

Athletes refusing to face Zionist regime's representatives must be backed: Leader

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TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the Zionist regime attempts to gain some legitimacy by appearing in international athletic competitions and the government must support the rights of Iranian and non-Iranian athletes, who were deprived due to refusing to compete with the Israeli representatives.

The Leader made the remarks in a meeting with the Iranian Olympic and Paralympic medalists at the 2020 Tokyo Games, which was held in accordance with health protocols at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyyah on Saturday.

Iranian athletes have refused to recognize the Israeli regime's competitors in sports fields since 1979.

Athletes from Muslim countries have repeatedly refused to compete against Israeli opponents at major international events in protest to Israel's crimes and occupation of Palestine.

The message of championship in athletic events, particularly at the international level, is that of ability, exuberance, perseverance, and willpower. Champions teach resistance, hope, and exuberance," the Leader said, according to the khamenei. r.

Some ways of becoming a champion are not healthy or valuable. There are many examples in the world: unfair refereeing, political scheming, bribery, and doping. Another example is when athletes win a medal by betraying their country or themselves. These are in conflict with values," he added.

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The chivalrous behavior displayed by Iranian athletes is valuable, examples such as: performing prayers, embracing the defeated rival, using a kufiyah scarf as a symbol of resistance and ladies' hijab in competitions.

Our female athletes have proven that hijab is not an obstacle that prevents brilliance. Similarly, women have previously proven this in the fields of politics, science, and management," the Leader stated.

Three Iranian women won three gold medals in the 2020 Paralympic Games while wearing hijab in their competition.

Archer Zahra Nemati made history in Tokyo by winning her third consecutive gold medals. Shooter Sareh Javanmardi, who had won her first gold in Rio 2016, seized the second gold in Tokyo. And Hashemiyeh Motaghian became the first Iranian woman to win a medal at either the Olympic or Paralympic Games in athletic.

Our female athletes' hijab encouraged women from other Muslim countries, and later female athletes from over 10 other countries appeared in athletic events wearing hijab. This was not common previously, and you Iranian champions have prepared the ground for this," Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

The genocidal, illegal Zionist regime attempts to gain some legitimacy by appearing in international athletic competitions. The world's arrogant powers and their cohorts assist and support them in this.

A freethinking athlete cannot acknowledge the Zionist regime for the sake of a medal. The government must support the rights of Iranian and non-Iranian athletes, such as the Algerian athlete, who were deprived due to refusing to compete with the Zionist regime's representatives.

The Leader was referring to Fethi Nourine and his coach who withdrew from the Tokyo Olympics to avoid facing an Israeli athlete. The decision was made in support of the "Palestinian cause".