

*Maryam Rajavi addresses “Interfaith Solidarity Against Extremism”
June 03, 2017*

Distinguished guests,
Dear sisters and brothers, from Palestine, Syria, Yemen, and other countries, who have joined this Iftar reception hosted by the Iranian Resistance,
And dear sisters and brothers who are attending this ceremony from different parts of France,
Happy Ramadan!

I congratulate my countrymen in Iran, Muslims in the brother nations neighboring Iran, Muslims in the region, and Muslims in France and all over the world on the advent of Ramadan.

The tenth of Ramadan is the anniversary of the passing of Hazrat Khadijah al-Kubra (a), the honorable wife of the Prophet, the first convert to Islam and the great supporter of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet described her as a “God-given gift and blessing.”

Our endless salutations and respects to her. She set an immortal example for emancipated and free women of all ages.
She is the ideological mother of all believers and forerunners who have followed the Prophet’s path. This is why her name and memory inspire solidarity among all Muslims, regardless of their sect or creed.

As stated in the Quran, Ramadan is the month of Taqwa or piety.

شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنَ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

Ramadhan is the month in which the Qur'an was sent down, as a guide to mankind, and as clear signs for guidance and judgment between right and wrong.

To differentiate Islam from perversion and reaction, and differentiate freedom from compulsion.

To differentiate the rituals of truthfulness, love and compassion and the rituals of Muhammad on the one hand, from deception and demagoguery entwined with merciless vengeance and repression as symbolized by Khomeini, on the other.

Don't Ramadan and fasting reject all forms of falsehood and duplicity? Don't they bear the message of peace and solidarity? Don't they aim to fight poverty and oppression?

What does an atrocious ritual based on lies, flogging of people and chaining them by poverty and scarcity have to do with Islam? Ramadan brings people closer, bonding their hearts. Ramadan brings

warmth to humanity, leads them to unity, and inspires sympathy, consensus and understanding of our shared values.

With this understanding, we are not to blame if we shed tears for the distress and division in our countries and nations in the Middle East and North Africa, for blood-drenched Syria, for occupied Iraq, for Yemen engulfed in war, and for the countries beset by terrorism and fundamentalism.

And that is why I seek your permission to call on all Muslim nations, and all Sunnis and Shiites, to join hands and stand up to those responsible for such a catastrophic situation.

Our call is to unite in solidarity, based on a strong foundation over which the overwhelming majority of Muslims concur. Ideologically, this foundation, which derives from the truth of Islam, is to deny religious compulsion and compulsory religion.

Politically, it is to stand up to the religious tyranny ruling Iran, which is the common enemy of all nations in the Middle East and is the epicenter of belligerence and export of fundamentalism to other countries in the region.

This is the “bond” and the word that can unite us: Rejection of religious compulsion and standing up to the Velayat-e Faqih regime in Iran.

Of course, we do not intend to overlook the very real differences existing among our nations in the region. Despite such differences, however, everyone believes that Islam does not approve of using force to impose an opinion or a religion. Once coercion, compulsion and vengeance are rejected, the prospect will arise for brotherhood and sisterhood - the historical and collective conscience of our nations - to spread.

It is the common belief of our nations in the region that we regard one another as sisters and brothers. We follow the words of God in the Quran: *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ*, indeed all believers are brothers.

Islam at its core is the standard-bearer of brotherhood in the world.

Wasn't it the Prophet who eliminated jealousy and revenge from relations among people?

Didn't he make kind brothers out of people who had thirsted for one another's blood? He brought the religion of freedom, compassion and forgiveness; the religion of tolerance and charity, heartfelt affection; the religion of solidarity, brotherhood, and sisterhood. This is the exact opposite of sectarianism, bigotry, narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and coercion under the pretext of defending Islam.

And remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren;

One of the main tools of religious compulsion and imposition is excommunication. This is a means to rid oneself of opponents, in favor of monopoly and imposing despotic rule under the veneer of Islam. Khomeini initiated the decree for the massacre of political prisoners in 1988 by excommunicating the PMOI.

Let us remember the words of Prophet Muhammad (S), who said: I have not come to curse, but to promote compassion.

He said: Everyone's neighbor is like himself and it is not permissible to mistreat or use foul language against him.

And let us also remember that he obliged his people to live in peaceful coexistence with followers and adherents of other faiths and religions. He also taught believers to cherish their differences as a blessing.

History attests that he suffered much oppression and mistreatment in his hometown, Mecca. However, he went to Medina with a message of peace and brotherhood, and when he returned to Mecca, his message was clemency and kindness.

Islam promotes tolerance towards adherents of other faiths and fellow human beings. Islam espouses peaceful coexistence among mankind from every race, gender, faith and creed.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ

Say: O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you

Accordingly, we argue that the dispute is not between Shiites and Sunnis, not between Christians and Muslims, not between those in the Middle East and those in the West. There is not a war among civilizations. The main dispute and confrontation is between despotism and fundamentalism on the one hand, and democracy, freedom, and the people who desire freedom and progress, on the other hand.

Dear friends,

Rejecting all forms of compulsion in religion also opens the way for the principle of separation of religion and state, and leaves no room for tyranny and religious discrimination under the name of God.

As the Leader of our Resistance movement, Massoud Rajavi, has pointed out, "Islam does not need to prove its legitimacy, including its political legitimacy, through compulsion and coercion... We strongly believe that Islam thrives genuinely only when there is no discrimination, no political privilege and no compulsion in society."

As also stated in the platform of the National Council of Resistance of Iran: "The source of legitimacy for a government in power is the ballot box... No one will enjoy or be deprived of any privilege for belief or disbelief in a religion."

