

Fact Sheet: The Iranian Leadership's Apocalyptic Beliefs

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“It’s not the job of the president to solve every problem in the Middle East. The people in the Middle East are going to have to solve some of these problems themselves.”

—President Barack Obama, announcing the Iran nuclear deal, July 15, 2015.¹

“My concern is not that a nuclear Iran someday would be moved by messianic fervor to use a nuclear weapon as an Armageddon device and commit national suicide in order to hasten the return of the Hidden Imam.”

—Then-Senator Joe Biden, campaigning for president, December 3, 2007.²

What Iran’s Leaders and Allies Say They Want: A Global Islamic Kingdom

- “The governments of the world should know that . . . Islam will be victorious in all the countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Qur’an will prevail all over the world.”—*Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, January 1979.*³
- “We must strive to export our Revolution throughout the world.”—*Ayatollah Khomeini, March 21, 1980.*⁴
- “We don’t shy away from declaring that Islam is ready to rule the world. . . . We must believe in the fact that Islam is not confined to geographical borders, ethnic groups, and nations. It’s a universal ideology that leads the world to justice. . . . We must prepare ourselves to rule the world.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, January 5, 2006.*⁵
- “We do not believe in multiple Islamic republics; we do believe, however, in a single Islamic world governed by a central government.”—*Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah.*⁶

What Iran’s Leaders and Allies Say They’re Waiting For: The Arrival of the Mahdi

- “The coming of Imam Zaman [the Mahdi] is the definite promise by Allah.”—*Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, 2014.*⁷
- “The caravan of humanity from the day of creation has been moving . . . to the time of The Coming of Imam Mahdi. The awaiting for The Coming [of the Mahdi] is a hopeful and powerful wait, providing the biggest opening for the Islamic society.”—*Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, 2014.*⁸
- “I can tell you with utmost confidence: The promise of Allah for The Coming [of the Mahdi] and the establishment of a new Islamic civilization is on its way.”—*Iran’s*

*Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, 2014.*⁹

- “[The] battle [to establish the Mahdi’s kingdom] will only end when the [Islamic] society can get rid of the oppressors’ front, with America at the head of it.”—*Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, 2014.*¹⁰
- “Iran’s Supreme Leader has reportedly issued a fatwah, or Islamic edict, demanding that people obey him as the earthly ‘deputy’ of both the Prophet Muhammad and Shi’ism’s mysterious Twelfth Imam. . . . Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has created a stir after apparently issuing a religious edict Tuesday claiming ultimate spiritual powers on Earth. Iranian media reported that he told followers that they must ‘obey him’ as the ‘representative of the Prophet Muhammad and [Shi’ism’s] Twelfth Imam on Earth.’”—*Voice of America news report, July 20, 2010.*¹¹
- “Today our nation’s great duty and prophetic mission is to prepare for the formation of the universal rule of the Mahdi.”—*Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as mayor of Tehran, before he became president of Iran.*¹²
- “The Hidden Imam has no tangible presence among us, but he is always [here], and we must prepare the ground for his speedy appearance. We must rush towards him and hasten to prepare the ground for his appearance. [He will not appear] if we sit idly. Mankind must hurry towards the Hidden Imam in order to reach him.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a 2006 eschatology conference marking the occasion of the Mahdi’s birthday.*¹³
- “O mighty Lord, I pray to you to hasten the emergence of your last repository, the Promised One, that perfect and pure human being, the One that will fill this world with justice and peace.”—*Prayer of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad before the U.N. General Assembly, September 17, 2005.*¹⁴
- “I felt it myself, too. Suddenly, the atmosphere changed. [All the people in the room] sat there and for the duration of the twenty-seven or twenty-eight minutes, they did not blink. I am not exaggerating. I looked up and I saw them. They were transfixed. It was as if a hand was holding them.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaking to Shia clerics, about an alleged supernatural experience while addressing the U.N. General Assembly in September 2005, after a colleague told him, “I saw a celestial light come and surround you and protect you.”*¹⁵
- “Our enemies naturally feel threatened by the call to [believe in] the Mahdi, for they do not want people to think about justice. But our reply to them is that the era of the aggressive has come to an end. We believe that it is time for the righteous to rule. . . . [The preparations for the Hidden Imam] will soon be complete.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, August 25, 2007, in a speech to the International Seminar on the Doctrine of Mahdism in Tehran.*¹⁶
- “The Iranian nation and the Islamic Revolution have a pivotal role in preparing the ground for the coming of the Hidden Imam. . . . We must rapidly develop Iran in order to create the [right] conditions for his coming, and we must also help the rest of the world’s nations [to prepare for his return], in order to precipitate this great event. . . . The responsibility that currently rests on Iran’s [shoulders] is very heavy; it is the kind of mission [with which] the divine prophets [were entrusted]. It does not permit us to rest or

