanese Hezbollah, is used as a tool to ‘export the Islamic revolution’ as practiced in Tehran.” KH openly accepts Khomeini’s vilayat-e faqih philosophy. KH members swear an oath of loyalty to Iran’s Khamenei, and accept him as their own spiritual leader. After the December 2011 U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, KH sent fighters to defend the Assad regime in Syria, allegedly at the behest of IRGC-Quds Force commander [Qasem Soleimani](#). KH has continued to prioritize its Khomeinist anti-American agenda, repeatedly boycotting battles against ISIS in which the United States participates. (Sources: [Rand Corporation](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))

Asaib Ahl al-Haq (Iraq)

[Asaib Ahl al-Haq](#) (AAH) is an Iranian-backed Shiite militia and political party operating primarily in Iraq, as well as in Syria and Lebanon. Formed in 2006 by [Qais al-Khazali](#), AAH has approximately 10,000 members and is one of the most powerful Shiite militias in Iraq. Until the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, AAH launched over 6,000 attacks on American and Iraqi forces. The group seeks to promote Iran’s political and religious influence in Iraq, maintain Shiite control over Iraq, and oust any remaining Western vestiges from the country. (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Washington Post](#), [Institute for the Study of War](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#))

AAH is devoted to vilayat-e faqih, and overtly displays its loyalty to Iran’s leaders. The group is reportedly under the coordination of the Quds Force’s Soleimani. According to analyst Sam Wyer of the Institute for the Study of War, AAH has “displayed its commitment to figures of the ‘tradition of the Iranian Revolution,’ including Ruhollah Khomeini, Ali Khamenei, Kazim al-Haeri, and Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi.” (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Institute for the Study of War](#))

Wyer characterized AAH as a Khomeinist organization that aims “to create a suitable environment for the return of Imam Mahdi through the imposition of strict Shi’a Islamic governance.” Wyer’s assessment is corroborated by *Guardian* Middle East correspondent Martin Chulov, who called AAH a “proxy arm of the Revolutionary Guards’ al-Quds Brigades, whose main brief is to export Iran’s 30-year-old Islamic Revolution.” (Sources: [Institute for the Study of War](#), [Guardian](#))

Hezbollah al-Hejaz (Saudi Arabia)

Hezbollah al-Hejaz, a.k.a. Saudi Hezbollah, is a Shiite terrorist organization that formed in May 1987 to target U.S. and Saudi interests there and abroad. The group is reportedly sponsored by Iran and related to the Lebanese Hezbollah terrorist group. Hezbollah al-Hejaz adheres to the Khomeinist philosophy of vilayat-e faqih and is loyal to Iran's supreme leader. According to U.S. authorities, Iran has provided logistic and military support to the group. Hezbollah al-Hejaz reportedly seeks to spread the vilayat-e faqih philosophy—and loyalty to Iran's supreme leader—inside Saudi Arabia. (Sources: [Al Arabiya](#), [U.S. Department of Justice](#))

The Saudi government outlawed Hezbollah al-Hejaz, forcing its members to allegedly train in Lebanon, Iran, and Syria. According to the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., Hezbollah al-Hejaz was responsible—with Iranian support—for the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers military barracks, an attack which left 19 U.S. citizens dead and 372 people wounded. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [FBI](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#))

Khomeini's Legacy: Lasting Effects in Iran

“Serve the nation from now on.”
- Ruhollah Khomeini, February 6, 1979

Khomeini died at the age of 86 on June 3, 1989, 12 days after undergoing surgery for intestinal bleeding. The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, a quasi-governmental body that presides over the dissemination of Khomeini's writings and ideology, maintains a number of historical sites associated with Khomeini. According to the institute, Khomeini's childhood home in the western Iranian city of Khomein receives hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. (Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#), [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works](#))

After Khomeini's death, a cult-like following developed within Iran, with Khomeini's tomb—referred to as “the holy shrine”—in Tehran serving as a pilgrimage site for many Iranians. One such follower, Iranian Ozra Noroozi, drove almost four hours to visit in 1990 because, “We loved the Imam so much that now we love his tomb. We pray that God will give victory to the Imam's revolution.” Iranian merchant Abdul Reza called the tomb “a place all Muslims must come, not just Iranians. This is not Mecca, but it is like Mecca. Everyone must visit.” Tehran mechanic Ali Fooladi credited Khomeini with bringing “the true religion of this country back to the people” and defeating “the heathens.” By 2015, the shrine had turned into a sprawling complex with shops, a museum, a hotel, and thousands of parking spots, prompting Deutsche Welle to call it “the most expensive mausoleum in the world.” However, the *Guardian* reported that fewer Iranians are visiting the shrine. “No one remembers the revolution or Imam Khomeini anymore,” one visitor told the *Guardian*, citing Iranians' preoccupation with

economic problems. (Sources: [Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works](#), [New York Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Guardian](#))

