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Ayatollah Says Iran Will Control Nuclear Aims

By **THOMAS ERDBRINK**

TEHRAN — Iran's supreme leader said Saturday that his country was not seeking nuclear weapons but added that if Iran ever decided to build them, no "global power" could stop it.

The supreme leader, Ayatollah [Ali Khamenei](#), whose 2005 edict banning nuclear weapons is regarded as binding in Iran, told a group of visitors to his home in Tehran, the capital, that his country favored the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons.

"We believe that nuclear weapons must be eliminated," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "We don't want to build atomic weapons. But if we didn't believe so and intended to possess nuclear weapons, no power could stop us." His comments were posted on his Web site, [Khamenei.ir](#).

American officials say they believe that Ayatollah Khamenei exercises full control over Iran's nuclear program. On Thursday, he rejected direct talks with the United States while it was "pointing a gun at Iran"; on Saturday he elaborated on the issue.

He called on the United States to show "logic" while talking to Iran, without further elaborating. He and other Iranian leaders have often emphasized that before any talks can take place, Western sanctions must be lifted and the West must respect what they say is Iran's right to a nuclear program monitored by the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#).

"This is the only way to interact with the Islamic republic of Iran, and in that case the U.S. administration would receive a proper response" from Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei said.

He pointed to American-devised sanctions, to which a new set of measures was added this month, as the prime example of why negotiations between Iran and the United States would fail.

"They seek the surrender of the Iranian nation," Ayatollah Khamenei said of the United States. If negotiations are a sign of good will, he asked how talks could occur in the face of the current sanctions.

"You impose — in your own words — crippling sanctions to paralyze the nation," he said. "Does this

show good or ill intention?”

Iranian oil sales have been reduced by half as a result of the international pressure on Iran, and restrictions on financial transactions and transportation have created many difficulties for Iran’s leaders. Consumer prices have increased, and the national currency has fallen sharply. Still, shops are fully stocked, restaurants are serving customers, and the construction of buildings and roads continues.

“They naïvely think that the nation has been exhausted by the sanctions and will therefore yearn for negotiations with the U.S.,” Ayatollah Khamenei said.

In a separate part of his speech, he sharply criticized President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) and the speaker of Iran’s Parliament, [Ali Larijani](#), who recently traded accusations during a public session of Parliament. Mr. Ahmadinejad caused an uproar by releasing a video of what he said were secret business dealings involving Mr. Larijani’s brother Fazel. During the same session, Mr. Larijani led the parliamentary effort to impeach one of Mr. Ahmadinejad’s ministers.

“People want psychological and moral peace, and I explicitly say that the event was not fitting to Islamic republic’s code of conduct,” Ayatollah Khamenei said, condemning both the release of the video and the impeachment effort.

“This event made me feel sad,” said the ayatollah, who has been Iran’s supreme leader since 1989.

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