slumber even for a moment. Have you ever seen a prophet take a rest from the fulfillment of his mission?”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, August 29, 2007.*¹⁷

- “I ask Almighty Allah . . . to make you the men who would clear the way for the Mahdi of this earth to establish divine justice.”—*Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, 2007.*¹⁸
- “[During a 2014 conference in Tehran,] Ayatollah Hassan Mamduhi, a member of the Assembly of (Clerical) Experts, offered an enigmatic quotation from the late Ayatollah Aziz-Allah Khoshwaqt to the effect that the Hidden Imam would conclude his Grand Occultation only when his ‘sword’ was ready. ‘The Return of the Mahdi is conditional on what our nuclear scientists are doing,’ Mamduhi said, without elaborating. The Tehran media, however, claimed that ‘The Sword of the Imam’ in the modern world could only mean a nuclear arsenal. A week later, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, head of the Council of the Guardians of the Constitution, claimed in a Friday sermon that the return of the Hidden Imam was ‘imminent’ thanks to ‘fantastic progress’ achieved by the Islamic Republic in Iran. Ayatollah Khoshwaqt, who died last year, was regarded as Khamenei’s teacher and ‘guru’ and a strong opponent of negotiations to limit any aspect of the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program. His views have found echoes among a number of Khomeinist clerics who argue that, with the U.S. in retreat under Obama, there is no reason to make concessions to the P5+1 group.”—*Amir Taheri, a prominent Iranian dissident and Middle East expert who served as editor of the Iranian daily Kayhan before the Islamic revolution and today resides in Europe, in a March 14, 2014 article in the London daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, titled “Obama, the Bomb and the Fatwa.” Taheri noted in the article that despite rumors abounding that Khamenei issued a fatwa outlawing the use of nuclear weapons, “no one has actually seen the fatwa, although many people comment on it,” and argued that “the famous fatwa either does not exist or is couched in the style of obfuscation that would open it to countless interpretations.”*¹⁹

What Iran’s Leaders & Allies Say They Will Do: Annihilate America

- “The slogans of the Iranian nation on Al-Qods Day show what its position is. The slogans ‘Death to Israel’ and ‘Death to America’ have resounded throughout the country, and are not limited to Tehran and the other large cities. The entire country is under the umbrella of this great movement [of ‘Death to Israel’ and ‘Death to America’].”—*Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, July 18, 2015.*²⁰
- “Even after this [nuclear] deal [with the P5+1], our policy towards the arrogant U.S. will not change.”—*Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, July 18, 2015.*²¹
- “Saying ‘death to America’ is easy. We need to express ‘death to America’ with action.”—*Hassan Rouhani, then a presidential candidate, and later the elected president of Iran, May 8, 2013.*²²
- “God willing, with the force of God behind it, we shall soon experience a world without the United States and Zionism.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, October 26, 2005.*²³
- “Is it possible for us to witness a world without America and Zionism? You had best

know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and surely can be achieved. . . . We must understand the depth of the disgrace imposed on us by the enemy, until our holy hatred expands continuously and strikes like a wave”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, October 26, 2005.*²⁴

- “Today, the time for the fall of the satanic power of the United States has come, and the countdown to the annihilation of the emperor of power and wealth has started.”—*Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, June 2, 2008, marking the 19th anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini.*²⁵
- “Get ready for a world minus the U.S.”—*Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, June 4, 2008.*²⁶
- “Let the entire world hear me. Our hostility to the Great Satan [America] is absolute. . . . I conclude my speech with the slogan that will continue to reverberate on all occasions so that nobody will think that we have weakened. Regardless of how the world has changed after 11 September, Death to America will remain our reverberating and powerful slogan. Death to America.”—*Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, September 27, 2002.*²⁷

