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Iran Daily

Vol. 7719 • Tuesday, December 10, 2024 • Azar 20, 1403 • Jumada al-Thani 8, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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Syria's future

Opportunities lie hidden within threats

By Behnam Saeedi
Iranian Lawmaker

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The developments in Syria that led to the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government occurred much more swiftly than anticipated. Undoubtedly, the recent events will pose challenges for the people of Syria and the region moving forward. What is clear is that there was a lack of necessary motivation among the Syrian army and the government to sustain their rule and counter the attacks from opposing groups. It was expected that the Syrian army and Bashar al-Assad would have acted with greater resolve in confronting the rebels.

Given these circumstances, I believe that in the current situation, where the government has changed, the future of this country should be shaped by the people's decisions, and they must determine the type of government they want. Experience has shown that wherever people have stepped up to make decisions, the best choices have been made and the most favorable outcomes have followed. Therefore, we hope that the people of Syria emerge with dignity from the difficult trial ahead and make the best decision for the future and the fate of their country. We also hope that no one in Syria faces any difficulties and that the beloved people of Syria can experience a life filled with peace.

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Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (c) is briefed by Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, at an exhibition in Tehran on December 9, 2024.
fvpresident.ir

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Domestic consumption makes up 70% of gas supplied to grid: *NIGC*

The spokesperson for the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) announced that 70% of the gas delivered to the national grid on Sunday was consumed by the residential, commercial, and small industrial sectors, marking a 25% increase compared to the same period last year. Talking to Shana on Monday, Hassan Mousavi stated that on December 8, a total of 859 million cubic meters of sweet gas was injected into the national network, adding that of this amount, 600 million cubic meters were consumed by the residential, commercial, and small industrial sectors, accounting for 70% of the total gas delivered to the network.

Iran is one of the largest natural gas producers in the world, and its domestic consumption of natural gas is equally significant. The country heavily relies on gas for a variety of purposes, including residential heating, electricity generation, and industrial use.

A large portion of the gas is consumed in the residential sector, particularly during the colder months, as heating is a major energy need for Iranian households.

Meanwhile, the CEO of NIGC announced on Sunday that the residential sector's gas consumption on Saturday increased by 130 million cubic meters compared to the same period last year, matching the daily consumption levels recorded in February, 2023.

Saeid Tavakoli made the statement during the 13th Winter Fuel Supply Coordination Meeting, held via videoconference with senior officials and provincial gas company managers.

Addressing the nation's gas production and consumption, he emphasized the critical need for a national approach to managing gas usage while prioritizing essential needs.

"As we have repeatedly stressed, maintaining a stable gas supply for households remains the top priority principle for the NIGC during the cold season," Tavakoli said.

The deputy minister of oil for gas affairs compared current consumption levels with last year, noting a significant rise in residential, commercial, and small industrial gas usage due to recent temperature drops.

Tavakoli also highlighted the supply of gas to power plants, stating that ensuring adequate supply for this sector is the company's second priority after households.

Anti-Iran sanctions a challenge for interrelations: *ECO chief*

Asad Majeed Khan, the secretary-general of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), commented on unilateral sanctions against Iran and their impact on ECO cooperation, saying, "This is a challenge that exists and will have an impact. We are working on it."

Majeed Khan made the comment on Monday in a press conference held at the ECO secretariat in the Iranian capital of Tehran, IRNA reported.

We want to provide guidelines to chambers of commerce to improve trade relations, he said, adding that his organization aims to advance regional transportation economy and sustainable development in 2025.

He told reporters that ECO now has 10 members after five central Asian countries and the Republic of Azerbaijan and Afghanistan joined the organization.

Azerbaijan has announced its intention to host the

ECO Summit in 2025, he added.

Responding to an IRNA correspondent's question regarding how ECO cooperates with BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as well as international institutions, Majeed Khan said there is active cooperation as some countries are official members or observer members at ECO, BRICS or SCO.

As to ECO intra-cooperation, Majeed Khan explained that the organization has several affiliations active in cultural, educational and banking fields, with all of them connected to each other and enjoying mutual cooperation.

He also said ECO accounts for \$82 billion of the total world trade that stands at \$1.60 trillion. He added that ECO's share is not at a proper level, and "we are looking to use mechanisms to facilitate trade."

The 28th Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Council of Ministers (COM) convened



on December 3 in Mashhad, Iran, gathering foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers from the ECO countries.

Also, ECO specialized agencies and subsidiary bodies, including the ECO Trade and Development

Bank, ECO Science Foundation, ECO Cultural Institute and ECO Educational Institute, as well as observers and partner international organizations, including the Turkish Cypriot State, Organization of Turkic States, the D-8 Organiza-

tion for Economic Cooperation, Asia Cooperation Dialogue, and CICA have attended the event.

The council adopted the Mashhad Communiqué, a pivotal outcome document that sets strategic directions for ECO's ac-

tivities, reinforcing cooperation among member states. The meeting also reviewed progress on key initiatives and projects, emphasizing the importance of collective action to address shared challenges and opportunities.

Iran, Russia launch two transport projects to boost trade



Iran and Russia initiated two major transit-logistics projects to enhance connectivity and trade

efficiency.

The projects include the "Ulyanovsk-Astara" rail route and the "Volga-Caspian Sea" river corridor, expected to slash transit times from 21 days to just seven, IRNA reported.

The launch ceremony in Ulyanovsk was attended by the region's governor, Iran's consul general in Kazan, and officials

from India, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Iraq, alongside representatives from transport companies such as the Iranian-Russian Salianka port.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ulyanovsk Governor Alexey Russskikh highlighted the projects' potential to facilitate faster and more cost-effective trade between the two

nations.

He noted a 76% increase in trade volume between Iran and Ulyanovsk in the first nine months of 2024, reaching \$15 million compared to \$8.5 million in the same period of 2023.

Iran's Consul General Davoud Mirzakhani underscored the economic significance of the Volga region, which accounts

for substantial shares of Russia's agricultural, industrial, and mineral production.

This corridor, one of the most significant joint ventures in the Volga region, is set to play a key role in strengthening Iran-Russia trade ties, particularly leveraging Ulyanovsk's strategic position and its 13 ports along the Volga River.

Iran's shortages crisis rooted in mandatory price setting



By Davoud Danesh-Jafari
Iran's former economy minister

OPINION

Shortages in the Iranian economy are tied to its deep dependence on oil revenues. Approximately 80% of Iran's GDP is directly linked to oil income, making fluctuations in global oil prices a key catalyst for economic crises.

For instance, between 2010 and 2014, the average oil price was \$100 per barrel, but it dropped to \$50 in 2015-2017 and has hovered around \$70 in recent years. For oil-dependent economies like Iran, such drastic changes in revenue create significant challenges. Compounding this issue are international sanctions, which have cut Iran's oil revenues by half or even two-thirds, exacerbating the economic deficits.

Despite awareness of oil revenue volatility, Iran's economic planning has failed to provide sustainable solutions. Mechanisms like the National Development Fund and Foreign Exchange Reserve Account were introduced to stabilize the economy by saving oil revenues during boom periods to cushion shortfalls during lean times.

However, these efforts have largely failed because these funds

were often depleted even during periods of high oil income. Rather than serving as a safety net, these reserves became an auxiliary budget, leaving the country unprepared for economic crises and perpetuating the imbalance. The COVID-19 pandemic further deepened Iran's economic shortages. The combination of reduced oil revenues and pandemic-related disruptions led to a 9% contraction in GDP.

Socially oriented businesses shut down, and countless households lost income. The government, already grappling with falling revenues, was forced to increase spending to support vulnerable populations and fund vaccination efforts, which added pressure due to their foreign currency costs. This scenario exacerbated the budget deficit and worsened the economic imbalance.

