

Crushed by Israel, Iran's regime doubles down on fear, lies, and internal control

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 29.06.2025

In a pre-recorded televised speech aired on June 18, while Iran was under heavy and systematic attack by the Israel Air Force, Ali Khamenei instructed his men and supporters:

"Do not let the enemy sense that you fear him, that you feel weak. If the enemy senses that you are afraid of him, he will not let go of you. Continue the same behavior you have shown until now, and continue it with strength."

In the coming days and weeks, the Iranian regime is expected to increase the repression of the Iranian people. It will conduct broad internal inquiries about Israel's significant penetrations and the failure of the "Axis of Resistance," mainly Hezbollah, to come to the Islamic Republic of Iran's aid during the 12 days of fighting.

Tehran will work to restore its nuclear program and missile infrastructure, both of which were damaged during the war.

The regime will carry out in-depth investigations into how Israel managed to strike so intensively against nuclear facilities and so successfully against top regime officials, military bases, and symbols of authority. At the same time, it will strengthen its image and intensify its psychological warfare efforts, directed primarily toward the Iranian public, regional countries, and global powers.

The Iranian regime cannot afford to be perceived as weak; such a perception could encourage opponents of the regime to unite under a nationwide protest movement. In Khamenei's view, any sign of frailty would be an admission of the Islamic Revolution's failure and would embolden enemies in the West to help the Iranian people overthrow the government.

Khamenei, who is often credited with long-term strategic vision, insisted in his speech after the ceasefire reached between Israel and Hezbollah in November 2024 that the "Axis of Resistance" remained intact and that Iran's regional standing was unaffected, even after the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah and other top Hezbollah leaders.

Khamenei misunderstood Middle Eastern shifts, Israel's capability to tackle Tehran

Yet this statement masked a deeper failure: Khamenei misread the profound regional shifts underway and underestimated Israel's resolve and capability to confront the Iranian threat head-on.

As part of its substantial psychological campaign to save its image, Khamenei's regime is carrying out deceptive efforts aimed at convincing the Iranian public that the Islamic Revolution is still on track.

To this end, it has been pushing its supporters to the streets since Israel's initial strike: On Saturday, June 14, the Shi'ite holiday of Ghadir – marking the Prophet Muhammad's appointment of Ali as his successor; on June 20, in Friday sermons across Iran; and, most recently, last Tuesday evening during the "victory celebrations" in Tehran.

The regime is also stepping up propaganda efforts through its media apparatus: state television channels, newspapers, news websites, and social media propagandists, along with indoctrination campaigns within the security forces themselves.

To further the plan, regime institutions will attempt to obscure from public view the depth of damage and shock suffered by the regime at the hands of the Israelis, beyond what simply cannot be concealed: the elimination of senior figures and the destruction of military bases throughout the country.

Under Khamenei's directive, the regime will strive to preserve and also project its (faltering) image as a victorious force.

Behind the boasts, however, lies a deep fear of what comes next. This anxiety will likely drive a dual strategy: intensifying domestic repression, while simultaneously offering economic incentives and populist gestures to mitigate the regime's growing legitimacy crisis.

For now, having ended its war with Israel, the regime appears poised to turn inward – to wage a war of survival against its own people.

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