Nonetheless, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has used the anniversary of Khomeini's death to reinforce his and Khomeini's harsh positions. During the 25th anniversary in June 2014, for example, Khamenei railed against U.S. sanctions, which have failed to bring Iran "to its knees." In June 2015, on the 26th anniversary of Khomeini's death, Khamenei warned Iranians against distorting Khomeini's character. The rebuke was a response to public debate over whether renovations to Khomeini's mausoleum were too extravagant. Tens of thousands of people reportedly attend the anniversary ceremonies at Khomeini's tomb. While the anniversary is celebrated in Iran, Iranian embassies, and countries sympathetic to Iran, it is met with protests in other parts of the world. A June 2015 commemoration at an Islamic center in Ontario, Canada, drew 250 protesters, primarily from Iranian Canadian and Jewish groups, according to media reports. (Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#), [Greater Kashmir](#), [Tehran Times](#), [Vice News](#))

Khomeini's Descendants and the Alleged Iranian Distortion of Khomeinism

Khomeini's descendants view themselves as the "faithful custodians" of his legacy, according to grandson Ali Eshragi. Despite Khomeini's implementation of totalitarian policies in Iran, several of his descendants have spoken out against the current Iranian government's restrictive policies—such as government censorship and restrictions on women—claiming that they are not in line with Khomeini's original ideals. Khomeini's descendants accuse government hardliners of perverting Khomeinism into a system of oppression of the Iranian people—even though Khomeini himself sanctioned many of the oppressive policies they protest. (Source: [Asia Times](#), [Adnkronos International](#), [New Republic](#), [Telegraph](#), [Adnkronos International](#),

In a 2003 BBC interview, Khomeini's eldest grandson, Hossein Khomeini, called for Iran to have a national referendum on Iran's Islamic system of government. He argued that the majority of people who voted for the system in 1979 are now a minority in Iran compared with the country's younger population. Khomeini told Al Arabiya in 2006 that "Freedom needs to come to Iran in any way possible, whether by internal development or external interference." (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Asia Times](#))

Select History:

- **April 1, 1979:** The Islamic Republic of Iran is created after the Iranian people vote in national referendum to become an Islamic nation. Khomeini declares "the first day of a government of God." (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#))
- **May 5, 1979:** Khomeini creates the IRGC to fulfil "the ideological mission of jihad in God's way," according to the constitution. (Source: [Council on Foreign Relations](#))

- **August 1979:** Khomeini publicly proposes the first Quds Day to support the Palestinians against Israel. The commemoration has become an annual day of protests and rallies against Israel, frequented accompanied by chants of “Death to Israel.” (Source: [BBC News](#))
- **November 4, 1979-January 20, 1981:** On November 4, the 15th anniversary of Khomeini’s exile, students storm the U.S. embassy in Tehran and take 90 people, including 66 Americans, hostage. The crisis comes to an end on January 20, 1981, when the hostages are released a day after the United States pledges not to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs in exchange for their release. (Source: [Al Jazeera](#), [BBC News](#), [PBS](#))
- **December 1979:** After a national referendum, Iran accepts a new constitution, transforming Iran into an Islamic republic and empowering Iran’s supreme leader as the ultimate authority. (Source: [New York Times](#))
- **1980s:** The Badr Brigades—later renamed the Badr Organization—emerges as a pro-Iranian militia during the Iran-Iraq War. (Source: [Reuters](#))
- **September 22, 1980:** Iraq launches a surprise invasion of Iran, sparking the eight-year Iran-Iraq War, during which the IRGC becomes a major player in Iran’s foreign operations. (Source: [BBC News](#))
- **1982:** Hezbollah emerges in Lebanon with Iranian support. In its 1985 manifesto, Hezbollah pledges allegiance to Khomeini and his ideology. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Council on Foreign Relations](#))
- **April 18, 1983:** A Hezbollah suicide attack against the U.S. embassy in Beirut leaves 63 people dead and 120 wounded. (Source: [Global Terrorism Database](#))
- **February 14, 1989:** Khomeini issues a fatwa calling on all “proud Muslims” to kill Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*, and his publishers, “so that no one will dare to insult Muslims’ beliefs.” (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New Yorker](#))
- **June 3, 1989:** Khomeini dies at the age of 86. (Source: [Los Angeles Times](#))
- **September 17, 1992:** Four Iranian Kurdish dissidents are assassinated at Mykonos, a Greek restaurant in Berlin, Germany. In 1997, a German court issues an international arrest warrant for Iranian Intelligence Minister Hojjat al-Islam Ali Fallahian after determining that he had ordered the dissidents’ assassination with the knowledge of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Then-Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani is also implicated. (Source: [Spiegel Online](#))
- **July 18, 1994:** A truck bombing at the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, leaves over 80 people dead and 300 wounded.

