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Ayatollah Khamenei's word is very influential in Iran

**By the BBC's Jim Muir in Tehran**

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has strongly condemned the suicide terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

But he warned against the launching of a war against Afghanistan, saying that if the Americans send in their troops, they would only face more problems.

Ayatollah Khamenei's word has been eagerly awaited here. He has the final say on all important matters. The line he has taken now will determine Iran's policy in the critical days to come.

He left no doubt about his strong condemnation of the outrages in New York in Washington. "Mass killings of human beings are catastrophic acts which are condemned" he said "wherever they may happen and whoever the perpetrators and the victims may be".



Ayatollah Khamenei: "Mass killings of human beings are catastrophic acts"

But he warned strongly against a large-scale military assault on Afghanistan.

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If America wants to expand its power in the region by establishing a presence in Pakistan and sending troops into Afghanistan, he said, it would find that its problems would keep on multiplying.

Was it right, he asked, that the long-suffering people of Afghanistan should be subjected yet again to the harsh blows of war because of the presence there of some individuals against whom there were as yet unproven accusations of involvement in the terrorist attacks.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that if another catastrophe were now brought about in Afghanistan, Iran would condemn that too.

The leader's remarks make it clear there will be no Iranian support for a large scale military adventure in Afghanistan, although there is absolutely no love lost between Tehran and the Taliban.

### Too close for comfort

Iran's reformist President, Mohammed Khatami, has also warned against a rash and emotional response to the terrorist attacks.

In a letter to the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, he said that Iran saw the UN as the most suitable vehicle for combating and fundamentally eradicating the ugly phenomenon of terrorism.

Despite its hostility to the Taliban regime, Iran is clearly nervous about the prospect of an American-led intervention on its eastern borders.

It is also concerned that such an attack could lead to another huge wave of Afghan refugees making their way into Iran. It's already playing host to well over two million.



Terrified Afghan refugees are fleeing the country in case the US attacks

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