This will ensure religious freedom, meaning that both Muslims and followers of other religions are free in their religious activities without experiencing any inequality.

In a charter written in the 11th month after the Prophet's migration to Medina, he said, "Jews and Muslims are one people and one nation with the only difference being that Jews follow their religion and Muslims follow theirs."

Our intention is to erase despotism under the cover of religion. These words are the essence of a historic experience, namely the experience of defeating the religious dictatorship in Iran.

Yes, we can reach agreement and share a common view on a fundamental principle, which like a thread is woven into the fabric of Islam. And that is the rejection of religious compulsion, and the very principle of “There is no compulsion in religion” or *La Ikraha Fed-Din*.

So, in diametric opposition to the Khomeinist motto of “the only party is the party of God” in Iran, and in contrast to his ISIS successors who say, “divine Sharia cannot be implemented except by force,” we say, “No, this is not Islam. Anything done out of compulsion contradicts the spirit of this religion; our religion and our Islam is what the Quran has said: ‘There is no compulsion in religion.’”

The spirit of Islam abhors all forms of compulsion, coercion and forcible prohibition, ranging from imposing the compulsory veil to the forced observance of fasting and prayers by flogging and terror, to preventing the construction of Sunni mosques, and especially to imposing the rule of a government under the name of God and Islam.

Therefore, I call on all Muslims to unite in solidarity over this principle, over rejection of compulsory religion and religious compulsion.

Honorable guests,

The incidents of recent years in the Middle East, particularly the slaughter of at least half-a-million innocent people of Syria with the complicity of the Iranian regime and the Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), have proven the mullahs’ endless hostility to Muslim and Arab nations.

Over the past 38 years in Iran, the ruling mullahs have occasionally made deceptive claims of favoring reform and moderation. What has been permanent and not ever changed, however, is the gross violations of human rights and brutal suppression. On the regional level, the regime has always sought to dominate through invasions and promotion of fundamentalism and sectarianism under the name of Islam.

Two weeks ago, at the Arab Islamic American Summit in Riyadh, it was declared that the clerical regime has deprived the region and world of tranquility and stability, and that its activities in the Middle East and throughout the world are destructive. The Saudi and U.S. leaders also reiterated that the people of Iran are the first and longest-suffering victims of that regime.

Fortunately, the Arab world, the Islamic world, and the United States have finally reached a consensus on the origin of terrorism, belligerence and fundamentalism in the region, the theocratic regime in Iran. This stance is in the right direction, and now steps must be taken to stop the regime’s belligerence and bloodshed.

Long years of experience have proven: Firstly, that it is vital for the Velayat-e Faqih regime to seek to dominate and invade other countries; otherwise, it cannot preserve its rule. Therefore, the regime will not abandon this behavior voluntarily.

Secondly, it has been proven that the regime feels most endangered by the power of the Iranian people and Resistance, and views them as an existential threat. Therefore, it uses all its might to prevent this force from actively entering the scene.

The history of the mullahs' regime also displays their unwavering enmity to the countries in the region. Two weeks ago, Hassan Rouhani became the regime's president for a second term. He deceptively claims to be a moderate. However, the regime continued to carry on its policies of aggression and invasion over the four years of Rouhani's first term, just as it did when Rafsanjani or Khatami were in office, also claiming reform and moderation. It will be the same for the next four years, too. This time, the only difference is that the recent sham election has intensified the rift and crisis at the helm of the regime, at the leadership level, further paving the way for the regime's overthrow.

Some people are wrongly impressed by the mullahs' ceaseless deception, assuming that the clerical regime's resort to war and carnage in the region stems from its strength. Whereas the regime has resorted to brutal oppression inside the country and to export of war beyond its borders because it is beset by a nation poised for uprising. By fueling war in the region, the regime seeks to preserve its vulnerable rule inside the country. If the mullahs were limited to the borders of Iran, they would definitely be overthrown.

The sham election two weeks ago attested to the fragility and instability of the mullahs' rule. Fearing a popular uprising, Khamenei suffered a setback and failed to unify his regime, although he desperately needed to do so. As a result, the election farce intended to shore up the regime, ended up engulfing it in paralyzing discord.

During this so-called election, the candidacy of Ebrahim Raisi, a detested executioner in charge of the 1988 massacre, triggered popular outrage over the executions of PMOI prisoners, galvanized the will of the Iranian people and Resistance as a significant force, and led to the regime's failure. Of course, the regime cast millions of fake ballots and inflated the election tallies several times over as a face-saving measure. Nevertheless, the regime is engulfed in crisis and its overthrow is closer than ever before.

On this basis, I would like to propose a three-pronged initiative on behalf of the Iranian people and Resistance. And I urge all the states and countries in the region to support it.

Firstly, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), the main operative advancing all the clerical regime's policies in the region, must be officially recognized and declared as a terrorist entity. The presence of this criminal force and its proxy militias in Middle Eastern countries must not be tolerated, and they must be evicted all together from those countries.

Secondly, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) must expel the Iranian regime and grant Iran's seat in this organization to the Iranian people's Resistance.

Thirdly, the Iranian people's struggle to bring down the clerical regime and establish freedom and democracy should be recognized.

Dear sisters and brothers,

In these hours before Iftar, let us pray for the victory of this struggle, which is ultimately the desire of all nations in the region.

Undoubtedly, the vast strength of solidarity and resilience among our nations will put an end to the mullahs' religious dictatorship and realize the victory of the people of Iran, as well as of the peoples of the region.

Hail to you all.