Hezbollah and the IRGC are suspected of orchestrating the attack. In 2006, Argentine officials indict former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani for involvement in the attack. (Source: [BBC News](#))

- **June 25, 1996:** A truck bomb explodes at a dormitory complex at Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers, housing U.S. Air Force pilots and staff, leaving 19 Americans dead and 372 wounded. A U.S. federal grand jury in 2001 indicts the leader of Hezbollah al-Hejaz and 13 other members, charging that "elements of the Iranian government inspired, supported, and supervised members of" Hezbollah al-Hejaz. A U.S. federal judge rules in 2006 that Iran directed Hezbollah al-Hejaz in the attack. (Sources: [FBI](#), [U.S. Department of Justice](#), [Washington Post](#))
- **January 2010:** The IRGC's Quds Force and Hezbollah agree to cooperate in carrying out attacks against Israeli, U.S., and Western targets. (Source: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#))
- **December 30, 2011:** Badr members celebrate the end of the U.S. military presence in Iraq by plastering the walls of government buildings with posters of Khomeini and current Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. (Source: [Fox News](#))
- **August 2012:** Khamenei reportedly orders the IRGC Quds Force to step up attacks against Western targets in retaliation for U.S.-backing of Syrian rebels in that country's civil war. (Source: [Telegraph](#))
- **May 2013:** Intelligence officials say that Qasem Soleimani, leader of the IRGC's Quds Force, has called upon Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) to send several hundred fighters to Syria. KH and AAH fighters pour into Syria to fight Sunni rebels near Damascus. Later that year, Iranian proxy groups are identified as the main contributors of Shiite fighters in Syria. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#), [U.S. Government Publishing Office](#))
- **December 2014:** An Iranian official confirms that the IRGC Quds Force has "a few hundred" personnel in Yemen training Houthi rebels. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Extreme Rhetoric

Khomeini, 1941

From Khomeini's book Unveiling the Mysteries:

"God has formed the Islamic Republic. Obey God and his Prophet and those among you who have authority. It is the only government accepted by God on Resurrection Day. We don't say that the Government must be composed by the clergy but that the Government must be directed and organized according to the divine law, and this is only possible with the supervision of the clergy."

“The orders of the dictatorial state of Reza Shah are valueless and all laws approved by the Parliament must be burned.”¹

Pro-Islamist, Pro-violence

Khomeini, October 26, 1964

“All our troubles today are caused by this Israel. Israel itself derives from America.”²

Anti-Israel, Anti-American

Khomeini, October 26, 1964

“If our country is under American occupation then tell us.... All our troubles today are caused by this America.”³

Anti-American

Khomeini, 1978

“At present the large and well-equipped army of tens of thousands of the professional criminals of Israel—that nucleus of mischief—with the help of their weapons, cannons, tanks and warplanes, have taken control of the southern areas of the country, the heartland of our brothers-in-faith, driving the oppressed inhabitants away, destroying their homes and setting fire to their farms.”

[...]

“It is hoped that the heads of the Islamic governments, especially the Arab ones, strive jointly to repulse Israel, this mass of mischief. If they fail to do so, there is the possibility, God forbid, of such an eventuality arising in countries of similar type.”⁴

Anti-Israel, Pro-violence

Khomeini, 1979

“The Baha’is are not a genuine religion, and have no place in Iran.”⁵

Anti-Baha’i

¹ Raymond H. Anderson, “Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, 89, the Unwavering Iranian Spiritual Leader,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/04/obituaries/ayatollah-ruhollah-khomeini-89-the-unwavering-iranian-spiritual-leader.html>.

