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Subject: The students' question and answer session with the president regarding human rights, the difficulties experienced by students, and economic issues
The official: President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ali Khamene'i
The occasion: Meeting with a group of students
Date: Last week of November 1988
Source: *Resalat*, 7 December 1988

Last week, in a warm and friendly gathering with students, Hojjat ol-islam val Moslemin Khamene'i responded to the most critical questions that circulate in student environments.

Mr. Khamene'i said: "Students and the clergy (whether of junior or senior rank) have certain points in common. This commonality plays a fundamental role in preserving the Islamic system." . . . In replying to the first question on why Iran had accepted the Resolution [598, the UN Resolution ending the Iran-Iraq War], the President said: "Perhaps if the war [with Iraq] had continued, we might have been able to achieve our objectives in the long run. However, certain shortcomings caused us to accept [the resolution]. Of course, some of these reasons were mentioned in the Imam [Khomeini]'s letter to the government authorities. But because we are still in a state of neither war nor peace, and the enemy is still on our soil, mentioning these [reasons] here may be problematic. We shall leave this for when I can speak more freely." . . . [The President] was asked about the reasons for the Islamic Republic's lack of

attention to human rights issues, and not permitting the United Nations' human rights experts to carry out their investigations in [Iran]. [He was also asked] about the reasons for the widespread executions in all the provinces of Iran. . . . The President replied: "Your tone of questioning is the same tone as that adopted by foreign radio. However, it is still a question and I will answer it. We are not indifferent to human rights. Nowhere in the entire world will you find a situation similar to the one we have here, where the leaders of a country, like the President, Prime Minister, or others in charge of the most important [state] responsibilities, enjoy such an [excellent] relationship with their people. You will find few countries where freedom of speech and freedom to express your views are as [encouraged] as they are in Iran. For example, if someone were to insult me right here and now, he would not be prosecuted. In fact, I would not even press charges [against him]. Those who speak against us by raising human rights issues are the same people who want the *monafeqin* (Mojahedin) and others who wish to subvert this regime to have complete freedom of action in this country. And



they want the regime to show no reaction against these groups, whatsoever. . . . Regarding the executions, the same [unjustified] approach that foreign radio takes to them is now being adopted here. In fact, the *monafeqin's* radio says the very same things. But did we ever say we had abolished the death penalty? Like many countries in the world, we too have capital punishment, but only for those whose crimes are deserving of it. Whoever commits such crimes will be executed, irrespective of family ties or where they come from. In your view, must those people who plotted with the *monafeqin* while in prison, and also plotted with foreigners to carry out atrocious actions

on Iranian soil—such as those that took place in Islamabad—be rewarded? If a person's connection to that traitorous organization becomes known, what are we to do with him? In our view, such a person must be condemned to death and we will certainly execute him and we will not keep it a secret. Of course, when I say we, I am referring to our regime; I am not in charge of the judiciary. It goes without saying that if a person is executed whose [crime does not call for] a death sentence, then his executioner must be put to death. He must face *qesas* [retribution—the law of an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth]. Our logic is clear. We are not hiding anything.”



A newspaper photograph of an anti-Shah demonstration at the time of the Revolution

