

# *Ayatollah Khamenei receives Assad, hails Syria's resistance*

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Tehran, May 31 (RHC)-- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has received President Bashar al-Assad who has traveled to Tehran to offer condolences over the loss of President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions in a helicopter crash.

Ayatollah Khamenei on Thursday hailed Syria's "distinguished identity" in the region, saying it is owed to the Syrian nation's resistance. "Syria's special position in the region is distinguished because of this identity, and this important feature must be preserved," he told the Syrian president.

The distinguished identity of Syria, the Leader said, was formed during the late Hafez Assad's era with the founding of the resistance front and standing against the West. "This identity has always contributed to the national unity of Syria," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei also lauded President Assad for his firm stand, saying "everyone should see the special privilege of the Syrian government, that is, resistance, in front of their eyes".

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Westerners and their acolytes in the region tried to overthrow Syria's political system and remove it from the regional equations through the war they waged against the country, but they did not succeed. "Now they want to use other methods, including promises that they never fulfill, in order to take Syria out of the regional equations," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on the political and economic pressures of the U.S. and the Europeans on Iran and Syria, saying the two nations must overcome the situation by increasing their cooperation and regularizing it. He also pointed to the efforts of "dear late President Raisi" to increase cooperation between Iran and Syria in various fields.

"Now Mokhbar, having the powers of the president, continues the same approach and we hope that all affairs will proceed in the best possible way," he added, referring to acting President Mohammad Mokhber.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei criticized the inaction of the regional countries in the face of Israeli atrocities in Gaza, citing the recent Arab League summit in Manama where "many mistakes were made towards Palestine and Gaza, but some countries also acted well".

President Assad took part in the summit, the second time he has done so since the league suspended Syria's membership in 2011 as part of the destructive war on the country.

In his meeting with Ayatollah Khamenei, President Assad expressed his condolences to the Leader, the government and the Iranian nation over the recent loss. "Iran-Syria relations are a strategic relationship that is progressing under the guidance of Your Excellency," he told Ayatollah Khamenei.

President Raisi and the late Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were at the helm of the implementation of this guidance, Assad added. Assad touched on President Raisi's "humble, wise and ethical character", calling him a clear example of the positions and slogans of the Islamic Revolution.

"President Raisi had an important impact on the role of the Islamic Republic in the region and the Palestinian issue in the past three years, as well as deepening relations between Iran and Syria," he said.

President Assad touched on the evolution of resistance in the region, saying after more than 50 years, it has become a religious and political approach. Assad said his position has always been that any retreat against the West would lead to its advances. "I announced a few years ago that the cost of resistance is lower than the cost of compromise, and this issue is now very clear to the Syrian people.

"The events in Gaza and the victories of the resistance proved to the people of the region that resistance is a principle," he said.

President Assad also thanked the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for his "prominent and important role in supporting the resistance in the region and also for supporting Syria in all arenas."

"Your remarks had important points, but one point was more important to me, when you emphasized that 'the more we retreat, the more the other side will come forward'," Ayatollah Khamenei responded. "There

is no doubt about this issue and this has been our slogan and belief for more than 40 years," the Leader said.

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