² “Iman Khomeini’s Slammed Shah Regime’s Capitulation Bill,” Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, October 26, 2013, http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n6523/Weekly_Topic/Imam_Khomeini_s_Slammed_Shah_Regime%E2%80%99s_Capitulation_Bill.

³ “Iman Khomeini’s Slammed Shah Regime’s Capitulation Bill,” Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, October 26, 2013, http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n6523/Weekly_Topic/Imam_Khomeini_s_Slammed_Shah_Regime%E2%80%99s_Capitulation_Bill.

⁴ “Imam Khomeini slammed Israeli Crimes in Lebanon and Palestine,” Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, March 22, 2014, http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n7638/News/Imam_Khomeini_slammed_Israeli_crimes_in_Lebanon_and_Palestine.

⁵ Richard Falk, “Ayatollah Khomeini: A Rare Encounter with a True Revolutionary,” *Al Jazeera*, February 3, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/02/ayatollah-khomeini-rare-encounte-20142354756879470.html>.

Khomeini, 1979

Forward to English translation of Khomeini's book Islamic Government:

“Since its inception, the Islamic government was afflicted with the Jews when they started their counter-activity by distorting the reputation of Islam, by assaulting it and by slandering.”⁶

Anti-Semitic

Khomeini, 1979

Excerpt from English translation of Khomeini's book Islamic Government:

“Christian, Jewish and Baha'i missionary centers are spread in Teheran to deceive people and to lead them away from the teachings and principles of religion. Isn't it a duty to destroy these centers?”⁷

Anti-Baha'i, Anti-Christian, Anti-Semitic, Pro-violence

Khomeini, 1979

Excerpt from English translation of Khomeini's book Islamic Government:

“We must first advise such people to abandon their erroneous way, must draw their attention to the danger surrounding Islam and the Moslems and must open their eyes wide to the Zionist danger and to the Anglo-American (colonialism) that supplies the Israeli entity with the mainstays of life.”⁸

Anti-U.S., Anti-Israel

Khomeini, 1979

Responding to reports of executions of homosexuals, prostitutes, and adulterers:

“If our finger suffers from gangrene, what do you do? Do you let the whole hand, and then the body, become filled with gangrene, or do you cut the finger off?”⁹

Anti-homosexuality, Pro-violence

Khomeini, February 3, 1979

“Do not provoke me to invite people to stage a jihad. If jihad comes, we can supply the people with guns. The government will soon be introduced. The Islamic Revolution Council has been appointed [its membership was secret at that time]. We ask the army to join us as soon as possible. The armed forces are our children. We have a lot of love for them. They should join the nation. When the new constitution is drafted, it will be put to a vote.”¹⁰

Pro-Islamism, Pro-violence

⁶ “Behind the Headlines the Anti-Semitism of Khomeini,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, December 28, 1979, <http://www.jta.org/1979/12/28/archive/behind-the-headlines-the-anti-semitism-of-khomeini>.

⁷ “Behind the Headlines the Anti-Semitism of Khomeini,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, December 28, 1979, <http://www.jta.org/1979/12/28/archive/behind-the-headlines-the-anti-semitism-of-khomeini>.

⁸ “Behind the Headlines the Anti-Semitism of Khomeini,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, December 28, 1979, <http://www.jta.org/1979/12/28/archive/behind-the-headlines-the-anti-semitism-of-khomeini>.

⁹ Raymond H. Anderson, “Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, 89, the Unwavering Iranian Spiritual Leader,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/04/obituaries/ayatollah-ruhollah-khomeini-89-the-unwavering-iranian-spiritual-leader.html>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Sahimi, “The Ten Days That Changed Iran,” PBS, February 3, 2010, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/02/fajr-10-days-that-changed-iran.html>.

