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Dam levels reach critical lows Iran faces severe water crisis as reservoir supplies plummet

Social Desk

Iran is staring down the barrel of a severe water crisis as reservoirs across the country continue to dry up amid a staggering drop in rainfall, officials warn. With water reserves running dangerously low, experts say the country is teetering on the edge of an emergency that could wreak havoc on agriculture, industry, and daily life.

According to Isa Bozorgzadeh, spokesperson for Iran's water industry, rainfall in the current water year has nosedived 41% below the long-term average and 21% lower than last year's levels. The Ministry of Energy reports that precipitation from early October to mid-March has barely reached 93.8 millimeters, a dramatic shortfall from the 157.8 millimeter average.

"This drop in precipitation has had a direct impact on our reservoirs," Bozorgzadeh added. "Water inflow into dams has plummeted 33% compared to last year, while stored reserves have shrunk by 7% to 22.09 billion cubic meters." Tehran, home to over nine million people, is feeling the pinch. Images circulating on social media in recent weeks show alarmingly low water levels in the city's key reservoirs.

The National Water and Wastewater Engineering Company of Iran (Abfa) recently revealed that Tehran's water consumption has surged by 20%, reaching an unprecedented 48,000 liters per second due to seasonal demand spikes ahead of Nowruz and Ramadan.

"This year marks the lowest precipitation levels in the past 57 years," said Iran's Deputy Energy Minister for Water Affairs Mohammad Javanbakht.

The Lar, Lalyan, Mamlu, and Karaj dams, which are vital for Tehran's water supply, have been hit hard by a 47% decline in rainfall, leading to what officials call a "drastic reduction" in their reserves.

The figures paint a grim picture. In December, the Karaj Dam was 35% full, while the Lar Dam was at a mere 3% capacity. Fast forward three months, and these numbers have taken a nosedive: Karaj is now down to just 7% capacity, while Lar is teetering on the brink at 1%. The Lalyan and Mamlu dams are also struggling, holding only 12% of their potential storage.

"The situation at Karaj Dam is unprecedented in its entire history of operation," Javanbakht warned, adding that some of the remaining reserves are part of the "dead volume" that cannot be easily accessed for consumption.

Across Iran, other major reservoirs are also running on fumes. The Zayandehrud Dam, a crucial source of water for Isfahan Province, is operating at just 13% of its five-year average.

While authorities attribute the crisis to climate change and prolonged drought, experts argue that poor water management is fanning the flames. Firouz Qasemzadeh, another spokesman for Iran's water industry, confirmed that eight provinces have seen rainfall drop by more than 50%, warning that many key reservoirs have reached dangerously low levels.

As the summer months approach, officials are bracing for worsening water stress. If rainfall doesn't pick up, water rationing could be on the table. Experts are calling for urgent action, including better conservation practices, stricter consumption regulations, and smarter agricultural policies.

"This crisis has been years in the making, and unless we change our approach, it will only get worse," said a senior water industry official. With Tehran's population growing by 2-2.5% annually and no new water sources in sight, authorities face an uphill battle to keep the taps running in the capital and beyond.



Tehran to host Picasso exhibition

Arts & Culture Desk

An exhibition featuring works from various periods of Pablo Picasso's career, including his renowned 'La Tauromaquia' (The Art of Bullfighting) series, will open on March 11 at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA).

According to a statement from TMOCA, more than 60 works by the legendary Spanish artist will be displayed, spanning different phases of his artistic journey. Among them are 12 aquatint prints from the 'La Tauromaquia' series, alongside several of Picasso's most significant pieces, IRNA reported.

In addition to Picasso's works, the exhibition will feature pieces by Iranian artists whose styles or themes resonate with his artistic legacy.

The 'La Tauromaquia' collection consists of 26 aquatint prints, originally published as a portfolio in an edition of 261. The series is housed in major museums worldwide, including the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.

Other notable Picasso works on display from TMOCA's collection include 'The Painter and His Model,' 'An Open Window on Rue Penhièvre,' 'Baboon and Young,' and multiple versions of 'Weeping Woman'.

The exhibition will also showcase works by renowned Iranian artists such as Bahram Dabiri, Bahman Mohasses, Jalil Ziapour, Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam, Mohammad Ali Shiva (Kako), Garnik Der Hacopian, Hannibal Alkhas, and Parvaneh Etemadi. Also, pieces by international artists including Georges Braque, Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, František Kupka, and Joan Miró will be on display. Visitors can attend the exhibition until May 21 except on Mondays.