One of the primary causes of Iran's persistent economic shortages is government intervention in price-setting. According to basic economic principles, equilibrium prices emerge when supply equals demand, maximizing producer profits and consumer welfare.

However, when governments artificially lower prices, demand surges while supply diminishes, creating a gap that leads to

shortages. This interference often stems from systemic decision-making beyond the executive branch, further worsening structural economic problems.

The costs of these shortages are enormous. For example, the government purchases wheat from farmers at high prices but sells flour at heavily subsidized rates, resulting in significant fiscal burdens.

Similarly, mandating exporters to return foreign exchange earnings at below-market rates diminishes their incentives. These policies not only deepen shortages but also strain financial resources and increase the budget deficit.

Electricity is an evident example of this imbalance. The government provides free gas to power plants, buys electricity at 500 toman (approximately 0.8 dollar cent) per unit, and sells it at a mere 75-150 toman.

This mismatch has led to a 100 trillion toman (\$1.6 billion) debt to power plants, half of which are privately owned, discouraging further production. Policymakers, wary of burdening citizens with higher costs, maintain artificially low prices.

However, experience shows that such approaches are unsustainable and ultimately lead to higher prices. Instead, boosting



household incomes is a more sustainable solution than price manipulation.

While price controls may seem appealing initially, as they offer consumers temporary relief, they ultimately lead to supply shortages and reduced production, culminating in price hikes and economic shocks.

For instance, in foreign exchange markets, excess demand over supply causes price surges. The solution lies in increasing supply, not artificially controlling prices. When price adjustments adversely affect consumer welfare, the additional revenues generated should be redistributed to consumers to maintain their stan-

dard of living. Ultimately, prices should reflect economic realities, not short-term political strategies. The root cause of economic imbalance lies in supply shortages. This issue spans sectors, from fuel to electricity and water. When the government steps in to cover costs, it often resorts to borrowing from the central bank or other financial institutions, leading to budget deficits and inflation.

Unless this vicious cycle is broken, the economic imbalance will persist. Addressing the core issue of supply shortages and reducing reliance on artificial price controls are crucial steps toward achieving economic stability.

Abu Ali al-Hussein ibn Abdullah ibn Sina, known globally as Avicenna, was born in 980 CE and passed away in 1037 CE. He is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in medicine, philosophy, and the natural sciences, leaving an indelible mark on both the Islamic Golden Age and the European Renaissance. His seminal works, particularly *The Canon of Medicine* and *The Book of Healing*, are considered cornerstones in medicine and philosophy.

This article explores the life, achievements, and enduring legacy of Avicenna, emphasizing his significance in understanding Iran's rich cultural heritage, surfiran.com wrote.

Avicenna was born in the village of Afshana, near Bukhara, in what is now Uzbekistan. His father, Abdullah, was a respected scholar from Balkh, who relocated to Bukhara during the reign of the Samanid dynasty. From an early age, Avicenna exhibited extraordinary intellect. By the time he was ten, he had memorized the Holy Qur'an and was deeply engrossed in literature and the sciences.

At age 14, Avicenna began studying logic and philosophy under the prominent scholar Abu Abdullah al-Natili. His rapid progress soon surpassed his teachers, prompting him to study medicine independently. By 16, he was already treating patients, and at 18, he was recognized as a leading physician. His reputation in medicine earned him an invitation to treat Emir Nuh II of the Samanid dynasty, a task he undertook successfully. This opportunity granted him access to the extensive royal library, allowing him to further his studies across various fields.

The political instability of the time forced Avicenna to move frequently. After the fall of the Samanids, he traveled to Gorganj (modern-day Urgench), the capital of the Khwarezm region, where he served under the patronage of the ruling Ma'munids. However, he eventually had to leave due to growing threats from the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud.

Avicenna's journey continued through Gorgan, Rey, Hamadan, and finally Isfahan. Each move reflected the tumultuous nature of the era, yet also provided him with diverse experiences that enriched his scholarly work. In Rey, he served the Buyid dynasty as a physician and successfully treated ruler Majd al-Dawla. His tenure in Hamadan saw him serve as vizier to Shams al-Dawleh of the Buyid dynasty; however, his political involvement led to imprisonment after the ruler's death. Despite these challenges, Avicenna continued his intellectual pursuits, even writing while imprisoned.

His final years were spent in Isfahan under the patronage of Ala al-Dawleh, where he completed some of his most significant works. Avicenna's travels not only broadened his intellectual horizons but also enabled him to engage with various philosophical and scientific traditions across the Islamic world.

In logic, Avicenna made groundbreaking advancements that extended beyond the Aristotelian tradition. He introduced the concepts of conditional syllogism and temporal modal logic, laying the groundwork for what became known as Avicennian logic. This system was further developed by later scholars, including Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and became a cornerstone of Islamic logic.

Philosophically, Avicenna sought to reconcile the Peripatetic philosophy of Aristotle with Islamic theology. His metaphysical inquiries tackled profound questions such as the nature of the soul, and the relationship between the finite and the infinite. His argument for God as the Necessary Existent (*Wajib al-Wujud*) is one of his influential contributions, forming the basis for later theological and philosophical debates. Avicenna's philosophy also addressed the problem of evil, the nature of divine knowledge, and the concept of emanation, where he sought to explain how multiplicity arises from the One (God). His work laid the groundwork for the philosophical systems of later Islamic thinkers like Mulla Sadra and influenced medieval European scholars such as Thomas Aquinas and René Descartes.

Avicenna's most famous contribution to medicine, *The Canon of Medicine*, was a comprehensive medical encyclopedia that systematized all known medical knowledge of the time. The Canon was used as a standard medical text in both the Islamic world and Europe for over six centuries, covering topics from fundamental medical principles to complex surgical procedures. It was divided into five books that dealt with topics such as general principles, medical substances, diseases, and pharmacology.

Avicenna; a legacy of intellectual brilliance



● rezvanstone.ir

The Canon's emphasis on empirical observation and logic in diagnosis and treatment was revolutionary. It introduced clinical trials, quarantine to limit the spread of infectious diseases, and testing new drugs on animals before human use — principles foundational in modern medical science. The Canon also classified diseases into various categories and provided a detailed understanding of anatomy, physiology, and the pathology of different organs.

Avicenna's influence extended well beyond the Islamic world. His works were translated into Latin, becoming fundamental texts in European universities during the Middle Ages. *The Canon of Medicine* served as the primary textbook in institutions such as Montpellier and Leuven and remained a significant reference in the study of medicine until the 17th century. His philosophical ideas, especially his integration of Aristotle's philosophy with Islamic thought, significantly influenced Scholasticism and European philosophy development. Avicenna's impact is evident in numerous institutions, awards, and honors named after him worldwide. His contributions to various fields continue to be recognized by scholars and practitioners alike, symbolizing the intellectual flourishing of the Islamic Golden Age.