Khomeini, February 6, 1979

Speaking to the Iranian navy:

“Serve the nation from now on. The foreign hands must be cut off from this nation. How much should the United States loot this country? How much Britain and other powers? We must resurrect ourselves, wake up, and take back our freedom.”¹¹

Anti-U.S., Anti-West

Khomeini, February 10, 1979

“The communiqué of the military authorities is against the principles of Islam, and the people should not pay any attention to it. I condemn this inhumane aggression by the Imperial Guard division. They wish to keep the hands of foreigners open in Iran by engaging in fratricide. Although I have not ordered a holy jihad and would like to keep the peace and have the affairs taken care off in accordance with the law and the wishes of the people, I cannot at the same time tolerate such barbarism, and warn that if these acts of fratricide are not stopped, and the Guard units do not return to their barracks and the army commanders do not step in to stop such aggressions, I shall take my final decision, God willing, and then the responsibility will be with those committing the aggression and those transgressing.”¹²

Pro-Islamist

Khomeini, March 25, 1979

“Iran regards the peace made by Israel and Sadat a treachery to Islam and Muslims and the Arab brothers and supports the political stances taken by countries in opposing this Accord.”¹³

Anti-Israel

Khomeini, August 7, 1979

On the first Al-Quds Day:

“I invite Muslims all over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as Al-Quds Day and to proclaim the international solidarity of Muslims in support of the legitimate rights of the Muslim people of Palestine. For many years, I have been notifying the Muslims of the danger posed by the usurper Israel which today has intensified its savage attacks against the Palestinian brothers and sisters, and which, in the south of Lebanon in particular, is continually bombing Palestinian homes in the hope of crushing the Palestinian struggle.

“I ask all the Muslims of the world and the Muslim governments to join together to sever the hand of this usurper and its supporters. I call on all the Muslims of the world to select as Al-Quds Day the last Friday in the holy month of Ramadan — which is itself a

¹¹ Muhammad Sahimi, “The Ten Days That Changed Iran,” PBS, February 3, 2010, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/02/fajr-10-days-that-changed-iran.html>.

¹² Muhammad Sahimi, “The Ten Days That Changed Iran,” PBS, February 3, 2010, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2010/02/fajr-10-days-that-changed-iran.html>.

¹³ “Imam Khomeini Warned Against Treaty Between Egypt and Israel,” Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, March 24, 2014, http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n7637/News/Imam_Khomeini_Warned_against_Treaty_between_Egypt_and_Israel.

determining period and can also be the determiner of the Palestinian people's fate — and through a ceremony demonstrating the solidarity of Muslims world-wide, announce their support for the legitimate rights of the Muslim people. I ask God Almighty for the victory of the Muslims over the infidels.”¹⁴

Anti-Israel, Pro-violence

Khomeini, 1987

Speech before the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca:

“As I have often warned both before and after the revolution, I once again remind everyone of the danger of the prevalent, festering and cancerous Zionist tumor in the body of Islamic countries. I declare my own as well as the unreserved support of the Iranian nation, Government and authorities for all Islamic struggles of nations and courageous and Moslem young people toward the liberation of Jerusalem.”

[...]

“I pray for the success of all those dear ones who continue to deal blows to Israel and its interests in the occupied territories or next to that usurped country by relying on the weapons of faith and jihad. I assure you that the Iranian nation will not abandon you.”¹⁵

Anti-Israel, Pro-jihad, Pro-violence

Khomeini, 1987

Before the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca:

“If we wanted to prove to the world that the Saudi Government, these vile and ungodly Saudis, are like daggers that have always pierced the heart of the Moslems from the back, we would not have been able to do it as well as has been demonstrated by these inept and spineless leaders of the Saudi Government.”

[...]

“It is certainly true that the United States and Arabia have taken advantage of the fact that the Moslems were unarmed in the House of God where resort to force is forbidden have taken advantage of the respect shown by the faithful for the teachings of the Koran, and the fact that they shunned violence near the House of God. Using premeditated means and careful plans, they engaged in a dastardly attack on the ranks of our lion-hearted men and women and caught them unaware.... We hold the United States responsible for all these crimes. God willing, at an opportune time we shall deal with her.”

[...]

“The al-Saud family is not worthy of being in charge of the hajj and Kaaba affairs. The Moslems and the intellectuals should think of an alternative.”¹⁶

Anti-Saudi, Anti-U.S.

Khomeini, 1987

Before the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca:

¹⁴ “International Quds Day,” Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, accessed November 30, 2016, http://web.archive.org/web/20031028225026/http://www.irib.ir/occasions/Quds_Day/Quds%20dayEn.htm.

¹⁵ “Excerpts From Khomeini Speeches,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/04/world/excerpts-from-khomeini-speeches.html>.

¹⁶ “Excerpts From Khomeini Speeches,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/04/world/excerpts-from-khomeini-speeches.html>.