Deep dive into ...

The emergence of these resistance forces has added another layer of complexity to Syria's already fragile power dynamics, raising the odds of fresh conflicts on the horizon.

Key battlegrounds in Alawites' armed resistance

Amid the unfolding crisis, the remarks of Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei carry particular weight. He has repeatedly warned against policies that sow division and tear societies apart, emphasizing the importance of national unity and cohesion. Drawing on Syria's experience, Ayatollah Khamenei has stressed that neglecting these principles and disregarding minority rights could pave the way for serious crises and foreign intervention. In a stark warning, he once stated: "Some countries, if they make a grave mistake and push their devout young people out of the scene, will end up just like Syria." His words serve as a wake-up call to all nations—especially those with diverse ethnic and religious demographics—urging them to steer clear of divisive policies and

ensure that all groups have a stake in governance.

It is clear that the emergence of the Alawite resistance in Syria could trigger far-reaching strategic consequences. First and foremost, it could fan the flames of conflict and deepen instability. Should another full-blown civil war erupt, Syria would sink even deeper into chaos, with devastating repercussions for its people. Secondly, the resistance could shake up the balance of power in the region. If foreign powers throw their weight behind the various factions, Syria will once again turn into a battleground for regional and global rivalries, dragging the entire Middle East into a fresh wave of turmoil. This, in turn, could set off a domino effect of rising tensions and prolonged instability across the region.

Moreover, Israel is likely to exploit the situation to divert attention and clamp down on the Alawite population while consolidating its foothold in southern Syria and pushing for the fragmentation of Druze-majority areas. A renewed civil war would provide a golden opportunity for terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda to stage

a comeback. These organizations will waste no time in capitalizing on the power vacuum, posing a grave threat to the security and stability of the entire region.

In this volatile climate, finding a way out of the Syrian crisis is more urgent than ever. Any viable solution must rest on a few fundamental principles. First, Syria's territorial integrity and national sovereignty must remain intact. Any attempt to carve up the country will only fuel further bloodshed and deepen the crisis. Second, the rights of all ethnic and religious groups must be safeguarded by the new rulers. Any form of discrimination or persecution will only set the stage for another cycle of violence. Third, foreign meddling—particularly Turkey and Israel's destabilizing interventions—must be kept in check. Any interference from these actors will only prolong the conflict and crush any hopes for long-term stability.

Fourth, efforts must be ramped up to prevent extremist and terrorist groups from regaining a foothold in Syria. If left unchecked, they will drag the country—and the wider region—into

another dark chapter of destruction. Lastly, a broad-based political process must be initiated, one that includes all Syrian factions, even Ba'ath Party loyalists, to ensure that no group feels sidelined from the country's political landscape. This process should pave the way for an inclusive government and the drafting of a new constitution that guarantees the rights of all Syrians, regardless of their ethnicity or faith.

Iran's role in shaping the trajectory of the developments is crucial. As a long-time ally of the Syrian people, Iran has made considerable sacrifices in its bid to uphold stability in the country. It is well-positioned to leverage its influence over various Syrian factions to push for a comprehensive political settlement. Furthermore, through collaboration with regional and international players, Iran can put its expertise and potential to use in the fight against terrorism and extremism in Syria.

It is worth reiterating that Ayatollah Khamenei has consistently underscored the need to preserve Syria's unity and territorial integrity while standing by its people. In a powerful

statement, he declared: "Those who have violated the land of the Syrian people will one day be forced to retreat by the strength of Syria's courageous youth. Without a doubt, this will happen."

As Syria enters a new chapter of its troubled history, it finds itself at a crossroads, facing an even more intricate web of challenges. The recent bloodshed targeting Alawites in the coastal regions has not only further complicated the power dynamics within the country but has also unmasked the true face of certain so-called human rights advocates.

In these circumstances, the Syrian people have a chance to take a hard look at who their true friends and foes really are. This crisis has laid bare the reality that those who, in recent months, have paid lip service to their so-called friendship with Syria see the country as nothing more than a means to advance their own interests. When it comes to securing their gains, they have shown no hesitation in fueling Syria's fragmentation or turning a blind eye to the bloodshed of its people.