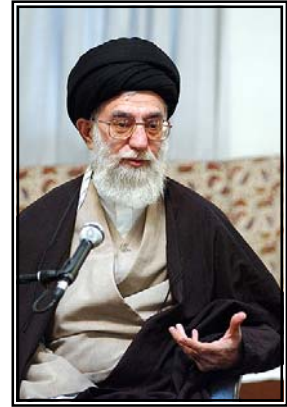


# Why Are We Not Defending Ourselves?

*Excerpts from the speech of Ayatollah al-Udhma Khamenei at the 17th International Conference on Islamic Unity [17 Rabi' al-Awwal 1425 - May 7, 2004]:*

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. . . . What I would like to talk about at this gathering of the Islamic elite and scholars is about the unity among Muslims. Today, the world of Islam and the Islamic Ummah are facing major problems. It is true that most of these problems emanate from our own Islamic community. We were complacent, we remained idle and we, with our selfishness and temporal affairs, did not pursue the path of Islamic Ummah towards the apex of human evolution. Some of these calamities are because of our own actions and in this connection, we must make a move, change our direction and repent.



There is also no doubt that in recent eras of history a very important part of such backwardness, catastrophes, and problems are due to today's and yesterday's false global order. The global order is an authoritative order, it is a state based on dictatorship. It is not a system based on human life. It is a system based on the wild life of the jungle. Take a look at the situation of the world of Islam. For years we have referred to the problem in Palestine as a deep wound to the body of Islam.

Today Iraq is added to the problem as well. See what people in power are capable of doing through the imposition of their will. They are changing all irrational, unacceptable concepts and present and act upon them as reasonable and acceptable. They are doing this by exerting force, and relying on the logic of arms, and their financial and political power. They are openly committing the kind of crimes that are regarded as criminal and murderous acts according to common laws of all international communities. Sometimes they also put a tag on them superficially as a justification, although they know that no one would accept them. In some instances they don't even justify their acts or try to put a cover on them. The usurper Zionist regime explicitly announces that it will assassinate Palestinian elite and the American government officially and openly is supporting them. This is the situation of today's world order.

Terrorism, fight against which has become an excuse for the arrogant American government to bully, is now openly announced as a legitimate and lawful act in their language and materialized in the Zionist governors' practice. Military occupation of Iraq, humiliation of a nation, bringing down a cultured and great nation, and occupation of a country is an absolute crime. It is an international crime. They overtly did this under the banner of human rights and defending democracy and freedom. Something that no one in the world believes. What the occupiers did in Iraq proves the opposite. It is obvious that they do not have the least concern about human rights, they do not care at all about the people's right to choose their own government. They themselves appoint officials, they themselves choose governors, they themselves set rules and themselves punish people without trying them, and condemn them to death. See what is going on in Iraq.

This is the situation of the Islamic nation today. And it is because this nation is concentrated in a rich zone of the world and because the rotating wheel of the civilization of the world depends on the resources that can be found in plenty at this corner of the world. Due to these resources, the Islamic nation is envied and invaded by these powers. And in this line they allow themselves to carry out any atrocities. This is the plight of the Islamic nation. The question is this: Can the Islamic nation defend itself? Can we not defend ourselves in the face of this mighty encroachment? The answer is, of course we can. We have many tools at our disposal to defend ourselves, to defend our right and to defend our existence. We comprise a huge nation. We possess vast reserves of wealth. We are bestowed with outstanding people. We have a spiritual asset which enables our

people to stand up to bullies. We enjoy the record of a culture and a civilization which are almost unique in the world. We are blessed with many possibilities. We therefore have the potential to defend ourselves.

But why are we not defending ourselves? Why are we so helpless when it comes to practice in the arena? The answer is because we are not united, because we are not attached to each other as one entity, because we were separated under various pretexts and because the extensive and organized Islamic army was fragmented into various groups whose main concern is how to confront each other, to fight one another, to fear one another, to violate each other's rights. It is obvious that this army will remain inefficient under such circumstances.

Time has come for the Islamic world today to reconsider the situation. The Islamic world should seriously pause over the issue of unity. America's threat today is not directed against just one or two countries in this region. The threat is directed against all of us. Today the Zionist capitalists behind American administration are not satisfied with just devouring one area of our region. They intend to devour the entire region. They say this so blatantly today. The plan of Greater Middle East has no other meaning but this. The intention was the same from the beginning, over 50 years ago, when they set up the usurping Zionist government. The thought also took shape in the European and other Western circles about 100 years ago.

They say that they want to devour this region, occupy it and that they need it. The people of this region are not important to them. All of us are under threat. And when all of us are under threat, the most rational thing to do is to unite. Our recommendations and our earnest demands from the Islamic government and the Islamic nations are: to think about this problem and work on it. I know it is difficult and certain preliminary actions ought to be taken.

Of course, the enemy is not going to be idle. The enemy will be using its old tools for engendering division. The enemy will make use of ethnic issues. It will make use of the creed and tribal affiliations. It will aggrandize certain issues that Islam told us not to aggrandize. Islam has stressed that ethnicity is not the benchmark for identity and distinction. *ان اكرمكم عند الله اتقاكم* Islam has stressed that Muslims' behavior towards each other must be brotherly. Islam has not differentiated between Sunnis, Shi'is or other sects in this regard. Islam talks about Muslims *انما المؤمنون اخوة*. The Holy Quran said that anyone who believes in the Holy Quran, Islam and Qiblah is a believer. All people who believe in such things are brothers. Islam has taught us this. We hide our dagger behind us in order to strike a blow to the chest of our brothers. There are guilty people in all sectors. We must stop them and encounter them.

Today, the Islamic Ummah, for its life, honor, and in order to rescue itself and raise the flag of Islam, need unity. What kind of rationale can withstand this and engender division among Muslims? This has priority over every other urgent need or necessity. Why do we not realize the need for unity among Muslims? Grave responsibility is on our shoulders. This is a very critical juncture. If enemies succeed in imposing their power and occupy the region, the world of Islam will be left behind one hundred years as it happened during the era of colonialism. The world of Islam will be one hundred years behind the modern and industrial world. We are accountable. Today, we are responsible. Today, governments, elite, cultural and religious figures are responsible. We are all responsible for unity in the world of Islam.

One of the most important words which our honorable Imam (Khomeini), may God be satisfied with his deeds, kept repeating and stressing since before the victory of the Islamic revolution and until the very last days of his life was the unity of the Islamic Ummah, the unity of Muslims and avoiding the enlargement of small pretexts. Today we understand and realize that it was a very wise and correct advice. . .