“I counsel the United States not to place responsibility for the most important political, international, and military martyrs in the hands of individuals such as Reagan, because Reagan has become incapable, especially in political issues and decisions.”

[...]

“The United States and Reagan . . . should remain assured that any continuation of the show of force in the Persian Gulf will lead the region into a hotbed of danger and unwanted crisis to themselves. If the world has prepared itself for an oil crisis, as well as the disruption of all economic, commercial and industrial activity, then we are ready also. We have tightened our belts; everything is ready for such a situation.”

[...]

“The United States should conclude that military intervention in the Persian Gulf is not simply an experiment. It is a big step, a dangerous game. We, along with all the Moslems of the Persian Gulf region, interpret the superpowers' military presence as a prelude for invading the Islamic countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran. We interpret this as an extension of their support for Saddam.”¹⁷

Anti-U.S.

Khomeini, 1988

“We must all be prepared for a real war and go to the war fronts and fight against America and its lackeys.”¹⁸

Anti-U.S., Pro-violence

Khomeini, July 1988

“We have repeatedly shown in our foreign and international Islamic policy that we have been and are intent on expanding the influence of Islam in the world and lessening the domination of the world devourers. Now, if the servants of the United States cite this policy as being expansionist and motivated to establish a great empire, we will not fear it but welcome it.”

[...]

“We are intent on tearing out the roots of corrupting Zionism, capitalism, and Communism in the world. We have decided to rely on God Almighty to destroy the regimes which are based on these three pillars, in order to spread the regime of the Islam of the messenger of God - peace be on him and his scion - in a world of arrogance.”

[...]

“Our war is one of ideology and does not recognize borders or geography. We must insure the vast mobilization of the soldiers of Islam around the world in our ideological war. God willing, the great Iranian nation, through its material and moral support for the revolution, will compensate for the hardships of the war with the sweetness of the defeat of God's enemies in the world. What is sweeter than the fact that the great Iranian nation has struck the United States on the head like lightning?”

[...]

¹⁷ “Excerpts From Khomeini Speeches,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1987,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/04/world/excerpts-from-khomeini-speeches.html>.

¹⁸ Youssef M. Ibrahim, “The Downing of Flight 655; As Iran Mourns, Khomeini Calls for ‘War’ on U.S.,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/05/world/the-downing-of-flight-655-as-iran-mourns-khomeini-calls-for-war-on-us.html>.

“One of the greatest sources of pride for our nation is that it confronted the greatest show of force, the deployment of U.S. and European warships in the Persian Gulf. I warn the United States and the Europeans that they should leave the Persian Gulf before it is too late, before they have sunk in the quagmire of death. It will not always be the case that our passenger aircraft are downed by your warships. The children of the revolution may sink your warships to the bottom of the Persian Gulf.”¹⁹

Anti-U.S., Anti-West, Pro-Islamism, Pro-violence

Full Text of Khomeini’s 1989 Fatwa Against Salman Rushdie:

“Surely we belong to God, and to Him we shall return. [Quran, 2:156]

I hereby inform all proud Muslims worldwide that the author of the book ‘The Satanic Verses,’ whose printed text includes insults to Islam and the Prophet, as well as those publishers who are aware of its contents, are sentenced to death. I request that proud Muslims execute this sentence against them wherever they are found, so that no one else will dare to insult Muslims’ sacred beliefs. Whoever is killed in this mission is a martyr, God willing. Additionally, whoever is unable to put his hands on the authors or is unable to execute them should guide the people to them, and the people will give him a reward for his good work. Peace be upon you, Ruhollah al-Musawi al-Khomeini”²⁰

Pro-violence

Iranian Government Statement, 1989

“We call on all Party of God cells in the world of Islam to grasp the depth of this black conspiracy. We advise all Islamic Governments not to place themselves against the million masses of angry Muslims but to demonstrate their disgust and anger, together with their nation, towards this provocative American deed.”²¹

Anti-U.S.

Khomeini, January 1989

Letter to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev:

“It is clear to everyone that Communism should henceforth be sought in world museums of political history. Materialism cannot save humanity from the crisis of disbelief in spirituality, which is the basic affliction of human societies in the West and the East.”²²

Anti-West, Anti-Soviet

Khomeini, 1989

From his last will and testament:

¹⁹ “Words of Khomeini: On Islam, the Revolution and a Cease-Fire,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/23/world/words-of-khomeini-on-islam-the-revolution-and-a-cease-fire.html>.

