Ayatollah discourages negotiations as Kurdish team puts peace terms

Khomeini kills hopes for peace in Kurdestan

By Lisa Thorpe

The chances of a peaceful settlement between the Iranian regime and the rebel Kurdish forces in the north are diminishing, the Ayatollah Khomeini said yesterday.

"We have suspended our talks on the possibility of a comprehensive agreement," the religious leader said, "because we are not confident of our ability to implement the terms of any such agreement.

The Ayatollah's statement came hours after his forces launched a new attack on the Kurdish-held town of Sereh in the northwestern province of West Azerbaijan.

"We have been forced to take this action due to the continued violation of the ceasefire agreement by the Kurdish rebels," a government official said. "They have repeatedly violated the terms of the agreement, and we cannot continue to be subjected to such behavior.

The Ayatollah's statement was widely condemned by international observers. "It is a tragic development in the region," said the UN representative for Iran. "We urge all parties to engage in constructive dialogue and work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Correspondents in the region reported that the Kurdish rebels had launched a series of attacks on Iranian military installations in recent weeks. The government has accused the rebels of terrorism and characterized them as a threat to national security.

The Ayatollah also spoke about the current situation in Kurdestan, a predominantly Kurdish region in western Iran.

"The situation in Kurdestan is tense," the Ayatollah said. "We have taken measures to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, but we cannot ignore the threat posed by the Kurdish rebels."

The Ayatollah's remarks were met with a mixed reaction in Kurdestan.

"We are concerned about the safety of our citizens," said a Kurdistani politician. "But we also understand the Ayatollah's position. We will continue to support the government in its efforts to ensure security and stability in the region.

The Kurdish rebels, however, demanded an end to the attacks on their territory and called for a ceasefire.

"We have no objection to peaceful negotiations," said a rebel leader. "But we will not tolerate any further attacks on our people."

The situation in Kurdestan remains uncertain as the government and the rebels continue to engage in talks.

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