

Iran Says the Upholding of a Swedish Court's Sentence Against Hamid Nouri Is a Blatant Act of Injustice and Cruelty Against the Former Iranian Judiciary Official Who Has Been Illegally Incarcerated in Sweden Since 2019

# IRAN NEWS

Highlighting the Importance That Iran Attaches to Relations With Libya, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Said the Cooperation Between the Two Muslim Nations Are on the Right Track and Can Develop in Various Fields, Such as the Health Sector

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### MPs Approve General Outlines of National Budget Bill



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - The Iranian parliament approved the general outlines of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1403, which starts on March 20, 2024, IRNA reported. During an open session of Majlis (Iranian parliament) on Wednesday, the national budget bill for the next year was put to a vote and 154 MPs out of 222 MPs who were present voted in favor of it and the generalities of the bill were approved. President Ebrahim Raisi submitted the national budget bill for the next Iranian year to the Majlis on December 5. The proposed budget for the next year amounts to about 54.18 quadrillion rials (about \$108.36 billion at the free market rate of 500,000 rials), with an 18 percent rise from the current year's budget. The bill has estimated the government's budget at 24.29 quadrillion rials (about \$48.58 billion). Public resources are estimated at 14.95 quadrillion rials (about \$29.9 billion). The crude oil income is predicted to be 5.54 quadrillion rials (about \$11.08 billion), and oil sales are estimated at 1.35 million barrels per day at an average price of €65. Like the current year's budget, the next year's proposed budget requires the government to pay 40 percent of its oil, gas, and gas condensate revenues to the National Development Fund (NDF). Tax revenues are predicted to be 11.22 quadrillion rials (about \$22.44 billion) which is 49.8 percent more than the figure for the current year's budget bill. The data provided in next year's budget bill indicate that the government is taking major steps to distance the economy from oil, as a big portion of the income is set to be gained from sources other than oil and gas. Oil incomes in the next year's budget bill are estimated to be 6.2 percent less than the ceiling allowed in the budget law, accounting for only 22.8 percent of the total incomes. On the other hand, the share of tax revenues is twice the revenues from oil and gas sales, which means changing the budget approach from oil revenues to sustainable revenues.

### Malaysia Blocks Israeli Shipping Firm Over Gaza Atrocities



KUA:ALUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia announced the blockade of the Israeli shipping firm ZIM Integrated Shipping Services from accessing its ports, a symbolic yet significant move reflecting mounting frustration over the Gaza atrocities. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim declared the prohibition of Israeli cargo ships from docking at Malaysian ports and restricted vessels bound for occupied Palestine from loading cargo in the Southeast Asian nation. The decision extends to all ships en route to occupied Palestine. Anwar explicitly targeted Israel's prominent shipping company, ZIM, revoking the previous authorization granted in 2002 for ZIM vessels to dock at Malaysian ports. The Prime Minister cited the Israeli regime's disregard for humanitarian principles and violations of international law as the catalyst for these measures. The Malaysian government firmly stated, "These sanctions respond to Israel's actions, defying fundamental humanitarian principles and breaching international law in the continuous brutal treatment and massacres of Palestinians." Malaysia, maintaining no diplomatic relations with the Israeli regime, took this stance amid Tel Aviv's extensive bombardment and ground invasion in Gaza, resulting in a reported death toll of nearly 20,000, predominantly comprising women and children. As international calls for a renewed ceasefire amplify to facilitate aid to Gaza, the United Nations plans to vote on a ceasefire proposal, anticipating heightened relief efforts for the besieged Palestinian territory.



### Resistance Stands Strong, Resolute as Israel Says Ready for Ceasefire

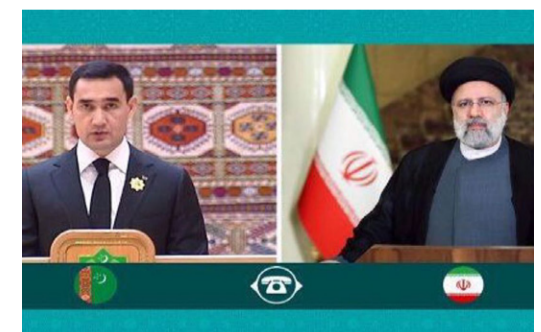
TEHRAN (PressTV) - The head of Hamas' political bureau says the Palestinian resistance stands "firm on the battlefield" despite two and a half months of Israeli war crimes in the besieged Gaza Strip. In a meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in the Qatari capital Doha on Wednesday, Ismail Haniyeh said the volume of the Israeli military's aerial, naval, and ground attacks on the besieged Gaza has been unprecedented. "The Zionist regime and its allies thought that they could eliminate the resistance this way and force it to raise the white flag," he noted. "The resistance, however, has still stood firm and steadfast on the battlefield and inflicted heavy damage on the Zionist regime after 75 days of Israeli crimes and mass murders as part of its scorched-earth policy." Haniyeh also hailed the Palestinian nation for showing unique resilience and standing by the resistance while paying a heavy price for their position. The Palestinian nation still continues the path of resistance in spite of the fact that Israel has killed and injured tens of thousands of people in Gaza, destroyed hundreds of houses, attacked hospitals and blocked the entry of humanitarian aid into the blockaded territory, he emphasized. The Hamas chief further thanked Amir-Abdollahian for following up on the developments in Gaza, saying the top Iranian diplomat has made four visits to Qatar since the beginning of the war. Amir-Abdollahian, for his part, stressed that Iran will continue its diplomatic efforts to support "the oppressed but powerful and patient Palestinian nation" in an attempt to end Israel's criminal aggression and siege on Gaza and counter imposed pro-Israeli political schemes. "Today, no one has doubts that the resistance and the Palestinian nation have proven their power and resolve in the face of the Zionist regime's killing machine despite enduring a lot of pain and suffering and sacrificing more than 20,000 martyrs in the past 75 days," he said. The Iranian foreign minister also condemned the United States' "all-out and unrestricted" support for Israel in the Gaza war, urging Washington to stop its futile sponsorship of Tel Aviv's "insane military strategy" as soon as possible. Highlighting the US's bewilderment at its strategy about the crisis in Gaza, he said, "All those at the White House believe that the Zionist regime must be victorious in the field. Now, however, they are seeking to get out of this war with dignity through a political method and save the Israeli regime from its failure of strategy given the realities on the field and the resilience of the resistance and the Palestinian people." Haniyeh went to the Egyptian capital Cairo on Wednesday for talks on a ceasefire in Gaza and a prisoner exchange. Haniyeh arrived "in Cairo to hold discussions with Egyptian officials over the developments of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and other matters", Hamas said in a statement. He earlier said, "There is no way for negotiations under Israel's attacks." Meanwhile Amir-Abdollahian met and held talks with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani in Doha on Wednesday. Reviewing the latest regional developments including the situation of Palestine with the Qatari officials is on the agenda of the Iranian foreign minister during his stay in Doha. Holding talks on finding ways to cease the crisis in Gaza is also among the plans of the Doha visit.

