

Iran holds state funeral for top brass slain in war with Israel

AFP- Iran began a state funeral service Saturday for around 60 people, including its military commanders, killed in its war with Israel, after Tehran's top diplomat condemned Donald Trump's comments on supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as "unacceptable".

The proceedings started at 8:00 am local time (0430 GMT) in the capital Tehran as government offices and many businesses were closed on Saturday for the occasion.

"The ceremony to honour the martyrs has officially started," state TV said, showing footage of thousands of people donning black clothes, waving Iranian flags and holding pictures of the slain military commanders.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, along with other senior government officials and military commanders – including Esmail Qaani, head of the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of the Revolutionary Guards – also attended the event.

Images showed coffins draped in Iranian flags and bearing portraits of the deceased commanders in uniform near Enghelab (Revolution) Square in central Tehran, where the march began.

– Commanders, scientists to be buried –

A patriotic eulogy blared from loudspeakers as the procession set out across the sprawling metropolis toward Azadi (Freedom) Square, 11 kilometres (seven miles) away.

"Boom boom Tel Aviv," read one banner, referring to Iranian missiles fired at Israel during the conflict in retaliation for its attacks on Iran.

Among the dead is Mohammad Bagheri, a major general in Iran's Revolutionary Guards and the second-in-command of the armed forces after the Iranian leader.

He will be buried alongside his wife and daughter, a journalist for a local media outlet, all killed in an Israeli attack.

Nuclear scientist Mohammad Mehdi Tehrani, also killed in the attacks, will be buried with his wife.

Revolutionary Guards commander Hossein Salami, who was killed on the first day of the war, will also be laid to rest after Saturday's ceremony – which will also honour at least 30 other top commanders.

Of the 60 people who are to be laid to rest after the ceremony, four are children and four are women.

– No sanction relief –

The United States had carried out strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites last weekend, joining its ally Israel's bombardments of Iran's nuclear programme in the 12-day conflict launched on June 13.

Both Israel and Iran claimed victory in the war that ended with a ceasefire, with Iranian leader Khamenei downplaying the US strikes as having done "nothing significant".

In a tirade on his Truth Social platform, Trump blasted Tehran Friday for claiming to have won the war.

He also claimed to have known "EXACTLY where he (Khamenei) was sheltered, and would not let Israel, or the U.S. Armed Forces... terminate his life".

"I SAVED HIM FROM A VERY UGLY AND IGNOMINIOUS DEATH, and he does not have to say, 'THANK YOU, PRESIDENT TRUMP!'" the US leader said.

Trump added he had been working in recent days on the possible removal of sanctions against Iran, one of Tehran's main demands.

"But no, instead I get hit with a statement of anger, hatred, and disgust, and immediately dropped all work on sanction relief, and more," Trump said.

Hitting back at Trump Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned the Republican president's comments on Khamenei.

"If President Trump is genuine about wanting a deal, he should put aside the disrespectful and unacceptable tone towards Iran's Supreme Leader, Grand Ayatollah Khamenei," Araghchi posted on social media platform X.

"The Great and Powerful Iranian People, who showed the world that the Israeli regime had NO CHOICE but to RUN to 'Daddy' to avoid being flattened by our Missiles, do not take kindly to Threats and Insults."

The Israeli strikes on Iran killed at least 627 civilians, Tehran's health ministry said. Iran's attacks on Israel killed 28 people, according to Israeli figures.

– 'Imminent threat' –

During his first term in office, Trump pulled out in 2018 of a landmark nuclear deal – negotiated by former US president Barack Obama.

The deal that Trump had abandoned aimed to make it practically impossible for Iran to build an atomic bomb, while at the same time allowing it to pursue a civil nuclear programme.

Iran, which insists its nuclear programme is only for civilian purposes, stepped up its activities after Trump withdrew from the agreement.

After the US strikes, Trump said negotiations for a new deal were set to begin next week.

But Tehran denied a resumption, and leader Khamenei said Trump had “exaggerated events in unusual ways”, rejecting US claims Iran’s nuclear programme had been set back by decades.

Israel had claimed it had “thwarted Iran’s nuclear project” during the 12-day war.

But its foreign minister reiterated Friday the world was obliged to stop Tehran from developing an atomic bomb.

“The international community now has an obligation to prevent, through any effective means, the world’s most extreme regime from obtaining the most dangerous weapon,” Gideon Saar wrote on X.

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