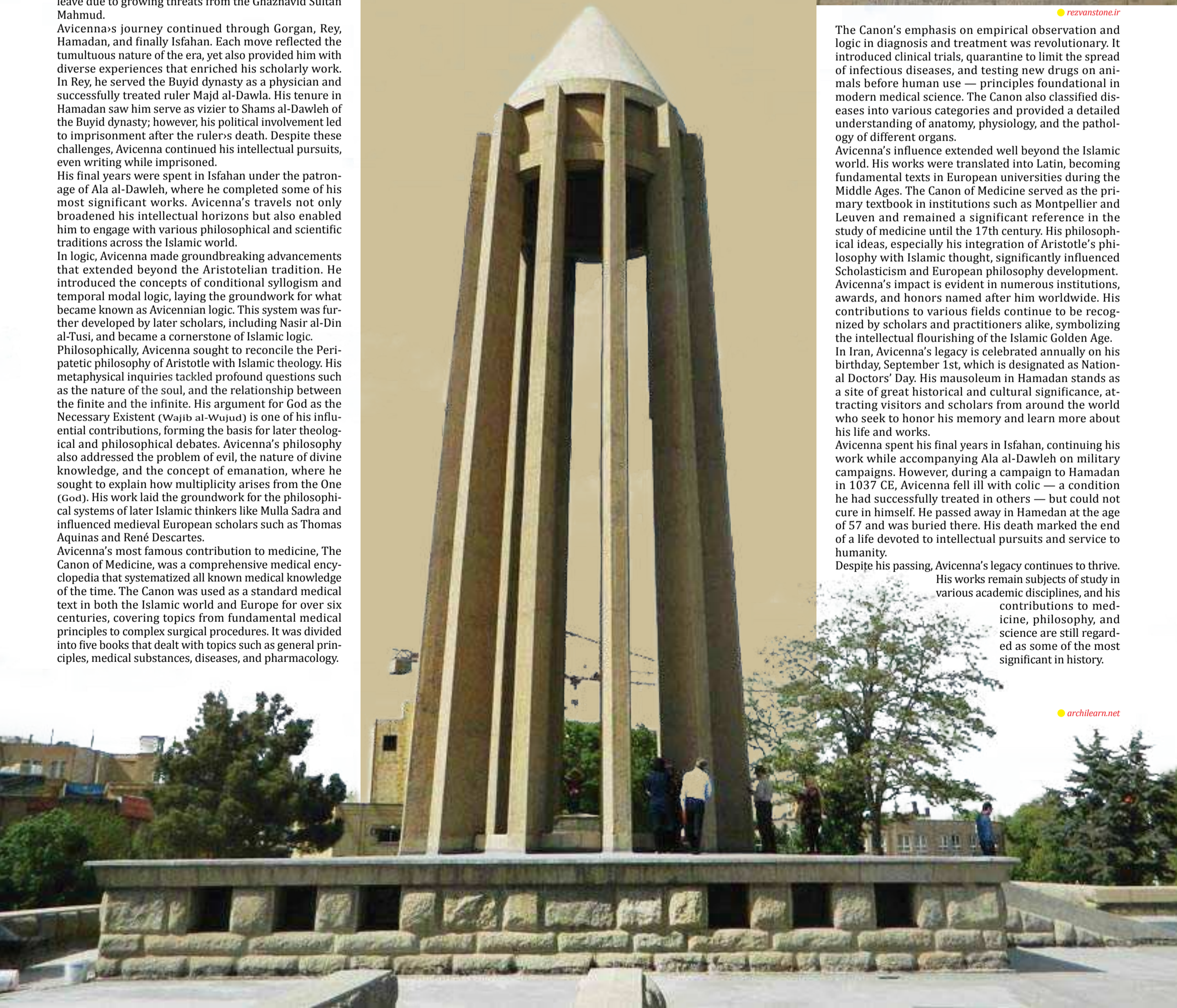
In Iran, Avicenna's legacy is celebrated annually on his birthday, September 1st, which is designated as National Doctors' Day. His mausoleum in Hamadan stands as a site of great historical and cultural significance, attracting visitors and scholars from around the world who seek to honor his memory and learn more about his life and works.

Avicenna spent his final years in Isfahan, continuing his work while accompanying Ala al-Dawleh on military campaigns. However, during a campaign to Hamadan in 1037 CE, Avicenna fell ill with colic — a condition he had successfully treated in others — but could not cure in himself. He passed away in Hamedan at the age of 57 and was buried there. His death marked the end of a life devoted to intellectual pursuits and service to humanity.

Despite his passing, Avicenna's legacy continues to thrive.

His works remain subjects of study in various academic disciplines, and his contributions to medicine, philosophy, and science are still regarded as some of the most significant in history.

● archilearn.net



Papa Biden a liar, American justice a lie



By Andrew
Mitrovica
Columnist

OPINION

who cling to the fantastical idea that America is a shining-city-on-a-hill model of liberty, equality, and fraternity would deny the essential truth of that blunt opening sentence.

That is why the overwrought brouhaha over Papa Biden's predictable volte-face to pardon his wayward son after insisting that he would not exercise his prerogative to wave a presidential wand and erase Hunter's criminal convictions, strikes me as missing a larger and obvious point.

All presidents lie. It is the American way. It always has been. It always will be.

Papa Joe Biden is a blatant liar and the embodiment of a perverse lie that sustains America's phantom democracy.

Only the familiar stable of wind-up partisans who appear on US cable news networks and silly naifs

Indeed, there are two defining qualities that every American president must possess in order to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. They must be able to lie with an almost pathological ease, and they must be content to order others to kill without pause or a scintilla of remorse.

Presidents lie about war. They lie about peace. They lie about negotiating "truces". They lie about "intelligence" produced by spy services whose business is deceit. They lie about bridging the schism between rich and poor. They lie about protecting "innocents" at home and abroad. They lie about preventing the planet from burning into extinction.

They lie about pardons. They lie when they place their hand on a bible and swear to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States". The biggest lie of all is when they reassure "the American people" — again and again — that they will, without fail, tell the truth.

Which raises a necessary question: Why do they lie?

They lie to convince the gullible that presidents are "peacemakers" who oppose war rather than fuel conflict with money and arms.

They lie to obscure the fact that, as president, their principal obligation is to serve the parochial interests of the few at the debilitating expense of the many.

They lie to promote a myth that America is a symbol of hope and freedom in order to deny the historical record that US president after president has been the unrepentant architect of loss and suffering on an almost incomprehensible scale across this ever-turbulent world.

Biden's eager complicity in the genocide being perpetrated with such ferocious and lethal efficiency in the desolate remnants of Gaza and the occupied West Bank is more convincing evidence of America's defining and anti-human past, present, and, no doubt, future.

America's 46th president has passed the litmus test that every president must pass. Biden has proven throughout his septic tenure as president that he has, all along, had the right stuff all right to be commander-in-chief.

And, like many other presidents who preceded him and are, of course, destined to follow him, Biden will have a shrine — euphemistically known as a presi-



Joe Biden (front-left) is joined by his family, including his son Hunter Biden (front-right), as he takes the oath of office as President of the United States on January 20, 2021.
● CHUCK KENNEDY/WHITE HOUSE

dential library — built in his honour to celebrate his facility to lie and kill.

So, the duelling camps on what constitutes the "right" and "left" in America who, on one hyperbolic side, are excoriating Biden for his hypocritical assault on the "rule of law" and, on the other sentimental wing, are defending the president's understandable act of love, are both guilty not only of naivete but a glaring double standard

which confirms their profoundly unserious natures.

Biden's detractors wail like colicky babies that he has reneged on a solemn pledge not to grant his second, troubled son clemency because they were convinced of this president's once-uncompromising fidelity to the "norms" that gird the American democratic "experiment".

This may come, I suspect, as a revelation to these starry-eyed

chumps, but the pampered and powerful elites in Washington D.C. and beyond — who dictate the terms and conditions of the American "experiment" — have never had to abide by any of your fictive "norms".

There are an exculpatory set of rules for the governors and a decidedly different set of incriminating rules for the governed.

Exhibit A: Not one of the grinning nest of Wall Street plutocrats who

engineered the sub-prime mortgage racket that triggered the near collapse of the rigged US economy and caused such grief and hardship among "Main Street" America were held to even a perfunctory measure of account.

Instead, they were handed golden, life-time-do-not-go-to-Rikers tickets and bailed out by the legion of "blue-collar" American taxpayers whom they damaged, often beyond repair.

Not surprisingly, they were abetted on this rule-of-law defacing score by a succession of compliant presidents. In happy league with their grateful Wall Street patrons and donors, not one sitting president has ever been charged, let alone convicted and jailed, like millions of their much less fortunate "fellow citizens".