²⁰ “Confessions Salman Rushdie / ‘I think that I have come to an end,’” *Fars News*, February 14, 2012, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13911125001458>

²¹ Sheila Rule, “Khomeini Urges Muslims to Kill Author of Novel,” *New York Times*, February 15, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/04/18/specials/rushdie-khomeini.html>.

²² Reuters, “Study Islam, Khomeini Suggests to Gorbachev,” *New York Times*, January 5, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/05/world/study-islam-khomeini-suggests-to-gorbachev.html>.

“We cheer to have Saddam, the Aflaqi ...(40) as an enemy whom friend and foe know to be a criminal, a violator of human rights and international laws and whose betrayal of the peoples of Iraq and of the Persian Gulf Emirates, has been no less than his betrayal of our country and people. We and the oppressed peoples of the world are delighted to be objects of criminal accusations by the superpowers through the international mass media under their control.”²³

Anti-West

Khomeini, 1989

From his last will and testament:

“The USA is the foremost enemy of Islam. It is a terrorist state by nature that has set fire to everything everywhere and its ally, the international Zionism does not stop short of any crime to achieve its base and greedy desires, crimes that the tongue and pen are ashamed to utter or write.”

[...]

“What can be a better source of pride than the fact that the USA with all its military might, its boastfulness, its claims, its mass media and its allies among puppet regimes, has been so dumbfounded and disgraced in its dealings with the dauntless Iranian nation and the land of His Holiness Baqiyatullah (a title of the 12th infallible imam, Hazrat Mahdi (AS) who is now in occultation) that it does not know which way to turn and who to turn to?! This is not the work of anyone or anything except divine assistance that has awakened nations, particularly the Iranian Muslim nation and has guided it from darkness into light: The Light of Islam.”

“Today, we feel proud that we seek to re-institute the objectives of the Holy Quran and Tradition and that the various layers of our nation sacrifice their lives, properties and loved ones for this holy cause.”²⁴

Anti-U.S.

Khomeini, 1989

Last will and testament:

“The stupid idea of a Greater Israel ...(36) urges them to commit any shameful crime. The Islamic nations and the mustazafeen (the meek, the oppressed) peoples of the world are pleased to have Hussein of Jordan (37) a professional, itinerant criminal, Hasan of Morocco ...(38) and Hosni Mubarak ...(39) of Egypt, fellow-mangers of Israel, as enemies. These are fellow-criminals with Israel and commit any act of treason against their own nations to serve the USA.”²⁵

Anti-Egypt, Anti-Israel

²³ “In The Name of God The Compassionate, the Merciful,” *Al Seraj*, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://www.alseraj.net/maktaba/kotob/english/Miscellaneousbooks/LastwillofImamKhomeini/occasion/ertehal/english/will/1mnew1.htm>.

²⁴ “In The Name of God The Compassionate, the Merciful,” *Al Seraj*, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://www.alseraj.net/maktaba/kotob/english/Miscellaneousbooks/LastwillofImamKhomeini/occasion/ertehal/english/will/1mnew1.htm>.

²⁵ “In The Name of God The Compassionate, the Merciful,” *Al Seraj*, accessed June 19, 2014, <http://www.alseraj.net/maktaba/kotob/english/Miscellaneousbooks/LastwillofImamKhomeini/occasion/ertehal/english/will/1mnew1.htm>.

Khomeini, undated

During the Iran-Iraq War:

“Almost every day, Iran is hit and many children, youngsters, old men and ordinary people see their homes fall in on them. But as soon as they clamber from the rubble they speak of the need for us to make war until victory.”²⁶

(Source: [New York Times](#))

Pro-violence

Khomeini, undated

Following the Islamic Revolution:

“This is not a struggle between the United States and Iran. This is a struggle between Islam and blasphemy.”²⁷

(Source: [New York Times](#))

Pro-Islamist, Anti-U.S.

²⁶ Raymond H. Anderson, “Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, 89, the Unwavering Iranian Spiritual Leader,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/04/obituaries/ayatollah-ruhollah-khomeini-89-the-unwavering-iranian-spiritual-leader.html>.

²⁷ Raymond H. Anderson, “Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, 89, the Unwavering Iranian Spiritual Leader,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/04/obituaries/ayatollah-ruhollah-khomeini-89-the-unwavering-iranian-spiritual-leader.html>.