

# Iran's supreme leader

**Ayatollah Ali Khamenei wields absolute control in Iran through a network of loyalists and institutions, including the Revolutionary Guards, Basij militia, judiciary and intelligence services**



■ **Jul 17, 1939:** Ali Khamenei, son of a cleric, born in Mashhad, Iran

■ **Education:** Studies at Islamic seminaries in Mashhad and Qom, where he becomes devoted follower of ***Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini***

■ **1963-69:** After U.S.-backed ***Shah of Iran*** drives Khomeini into exile, Ali Khamenei is arrested by **SAVAK** secret police. He spends three years in jail and further three in detention

■ **1978:** Strikes and demonstrations against Shah paralyze country

■ **1979: Shah overthrown.** Ayatollah Khomeini makes triumphant return, from exile, declares Islamic Republic, becomes country's Supreme Leader, Khamenei becomes Defence Minister

■ **1981:** Khamenei survives assassination attempt during election campaign. Elected President of Iran by landslide 95% vote

■ **1989:** Following death of Ayatollah Khomeini, ***Assembly of Experts***, Iran's most senior body, choose Khamenei as Supreme Leader