God-fearing, law-abiding, Boy Scouts all.

I suggest the "I'm shocked, shocked that the president lied" crowd take out a tissue and dab their embarrassing spigot of crocodile tears.

As for The Washington Post columnist and his like-minded brethren on CNN and MSNBC who chafed at Papa Biden's U-turn but gave him credit for saving his kid from an unpleasant fate since that's what any father would do,



The scales of justice aren't blind when your dad can lift the blindfold and take a good, long peek at the accused in the dock to find out whether they are related to you or not. Papa Biden should spare an ounce of his mercy for the deserving victims of the "miscarriages of justice" that are rife in America's unsparing "judicial system," which routinely imprisons the poor, minorities, non-violent offenders, and the innocent, who, in many outrageous cases, face the death penalty.

apparently these maudlin apologists require reminding that poor, little Hunter is a 54-year-old married man who ought to be responsible for his illicit actions and his pop is the president of the United States.

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Towards that — dare I say it — just end, Biden better carve out some time during his dwindling days in office to call the Innocence Project — a group of honourable volunteers who work hard to free the condemned — and seek its advice on who he should pardon next. That might temper the shameful stain on the "truth" and "justice" he has left behind.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.



US President Joe Biden (left) and his son Hunter Biden in April 2024.
● DEMETRIUS FREEMAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

Problem with Joe, Hunter



By Margaret
Kimberley
Author

OPINION

The outrage surrounding President Biden's pardon of his son Hunter Biden is not just about clemency for the relatively minor charges he was facing. The younger Biden has lived a life of great privileges, all granted to him by his father, who is equally undeserving of his own success. Fortunately, the two corrupt mediocrities will soon fade away and the public will be spared from watching them fail upward.

"If you have a piece of crack cocaine, no bigger than this quarter that I'm holding in my hand, one quarter of one dollar, we passed a law through the leadership of Senator Thurmond and myself and others. A law that says you're caught with that, you go to jail for five years. You get no probation. You get nothing other than five years in jail, judge doesn't have a choice."

— Senator Joe Biden in 1991

"Dear Hunter, thank you for inviting me to D.C. and giving an opportunity to meet your father and spent [sic] some time together."

— Vadym Pozharsky, Burisma executive

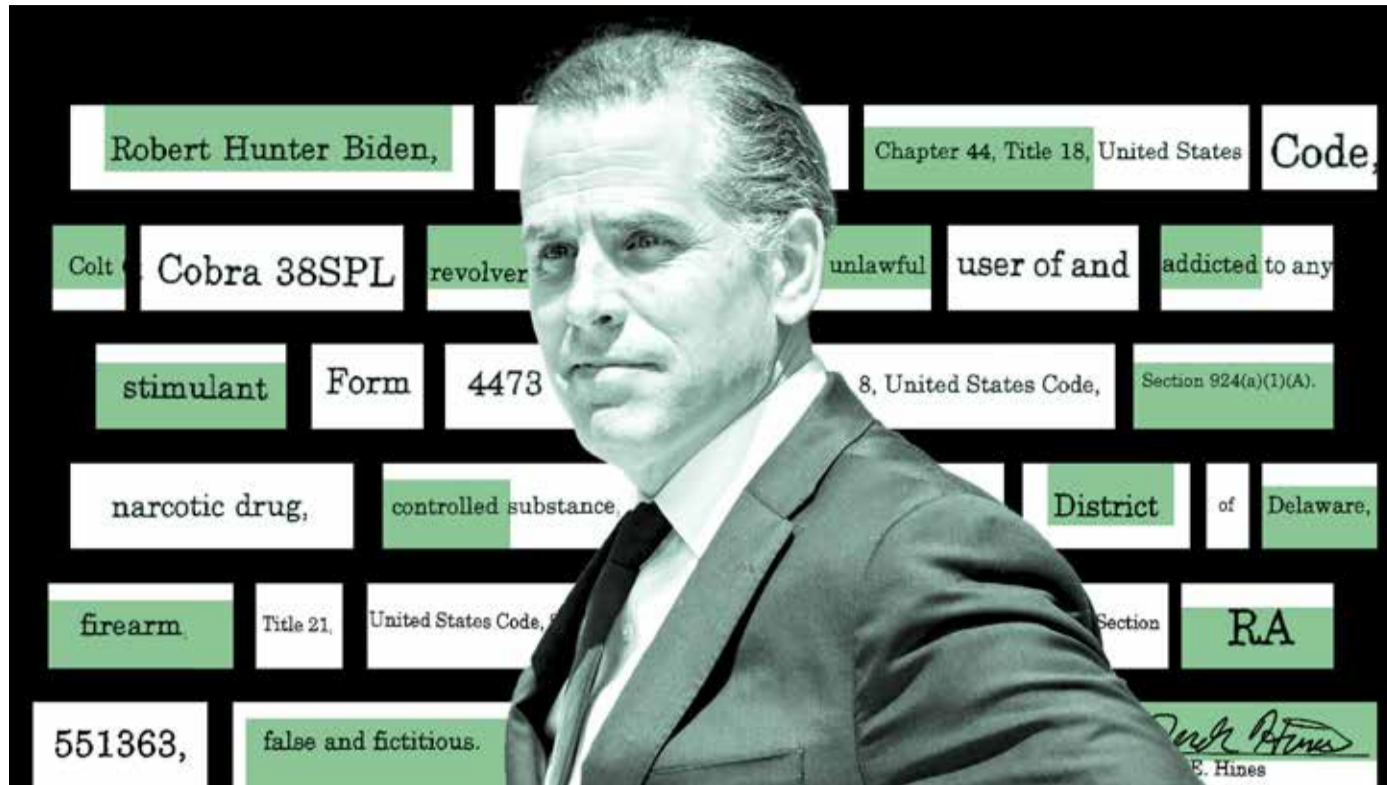
President Joe Biden's pardon of his son Hunter Biden was inevitable and inevitably controversial. Hunter Biden is the quintessential nepotism baby, the recip-

ient of privileges such as being appointed to the board of Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company. Burisma paid him \$50,000 per month for doing nothing

other than existing with the last name Biden. The younger Biden was the butt of jokes for years, a cocaine addict who somehow managed to never have any

interaction with the criminal justice system and who achieved nothing without an assist from his father. He lamented having to give up his lucra-

tive lobbying business after his father became Barack Obama's running mate. "Dad joined the Obama ticket, and I had to find new work."



The illustration shows Hunter Biden, the US president's son. In the background, parts of his indictment are included and highlighted. **CNN**

Hunter Biden came to greater public attention in the waning days of the 2020 presidential campaign, when an email in his laptop (which he left unclaimed at a repair shop) indicated that his father had at least one meeting with a Burisma colleague, creating a possible conflict of interest. The laptop also contained videos of the younger Biden using the drug that if his father is to be believed, warranted five years in prison.

The laptop affair should have been a bigger news story but was quashed by the Biden campaign in collusion with corporate media, especially social media platforms such as Facebook and the site then known as Twitter. Twitter and Facebook censored any links about the laptop from appearing in any posts. In addition, the Biden campaign convened a group of intelligence "experts" who claimed the laptop story was little more than a Russian disinformation campaign. This conspiracy among the media and the permanent government may have killed the story late in the campaign, but the establishment interference was never forgotten or forgiven.

The case can be made that absent being Joe Biden's child, Hunter wouldn't be facing any charges at all. But it isn't surprising that there is so much conversation about the pardon, especially after Biden previously stated that he would not pardon his son.