What Iran’s Leaders & Allies Say They Will Do: Annihilate Israel

- “It is the mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to erase Israel from the map of the region.”—*Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, January 2001.*²⁸
- “One bomb is enough to destroy Israel. . . . In due time the Islamic world will have a military nuclear device.”—*Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, December 2001.*²⁹
- “Rafsanjani Says Muslims Should Use Nuclear Weapon against Israel.”—*Headline from the Iran Press Service, December 14, 2001.*³⁰
- “Israel must be wiped off the map.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, October 26, 2005.*³¹
- “Like it or not, the Zionist regime is heading toward annihilation. . . . The Zionist regime is a rotten, dried tree that will be eliminated by one storm . . . [because] its existence has harmed the dignity of Islamic nations.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, April 14, 2006.*³²
- “I must announce that the Zionist regime (Israel), with a 60-year record of genocide, plunder, invasion, and betrayal is about to die and will soon be erased from the geographical scene.”—*Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, June 2, 2008.*³³
- “If they (Jews) all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide.”—*Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, October 23, 2002.*³⁴
- “One of the central reasons for creating Hezbollah was to challenge the Zionist program in the region. Hezbollah still preserves this principle, and when an Egyptian journalist

visited me after the liberation and asked me if the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem were Hezbollah's goal, I replied: 'That is the principal objective of Hezbollah, and it is no less sacred than our [ultimate] goal.'"—*Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, May 2000.*³⁵

END NOTES

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- ¹ See transcript of President Obama's press conference, White House press office, July 15, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/15/press-conference-president>.
- ² See transcript of speech by Sen. Joe Biden, delivered at the Iowa City Public Library, December 3, 2007, http://www.cfr.org/publication/14976/joe_bidens_speech_on_iran.html, accessed August 26, 2008.
- ³ Cited by V. S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers*, pp. 81-82; and by Robin Wright, *Sacred Rage*, p. 21.
- ⁴ Cited by Hamid Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, p. 286.
- ⁵ Cited by Alireza Jafarzadeh, *The Iran Threat*, p. 208.
- ⁶ Cited by Nicholas Noe, editor, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, p. 32.
- ⁷ Cited by Reza Khalili, "Iran Supreme Leader: The Islamic Messiah Is Coming Soon To Kill All Infidels," *The Daily Caller*, June 15, 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/06/15/iran-supreme-leader-the-shiite-islamic-messiah-is-coming-to-free-the-world/#ixzz3jvwiobxU>.
- ⁸ Cited by Reza Khalili, "Iran Supreme Leader: The Islamic Messiah Is Coming Soon To Kill All Infidels," *The Daily Caller*, June 15, 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/06/15/iran-supreme-leader-the-shiite-islamic-messiah-is-coming-to-free-the-world/#ixzz3jvwiobxU>.
- ⁹ Cited by Reza Khalili, "Iran Supreme Leader: The Islamic Messiah Is Coming Soon To Kill All Infidels," *The Daily Caller*, June 15, 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/06/15/iran-supreme-leader-the-shiite-islamic-messiah-is-coming-to-free-the-world/#ixzz3jvwiobxU>.
- ¹⁰ Cited by Reza Khalili, "Iran Supreme Leader: The Islamic Messiah Is Coming Soon To Kill All Infidels," *The Daily Caller*, June 15, 2014, <http://dailycaller.com/2014/06/15/iran-supreme-leader-the-shiite-islamic-messiah-is-coming-to-free-the-world/#ixzz3jvwiobxU>.
- ¹¹ See "Iran's Supreme Leader Says He Represents Prophet Muhammad on Earth," *Voice of America* report, July 20, 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/content/irans-supreme-leader-says-he-represents-prophet-muhammad-on-earth-98945624/172166.html>.
- ¹² Cited by Alireza Jafarzadeh, author of *The Iran Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis*, p. 25.
- ¹³ Cited by A. Savyon and Y. Mansharof, "The Doctrine of Mahdism: In the Ideological and Political Philosophy of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Mesbah-e Yazdi," *MEMRI Special Dispatch* #357, May 31, 2007.
- ¹⁴ President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, address to the United Nations General Assembly, New York City, September 17, 2005, translated and distributed by the Islamic Republic News Agency, posted on www.globalsecurity.org.
- ¹⁵ Cited by Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, authors of *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran*, p. 41.
- ¹⁶ Cited by Y. Mansharof and A. Savyon, "Escalation in the Positions of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—A Special Report," *MEMRI Special Dispatch* #389, September 17, 2007.
- ¹⁷ Cited by Y. Mansharof and A. Savyon, "Escalation in the Positions of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—A Special Report," *MEMRI Special Dispatch* #389, September 17, 2007.
- ¹⁸ Cited by Mohamad Shmaysani, "Al-Sayyed Nasrallah: Drill Shows Resistance Full Readiness," *al-Manar*, August 11, 2007.
- ¹⁹ See "Prominent Iranian Analyst, Author, And Columnist Amir Taheri: Nobody Has Actually Seen Khamenei's Anti-Nuclear Fatwa, Which Obama Often Quotes," *Special Dispatch* No.5681, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), March 17, 2014, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/7886.htm>.
- ²⁰ See "Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei Reaffirms 'Death to America' Slogan," video clip, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), July 25, 2015, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/5011.htm>.

