

Nuclear deal won't change policy to US: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

20/07/2015 17:21 by admin

Tehran, Iran: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Saturday a landmark nuclear deal won't change his country's policy toward the "arrogant" U.S., making his first public speech since the Islamic Republic's historic pact with world powers.

Khamenei said a more wide-ranging agreement with America is unlikely, striking a different pose than moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who earlier said the Vienna accord could "step-by-step remove bricks from the wall of mistrust" between Iran and the U.S.

However, the ayatollah's remarks also praised the Iranian negotiators who struck the deal. That likely means he won't offer a major criticism of the deal as Iran's parliament and its Supreme National Security Council, the nation's highest security decision-making body, consider the agreement in the coming days.

"Our policy toward the arrogant U.S. government won't change at all," Khamenei said in an address carried live by state television. "We have no negotiations with America about various global and regional issues. We have no negotiations on bilateral issues."

Khamenei's speech, which he gave to a large crowd in Tehran to mark the end of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, stressed that Iran will continue to support its allies in the Middle East, including the Lebanese Hezbollah, Palestinian resistance groups and the Syrian government.

Iran calls its Lebanese ally Hezbollah a "resistance movement" while the U.S. classifies it as a terrorist group. Iran also continues to call for the destruction of Israel, which Khamenei described in his speech as a "terrorist, baby-killer government."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has strongly opposed the deal. The West has feared Iran's nuclear program could allow it to build atomic weapons. Iran says its program is for peaceful purposes. The deal calls for limiting the program in exchange for lifting economic sanctions.

Prominent Iranian analyst Davoud Hermidas Bavand said Khamenei's remarks were primarily for domestic consumption as a "detente in Iran-U.S. relations is an inevitable consequence of the nuclear deal."

"Khamenei sought to pacify hard-liners who are worried about rapprochement with Washington," said Bavand, a former diplomat and a professor of international law at Science and Research University in Tehran. "The deal has increased Rouhani's popularity and Khamenei wants to create a balance and boost the morale of disappointed hard-liners."

Bavand said Iran and the U.S. now share some common interests in Afghanistan and Iraq, including over the ongoing fight against the militant Islamic State group. He also said that Khamenei's carefully worded speech likely contains a warning to Rouhani to slow down the pace of detente with Washington.

Conservative politician Hamid Reza Taraqi said Khamenei sought to "nullify efforts by the U.S. to damage Iran's anti-arrogance stance."

"Americans have tried to suggest that Iran has given up its anti-U.S. stance in order to tarnish Tehran's image in the eyes of its supporters. The leader's remarks nullified that," he said.

Taraqi accused Rouhani and his moderate allies of "seeking to pave the way for normalization of relations with the U.S."

- AP