In addition to doing what he said he would not do, there are two other problems for the el-

der Biden. One is his lackluster record of issuing pardons for others during his term in office. He can pardon anyone convicted of a federal offense before January 20, 2025, the date he leaves office and Donald Trump returns to the white house. But to date, his pardon record has been stingy, with the fewest number of presidential pardons since Richard Nixon.

The other issue is Ukraine. Hunter Biden's pardon is interesting because it covers any crimes committed from January 1, 2014, to the present. The year 2014 is the year of the US-backed Maidan coup against the elected Ukrainian government. He was charged with an illegal gun purchase made in 2018 and of tax evasion from 2016 to 2019. Why does the pardon begin in 2014?

Vice President Biden was the Obama administration's point man on Ukraine. The Maidan coup was the beginning of an effort to destroy Russia's economy and use Ukraine as a proxy in that conflict. As president, Biden is very much committed to this misguided plan, claiming in 2022 that sanctioning Russia's economy would "turn the ruble to rubble". Now as he leaves office, he is escalating conflict with Russia in Ukraine and in Syria.

It isn't clear what the younger Biden might have been doing on his Burisma seat that caused his father to extend the pardon back to 2014. It's possible that there isn't really much to find out, that Hunter Biden existed as a cipher for his father, and

contributed little to his position, but we are only left with speculation. Now, we will never know or if we ever do, it won't matter because Hunter Biden cannot be prosecuted for any activity related to his work in Ukraine. Young Biden was at the center of a scandal, but, all in all, things turned out well for him. He wrote a memoir, "Beautiful Things," and he even sold artwork which netted him \$1.5 million. He made money from a book and his paintings, and, in all probability, didn't worry about his legal troubles, knowing that his father would pardon him.

The outrage generated by the pardon is, in large part, due to Hunter's failson status. He is a man who only succeeded in life because his father was a powerful senator, then vice president, and finally president of the United States. His drug addiction created personal problems for himself and for his family, but he once smoked crack in a rental car, which means his identity could have been easily traced, but no one called the police.

If father and son have anything in common, it is mediocrity. Biden was never thought of as an intellectual giant in the Senate. He was known as a race-baiting right winger. In 1977, he warned that school busing would create a "racial jungle," and in later years, he proudly shepherded Bill Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill through the Senate and bragged about the draconian sentences and mass incarceration that resulted.

Senator Biden's conservatism

made him an attractive running mate for Barack Obama, who had marketed himself as a progressive when he was anything but that. The phony leftist needed racist, right-wing cover, and the senator who bragged about the "death penalty for jaywalking" was the perfect antidote. Biden was no different as vice president, known for blurting out what are kindly referred to as gaffes, a nice way of saying that he is not very bright. This not very bright man was influential however, and was able to make sure that his lightweight son had every undeserved advantage.

Hunter Biden was troubled though, so addicted to drugs that he forgot he left a laptop in a Delaware repair shop and that it contained videos of sex acts and drug use. Of course, it caused embarrassment to his equally mediocre father, who was fortunate to have the Democratic Party establishment and oligarchy coalesce around his presidential campaign in 2020. Aside from deadender democrats, most of the nation is sick of Joe Biden. Some 7 million people who voted for him couldn't bring themselves to vote for Kamala Harris, his handpicked successor. Instead of concluding his affairs as a lame duck soon to leave office, he extended the anti-Russia proxy battle from Ukraine to Syria and continues funding the Israeli genocidal apartheid government.

Millions of people watched a man whose health declined, yet who continued his re-election bid. The top-down oligarchic machinations that made Kamala Harris the nominee were a bridge too far, and, of course, she was defeated.

Now, with less than two months in office, Joe threw his disgraced son a lifeline. President Biden will not be missed. Even before he was shoved out of the race, his approval ratings were in the basement.

He said himself he was a "transitional" figure. He should have acted like it and accepted being a one-term president. In doing so, he would have kept his dignity and his party's fortunes intact. Instead, he'll be remembered for genocide, cognitive decline, and a failed son who always manages to land on his feet.

Biden's unpardonable hypocrisy



When President Joe Biden was running for a second term as president, he repeatedly ruled out granting a pardon to his son Hunter, who has pleaded guilty to tax fraud and lying on a form to purchase a gun. "He was very clear, very up-front, obviously very definitive," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said of one of his many promises to this effect. Biden professed a willingness to abide by the results of the justice system as a matter of principle. But in breaking his promise and issuing a sweeping pardon of his son for any crimes he may have committed over an 11-year period, Biden has revealed his pledge to have been merely instrumental.

In a defiant statement, Biden insisted that his son's prosecution was selective and unfair. "No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases," he wrote, "can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son — and that is wrong."

It is probably true that one of the crimes charged to Hunter Biden, lying on a form to obtain a firearm, is the sort of thing an average person would be unlikely to face charges over. (Hunter affirmed on the form that he was sober but later admitted to having been in the throes of addiction.) The other charge, blatantly failing to pay millions of dollars in taxes, is routinely brought against people who are not political targets. That it's true Hunter Biden was more likely to get caught than the average tax cheat is an indictment of the tax system. (It is also, ironically, an aspect of the system Joe Biden has set out to change by beefing up the IRS's enforcement capacity.)

give Hunter's clients anything of value. There is no proof to the contrary, and extensive Republican efforts to dig up evidence that Joe shared in the profits from Hunter's access-peddling business came up empty. But Joe Biden's defense of Hunter's influence peddling by stressing its narrow legality merely serves to highlight the hypocrisy of his fatherly indulgence. The black letter of the law was a fence to protect Hunter from the consequences of his sleazy behavior. And when the law itself trapped him, he simply opened a door and walked through it — a door no average American could access. The most bewildering passage in Biden's pardon statement posits some amorphous conspiracy against him by Justice Department prosecutors: "There has been an effort to break Hunter — who has been five and a half years sober, even in the face of unrelenting attacks and selective prosecution. In trying to break Hunter, they've



President Joe Biden sits down with ABC News' David Muir in Normandy, France, on June 6, 2024. In this interview, Biden once again said that he would not pardon his son Hunter amid an ongoing felony gun trial. **ABC NEWS**

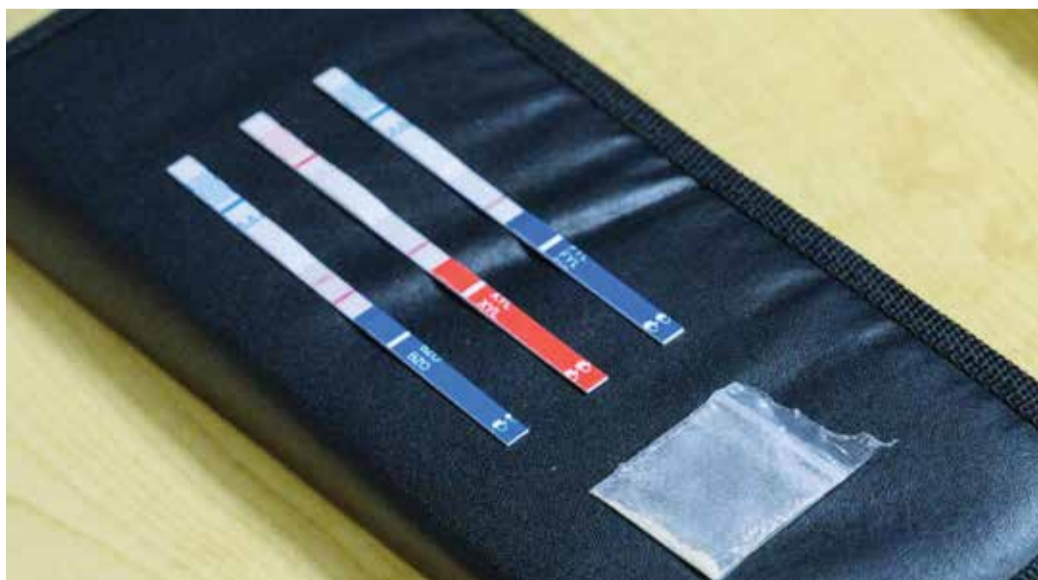
President Biden's complaint about the higher standard applied to his son reflects the perspective of myopic privilege. Crimes by family members of powerful public officials are far more damaging to public confidence than similar crimes by anonymous people. Holding them to account through strict enforcement of the law is good and correct.