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- ²¹ See “Nuclear deal will not change Iran's relations with U.S.: Supreme Leader,” Reuters, July 18, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/18/us-iran-nuclear-khamenei-idUSKCN0PS05320150718>.
- ²² Cited by Sohrab Ahmari, “About That New 'Moderate' Iranian Cabinet...,” Wall Street Journal, August 7, 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324635904578644333931206380>.
- ²³ Cited by Alireza Jafarzadeh, author of *The Iran Threat: President Ahmadinejad and the Coming Nuclear Crisis*, p. 25.
- ²⁴ President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, text of address to “A World Without Zionism” conference, Tehran, reported by the Iranian Students News Agency, October 26, 2005, cited by MEMRI, *Special Dispatch Series* #1013, October 28, 2005; see also, Manfred Gerstenfeld, “Ahmadinejad Calls for Israel's Elimination and Declares War on the West: A Case Study of Incitement to Genocide,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, November 2, 2005, <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp536.htm>.
- ²⁵ “Ahmadinejad says Israel will soon disappear,” Agence France-Presse, June 2, 2008.
- ²⁶ “Ahmadinejad: Iran, Japan should be prepared for a world without U.S.,” Islamic Republic News Agency, June 4, 2008.
- ²⁷ BBC Monitoring: Al-Manar TV, September 27, 2002; cited by Deborah Passner, “Hassan Nasrallah: In His Own Words,” research paper produced by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, July 26, 2006, http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=7&x_issue=11&x_article=1158, accessed July 6, 2006
- ²⁸ Cited by Naji, p. 144.
- ²⁹ Cited by Naji, p. 143.
- ³⁰ “Rafsanjani says Muslims should use nuclear weapon against Israel,” Iran Press Service, December 14, 2001.
- ³¹ Cited by Kasra Naji, *Ahmadinejad: The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader*, p. 139; see also, Ewen MacAskill and Chris McGreal, “Israel should be wiped off map, says Iran's president,” The (U.K.) Guardian, October 27, 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/27/israel.iran>.
- ³² Cited by Jafarzadeh, p. 31.
- ³³ “Ahmadinejad says Israel will soon disappear,” Agence France-Presse, June 2, 2008.
- ³⁴ Beirut *Daily Star*, October 23, 2002; cited by Deborah Passner, “Hassan Nasrallah: In His Own Words,” research paper produced by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, July 26, 2006, http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=7&x_issue=11&x_article=1158, accessed July 6, 2006.
- ³⁵ Cited by Deborah Passner, “Hassan Nasrallah: In His Own Words,” research paper produced by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, July 26, 2006, http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=7&x_issue=11&x_article=1158, accessed July 6, 2006.