What the president fails to note in his self-pitying statement is that Hunter Biden for years engaged in legal but wildly inappropriate behavior by running a business based on selling the perception of access to his father. The only commodity Hunter had to offer oligarchs in Ukraine, China, and elsewhere was the belief, or hope, that he could put in a good word for them with his dad.

Joe Biden's defense in these cases was that he did not actually

tried to break me — and there's no reason to believe it will stop here. Enough is enough." Trying to break Hunter? And his father? To what end? It would be tempting, but unfair, to draw a simple equation between Joe Biden's situational ethics and that of his successor. A willingness to evade the rule of law is the foundation of Donald Trump's entire career in business and politics, not a nepotistic exception. Still, principles become much harder to defend when their most famous defenders have compromised them flagrantly. With the pardon decision, like his stubborn insistence on running for a second term he couldn't win, Biden chose to prioritize his own feelings over the defense of his country.

The article first appeared on *The Atlantic*.



The pouch that held Hunter Biden's firearm, which was dumped in a trash can in Delaware, was examined later by FBI officials, where they found traces of cocaine. **AFP**

The article first appeared on *Black Agenda Report*.

Struggling Taremi eager to prove the right fit in Nerazzurri colors



By
Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

When Mahdi Taremi sealed his long-awaited move to Internazionale from Porto in July, his deal was widely regarded as a true bargain for the Serie A champion.

In signing the Iranian international as a free agent, Inter secured the services of a prolific striker with proven credentials and impressive numbers.

The 32-year-old came to Inter on the back of four glorious seasons with Porto, during which he bagged 91 strikes in 182 outings to become the Dragons' third all-time top scorer, while providing his teammates with 56 assists, as he helped the Portuguese giant lift seven domestic trophies – including a league and couple double in the 2021/22 campaign.

Preparing his team for a congested campaign – featuring the expanded UEFA Champions League and the new 32-team FIFA Club World Cup next summer – Inter head coach Simone Inzaghi hailed the Iranian as an “important player” with “a lot of experience and many goals under his belt” in the European elite clubs' competition. Taremi himself described the



move as “the best moment in my life” and went on to impress in the preseason friendlies, capitalizing on the absence of Argentine skipper Lautaro Martínez

and France international Marcus Thuram, who were given extended vacations due to their international commitments, to make a case for of place in the

starting XI when the season gets underway.

Five months into the marquee chapter of his career, however, Taremi has been struggling to

make a significant impact in Nerazzurri colors.

The Iranian's contribution has been limited to a single goal from the spot – in a 4-0 home

beating of Red Star Belgrade in the Champions League – and three assists in 15 games across all competitions.

He has been named just once in the starting lineup in a Serie A game – a home fixture against Lecce on matchday two – making nine cameo appearances off the bench, while he was an unused substitute in the last two matches in the Italian top flight against Hellas Verona and Parma.

Rumors have already begun to swirl around Taremi's future in the Italian media, with several reports suggesting his time at Inter could come to an end in the upcoming January transfer window if any club comes up with the right offer for the Iranian.

In the Champions League, however, the circumstances have been much more favorable of Taremi, who has started all five of Inter's games, starting with a dedicated performance in the goalless draw against Manchester City at the Etihad in September, followed by a man-of-the-match display against Red Star at San Siro.

Inter will be back in European action tonight when visiting Xabi Alonso's in-form Bayer Leverkusen, and the occasion at BayArena can provide the Iranian with the perfect opportunity to prove the Italian giant made no mistake by going after him.

Asian Women's Handball Championship: Iran aiming for history against Kazakhstan



Sports Desk

A historic bronze medal will be on the line for the Iranian girls when they take on Kazakhstan at the Asian Women's Handball Championship in New Delhi, India, today.

Nashmin Shafeian's made it to a third successive semifinal in the competition to secure a place in next year's World Championship in Germany and the Netherlands, before suffering a 33-20 defeat against 16-time champion South Korea at the Indira

Gandhi Arena on Sunday. Iranian captain Mina Vatanparast still claimed the Player-of-the-Match prize by the end of the contest, while Zahra Faqihi topped the scoring chart for the country with five goals. South Korean left-wing Seo Aru chipped in a game-high eight goals, with Lee Yeong-yeong and Jung Ji-in adding four apiece.

Two-time Asian champion Kazakhstan, meanwhile, fell to a 30-23 loss to Japan later on Sunday.

Today's encounter will be a repeat of the third-place matchup in 2021 in Amman, where Kazakhstan defeated Iran 38-33.

Beaten by China for the bronze in the previous edition, Iran got off to a losing start in this year's event – a 34-14 defeat against Japan – but bounced back to beat the host 32-30 and then walked away with a 26-17 victory over Hong Kong to finish runner-up to the Japanese in Group B.

Jokic stars again as Nuggets dominate Hawks

BBC – Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic continued his big-scoring form by hitting 48 points as the Denver Nuggets eased past the Atlanta Hawks 141-111 on Sunday.

Jokic, who recorded a career-high 56 points in his side's loss to Washington on Saturday, dominated against the Hawks with 14 rebounds, eight assists and three steals. The Hawks had come into the game on a six-game winning streak but were blown away with Michael Porter Jr adding 26 points for the Nuggets and Christian Braun 17.

And it was Serbian star Jokic's performance that earned extra praise from coach Michael Malone. “I can't say I'm surprised because

I've been spoiled by having the best seat in the house to watch this guy for 10 years, to watch him do it night-in, night-out,” Malone said. “I feel privileged to have the chance to coach him. I never take it for granted.”

Elsewhere, the Golden State Warriors fought back from a 12-point deficit early in the third quarter to defeat the Minnesota Timberwolves 114-106.

Stephen Curry had 30 points and eight assists for the Warriors, including a three-point buzzer-beater from near the halfway line at the end of the third that put them 93-90 ahead. The Los Angeles Lakers, without LeBron James, who has a foot injury, got the better of the Portland Trail



Blazers 107-98. Anthony Davis led the Lakers scoring with 30 points, with D'Angelo Russell adding 28 and Rui Hachimura 23. And Joel Embiid marked his return to action with 31 points and 12 rebounds to help the Philadelphia 76ers to a 108-100 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

Mbappe says he remains committed to France

BBC – Kylian Mbappe has promised he remains committed to playing for France despite being left out of their last two squads.

The 25-year-old Real Madrid forward has 86 caps for France, helped them win the World Cup in 2018 and scored a hat-trick in the 2022 final defeat by Argentina.

He is also their captain, yet Mbappe was omitted from the France squad in October as a precaution after returning from injury – and then again the following month for no clear reason.

“The French team has always been the highest rank in football, it's the national team. I've always said there's nothing more important. My love for the French team hasn't changed,” Mbappe told Canal+.

“You serve your country and that's it.” Mbappe has scored 48

goals for his country, but he managed only one competitive goal in 2024. He endured a difficult Euro 2024 as he played much of the tournament with a broken nose.

France head coach Didier Deschamps said the decision to omit Mbappe for November's Nations League games was a “one-off”.

Mbappe said: “I can't talk about November because it was a decision from the coach and I'll get behind what he said.”

“I fully respect his decision because he is the boss. I wanted to go but I can't say why.”

Mbappe has yet to find his best form for Real Madrid following his free transfer summer move from Paris St-Germain. However, he has still netted 11 goals in 21 games for the Spanish giants.

The lack of down time for top footballers will again be in the spotlight when

Fifa stages an expanded 32-team Club World Cup in the United States next summer.

Mbappe will be involved in that, and the regular World Cup follows in the summer of 2026.

Leagues, national associations and player unions have voiced major misgivings about the busy calendar, and Mbappe suggested it is inevitable that players will become weary.

“In the NBA [National Basketball Association], they get four months off,” said Mbappe.

“We get two weeks. And in the second week, we're already back to running. It's not a vacation.”

“I was tired [at Euro 2024]. I wanted to stay because you give everything for the French team but it was exhausting.”



LEON KUEGLER/REUTERS

International calls for inclusive gov't in Syria after Assad's fall

International Desk

Many countries in the world are calling for the formation of an inclusive, new government in Syria after militants toppled the government of Bashar al-Assad following a shock attack.

Iran's Foreign Ministry in a statement on Sunday called for the formation of an inclusive government representing all Syrian people, stressing that the country's future should only be decided by the Syrians. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan also said on Sunday that Syria's new administration must be inclusive because Syrian people would determine their own future.

Syrian militants declared the fall of Syrian government after seizing control of Damascus on Sunday, ending the Assad family's rule after more than 13 years of war in the Arab country.

Turkey, which has been supporting militants since the beginning of war in 2011, has said it did not support the militant operation in northern Syria, and that Assad's refusal to engage in a serious political solu-

tion had triggered his downfall. A new government will soon be formed, according to the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) that seized Damascus over the weekend. "Our forces are about to finish imposing order in the capital and preserving public property, and the new government will begin its work as soon as it is formed," the militants said in a statement on Telegram on Monday.

Meanwhile, Syrian Prime Minister Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali, who had been in power under Assad's rule, said in a video statement that, "We are ready to cooperate with any leadership chosen by the Syrian people by providing all possible facilities to ensure a smooth transfer of various government files."

Al-Jalali said in a separate interview that they were working to ensure a calm and brief transitional period and that most ministers were in their offices.

'Peaceful transition'

The EU has also called for "an orderly, peaceful and inclusive transition" in Syria that rejects "all forms of extremism" and



Syrian men wave the flag of the opposition in the central Umayyad Square in Damascus on December 9, 2024.
● LOUAI BESHARA/AFP

protects religious minorities. "It is critical to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria and to respect its independence, its sovereignty, as well as state institutions, and to reject all forms of extremism," the EU said in a statement.

France said it will support the transition to a new government in Syria only if the rights of minority populations are respected, Jean-Noel Barrot, French caretaker foreign minister, said. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk on Monday said there was a "huge chance" for inclusive dialogue on the political transition in Syria's new era after the ousting of Assad.

Damascus was relatively quiet after a day of chaos and looting on Sunday, with armed members of the militants spread out across the city as they sought to restore order a day after the collapse of the Assad govern-



ment, who left the country for Russia where he and his family have been granted asylum.

Delisting of HTS

In another development, the UK said the government is "quickly" considering its stance on

the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, which is proscribed by the UK as a terrorist organization, and that the immediate future in Syria is "very uncertain."

HTS is also designated as a terrorist group by the United States, and its leader Abu Mohammed

al-Julani, has a long history of militancy, before breaking away from Al-Qaeda and seeking to rebrand it as a nationalist force. US officials are also considering removing the HTS from the US terrorist list, The Washington Post reported on Monday.

Iran open to talks, but will never be blackmailed: VP

International Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said Iran is open to negotiations and interaction with the Western countries, but will never be blackmailed.

Aref made the remark as he toured an exhibition of Iran's nuclear industry achievements held at the Atomic Energy Agency Organization (AEOO) on Monday.

He referred to recent "baseless remarks" about activating the snapback mechanism against Iran, saying that the Western countries

repeatedly threatened to activate the process and have seen Iran's reaction, especially during the tenure of US President Donald Trump, "but they themselves know that although we are open to negotiations, but we will never be blackmailed." Aref said that if the Western countries trigger the snapback mechanism that fully reinstates anti-Tehran sanctions that were lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal, they have practically moved toward the complete death of that agreement. The Iranian official also warned the Western

countries that the strategy of the Islamic Republic is "action for action." However, he said that the approach of the current government is constructive interaction and negotiation aimed at lifting the "cruel sanctions" reimposed by the West on Iran after the US withdrawal from the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He recommended that parties to the agreement return to full compliance with the deal, saying, "We have not withdrawn from the JCPOA, and if the other parties return

to the JCPOA, we are ready."

In 2015, Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the JCPOA with six world powers. However, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo.

In 2019, Iran started to scale back the limits it had accepted under the JCPOA after the other parties, especially the European ones, failed to live up to their commitments.

Egypt, Jordan rebuke Israel's takeover of Syrian territory



International Desk

Egypt and Jordan condemned Israel's takeover of the buffer zone with Syria after militants subverted the Damascus government following a surprise attack.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry said the Israeli move represented "occupation of Syrian land, and a severe breach of the two countries' 1974 disengagement agreement." It said Israel had "contravened international law, ex-

ploited the [current] state of fluidity and vacuum in Syria in order to occupy more Syrian land and to impose new facts on the ground in contravention of international law."

Egypt called on the UN Security Council and international powers to take a "firm position" towards "Israeli attacks" on Syria. Meanwhile, Jordan denounced Israel's decision to seize Syrian-held areas in a UN-patrolled buffer zone in the Golan Heights.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Sunday he had ordered the army to "seize" the demilitarized zone in the Syrian-controlled part

of the Golan Heights.

"We condemn the fact that Israel has entered Syrian territory and taken control of the buffer zone," Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told parliament.

Safadi, whose country borders the Golan Heights, called the move a "violation of international law." Most of the Golan Heights plateau has been occupied since 1967 by Israel, which later annexed it in a move not recognized by most of the international community.

In 1974 a buffer zone was established to separate the Israeli-held and Syrian territories, with UN peacekeepers stationed there.

World must stand up to end Israel's century-long genocide: FM spokeswoman

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said the world must stop the Israeli regime's horrific century-long genocide of Palestinians.

Baghaei made the remark in a post on his X account on Monday on the occasion of the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948, Press TV reported.

"It is high time that the int'l community stood up in support of humanity and put an end to this horrific century-long genocide," he said.

More than 44,700 Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been killed in the Israeli campaign of genocide that began on October 7, 2023 following Operation Al-Aqsa Flood by the Palestinian resistance movements.

The brutal military onslaught enjoys unreserved military and political support on the part of the Israeli regime's Western allies, including the United States and France.

Baghaei added that genocide is defined as a specific set of acts committed in order to destroy, in whole or in part, a na-

tional, ethnic, racial or religious group. He emphasized that the Israeli regime is carrying out a "textbook case of genocide" in occupied Palestine 76 years after the adoption of the convention that avowed "never again."

The Iranian spokesperson said, "Israel is predicated on the goal of Palestinian erasure; its entire political system is directed towards this goal" as Special Rapporteur for Palestine Francesca Albanese has outlined in her October 2024 report to Human Rights Council (A/79/384).

"In fact, genocide is part of a century-long project of eliminatory settler-colonialism in Palestine, a stain on the international system and humanity, which must be ended, investigated and prosecuted," Baghaei wrote.

He noted that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on January 26 ruled that Israel must stop genocide and take all measures to prevent any acts contrary to the Genocide Convention.

"The occupying regime has been defying all SIX ICJ's provisional measures and continuing its barbaric genocide," he added.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist





18th Cinéma Vérité kicks off With focus on bold, pro-Palestinian storytelling

Arts & Culture Desk

The 18th edition of the Iran International Documentary Film Festival, Cinéma Vérité, began, December 8, 2024, at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex. The festival aims to spotlight a new generation of documentary filmmakers, as stated by its secretary, Mohammad Hamidi-Moghadam, during the opening ceremony. Hamidi-Moghadam emphasized the festival's commitment to bold and demanding storytelling, asserting, "Cinéma Vérité has always been a seeker and a brave platform, never aiming for neutral documentary cinema." In a poignant tribute, he dedicated the festival to the people of Gaza, who have

faced relentless attacks for over a year. "We are starting this 18th edition with a film about these people, and I see ourselves alongside them," he remarked. He elaborated on the festival's role as an observer in a chaotic world, highlighting that it would showcase films reflecting the complex realities faced by people globally. This year's festival will run through December 15, Irandocfest.ir. Hamidi-Moghadam reiterated the festival's mission, stating, "We have not pursued neutral documentary cinema and have valued young filmmakers, resulting in the birth of a fresh generation whose works you will witness in this edition." He also acknowledged the contribu-

tions of veteran filmmakers, expressing gratitude for their enduring influence on Iranian documentary cinema. He assured attendees that the national section of this year's festival would present straightforward narratives. "We trust filmmakers to provide fair critiques. The works in this edition strive to shed light on our world," he added, expressing appreciation for the documentarians who have kept the spirit of this cinema alive. One of the festival's primary objectives is to draw attention from policymakers towards the significance of documentary filmmaking. In a message conveyed to the festival, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, praised Cinéma Vérité as a unique opportunity to

showcase diverse perspectives and narratives from documentary filmmakers. He noted, "Documentary cinema serves as a medium for presenting the truth and reflecting the world directly, playing an unparalleled role in enhancing our understanding of culture, history, and society." Salehi highlighted that the festival provides a platform for voices that often get lost in daily life, encouraging society to reflect on pressing domestic and international issues. "Cinéma Vérité symbolizes the valuable efforts of Iranian filmmakers in the documentary arena, acting as a bridge between audiences and the complex world we inhabit," he commented. He lauded the creativity, commitment,

and awareness of the documentary filmmakers participating in this year's festival, asserting that their works open new windows to the real world.



Tehran event blasts Israel's 'sheer savagery' toward children in Gaza, Lebanon

The Iranian capital has hosted an international artistic event held in support of children in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, who have been hit by more than a year of markedly intensified and deadly Israeli aggression, denouncing the regime's "sheer savagery" toward the minors. Titled 'We Do Not End,' the event went underway in Tehran on Monday, with senior officials, other personalities and experts in attendance, Press TV reported. The event was held in cooperation with more than a dozen people-based organizations, the national network of non-governmental humanitarian bodies, and Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young

Adults. Addressing the occasion, Gholam-Hossein Darzi, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Sustained Development and Environmental Department, noted that tens of thousands of people had been killed as a result of the Israeli regime's 14-month-old genocidal war on Gaza and escalation against Lebanon. He said that women and children comprised "more than 70 percent" of the fatalities. Darzi considered the Israeli atrocities that have been taking place in full view of members of the international community to be perfect examples of "genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity." The sheer extent of the casualties and destruction caused by the genocide in Gaza "serves as a clear indicator of a calculated conspiracy aimed at bringing about the destruction of a nation through causing its forced displacement from Palestine," the official said. "Besides amounting to an affront to humanity, the volume of savagery serves as complete disregard for [various] values, norms, civilizations, and the foundational principles of the international law, especially the humanitarian international law."



Severe water shortages in Tehran as rainfall plummets by 23%

Social Desk

As Iran faces a significant reduction in rainfall, with a noted 23% drop nationwide and only 20% capacity in Tehran's reservoirs, officials are urging immediate water management reforms to avert further crises. In a stark warning about the state of water resources in Iran, Isa Bozorgzadeh, spokesperson for the Water Industry, announced that rainfall has decreased by approximately 23% since the current water year began on September 22, 2023. He emphasized that Tehran's reservoirs are only 20% full, with the capital receiving just 48 millimeters of precipitation so far, falling short of the normal 58 millimeters by 17%. During a televised report, Bozorgzadeh stated, "We are experiencing a dry autumn," and emphasized that the current national rainfall stands at about 35 millimeters, which is significantly lower than typical averages for this time of year. He further explained that Iran's average water resources are about one-third of the global average, which presents unique challenges for the

country, particularly in urban areas like Tehran that also depend on surrounding regions for their water supply. The spokesperson provided a broader overview of the national water situation, noting that this year's reservoirs have received 3.70 billion cubic meters of water, a 2% decrease from the same period last year. He pointed out that the total water volume in the country's reservoirs currently stands at 22.66 billion cubic meters, reflecting a 12% improvement compared to last year's figures. In Tehran specifically, the five main reservoirs collectively hold around 373 million cubic meters of water, with individual capacities reported as follows: The Amir Kabir Dam holds 63 million cubic meters (35% full), the Latiyan Dam holds 25 million cubic meters (34% full), the Lar Dam has 24 million cubic meters (3% full), the Taleqan Dam contains 239 million cubic meters (54% full), and the Mamlou Dam has 34 million cubic meters (14% full). Bozorgzadeh stressed the urgent need for improved water consumption management, stating, "We are

facing a water crisis in Tehran... If we do not manage our consumption, we could harm public welfare." He reiterated the importance of reducing groundwater extraction to prevent further degradation of water sources, warning that unchecked usage could lead to increased desertification and land subsidence. In alignment with these challenges, Bozorgzadeh outlined the Ministry of Energy's plans to reform water governance through institutional changes and enhanced community participation. He stated, "We must reduce the role of government in water management," advocating for a shift towards empowering local water organizations and the private sector. Moreover, Mohsen Ardakani, managing director of Tehran Water and Wastewater Company, echoed these concerns at a conference evaluating the performance of water-related companies in the region. He noted the unprecedented drought conditions over the past five years and highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts among staff to navigate the ongoing water crisis.

Opportunities lie hidden...

Regarding the international and regional situation arising from these developments, Iran is closely monitoring the conditions and changes taking place in Syria. Based on how the situation evolves, Iran will act in the interest of the people, the system, and the country. Iran will continue on its path based on its fundamental principles and strategies, which it

has consistently articulated and adhered to. Similar events have occurred in the past, and this situation will also pass soon. However, Iran assures that no aspect of these developments can pose a threat to Iran. When we review Iran's previous experiences over the past 45 years since the victory of the Islamic Revolution and examine events similar to the recent changes in Syria, we find that

Iran has consistently made the best decisions and continued on the most favorable path. Our national hero, General Qasem Soleimani, famously stated, "Sometimes, within threats lie opportunities that do not exist within opportunities themselves." Therefore, be assured that in the developments that have occurred in Syria, Iran will make the best decisions. If some enemies believe that the current situation in

Syria poses a threat to Iran and may cause harm, they are mistaken; they are far too small to be considered a threat to us. Our enemies have experienced Iran's strength during the eight years of the Sacred Defense (1980-1988), and they have tested Iran's heroes and defenders in various arenas. They have realized that when Iran's name and its interests and security are at stake, Iranians stand firm with

all their might. Hence, I emphasize that Iran's power will neutralize any threat, and the dignity and pride of Iranians will not allow any movement from enemies that could inflict even the slightest harm to the people and the country. During the eight-year war, it was universally acknowledged that the entire world, including Western and European countries, supported Saddam's re-

gime, while Iran relied solely on its brave and valiant youths. Despite having minimal military resources, we achieved a significant victory. Today, however, the situation is entirely different, and Iran possesses the most advanced military equipment. We have substantial experience in defensive technologies and military training, and day by day, Iran's dignity and power will continue to grow.