### Iran Condemns Swedish Verdict Against Nouri



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's Foreign Ministry has vehemently condemned as "fundamentally unacceptable" a Swedish court's verdict against Hamid Nouri, a former Iranian judiciary official who has been illegally incarcerated in Sweden. The Stockholm Court of Appeals on Tuesday upheld a controversial life sentence for 62-year-old Nouri, who was arrested in 2019 under unfounded allegations of rights abuse and for what was claimed to be his alleged role in the death of prisoners in Iran in the 1980s. "The Islamic Republic of Iran regards the primary and appeals court's verdict concerning Iranian citizen Hamid Nouri to be fundamentally unacceptable and strongly condemns it," said Nasser Kanaani, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesman. "It is regrettable that the Swedish court, disregarding the standards of a fair trial, has moved to issue such a destructive verdict." Kanaani underlined that Sweden had sided with anti-Iran terrorist groups by such a ruling and has jeopardized Tehran-Stockholm relations. "Unfortunately, Sweden's judicial system, by siding with the terrorist groups that have been engaged in the most heinous terrorist and inhumane acts against the people of Iran, Iraq, and even Europe for decades, has endangered the interests of the two nations as well as the old, historical and deep-rooted relations between the two countries," Kanaani said. "In light of its inherent duties in defending the rights of its citizens, the Islamic Republic of Iran has used all legal capacities and facilities to free the said citizen from the grips of injustice and will continue its efforts until the full fulfillment of the rights of its citizens," he added. The Foreign Ministry's spokesman also stressed that the Islamic Republic reserves the right to take "appropriate" steps in that regard. Nouri was arrested upon arrival at Stockholm Airport in November 2019 and was immediately imprisoned. He was put on trial on unfounded allegations staged against him by elements representing the Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist group that has openly boasted about carrying out terrorist operations against Iranian officials and civilians perceived to be supporters of the government.

### Entire World Enraged by Israel, U.S. Atrocities in Gaza



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's president says the entire world has been enraged by the Israeli regime and the United States' atrocities against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Ebrahim Raisi made the remarks in a Tuesday phone call with his Turkmen counterpart Sardar Bardimohamedov. The Iranian chief executive denounced "what is being afflicted on the oppressed people of Gaza in terms of oppression and crime, by the Zionist regime and the US." The atrocities, he added, "have deeply affected and enraged not only all the world's Muslims, but only the entire people of the world." The Iranian president emphasized the need to use all available capacities towards providing assistance to the oppressed people of Gaza. The remarks came amid an ongoing war that the Israeli regime has been waging against the Gaza Strip since October 7 in response to an operation staged by the territory's resistance movements. Close to 20,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have died during the military campaign so far. Elsewhere in his remarks, Raisi expressed satisfaction with the "remarkable" growth of Iran and Turkmenistan's ties, especially in the field of trade. He stressed the need for implementation of the important agreements that had been reached in the fields of energy, transportation, and transit during the most recent meeting of the countries' joint economic commission. For his part, the Turkmen official also expressed contentment with the growing trend of the countries' ties in various political, economic, and cultural fields. Bardimohamedov expressed readiness on the part of Ashkhabad for expansion of the level of cooperation between the countries and implementation of bilateral agreements.

### Foreign Ministry Refutes UNGA's Anti-Iran Human Rights Resolution

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned a resolution that the UN General Assembly has passed about the human rights situation in Iran, saying it is based on brazen double standards and illegitimate political objectives. Nasser Kanaani made the comments in a statement on Wednesday, days after a resolution dubbed "Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran" was adopted by 80 in favor, 29 against, and 65 abstentions in the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. The anti-Iranian resolution on human rights is a clear example of double standards and the instrumental employment of human rights for the achievement of illegitimate political objectives, the spokesman said. He said the resolution has been put forward by certain Western governments that have shut their eyes to the Zionist regime's war crimes and genocide in Gaza and the West Bank and are overtly providing unlimited support for the criminal Israeli regime. The irony is that the Zionist regime is one of the initiators of the anti-Iranian resolution, he added. The fact

that the usurping Zionist regime has been involved in the initiation and adoption of the resolution against Iran amounts to a "major political and moral scandal" for the Western initiators of the resolution and indicates that the valuable concept of human rights has been rendered worthless and the international organizations have been devoid of their raison d'être, Kanaani underlined. The resolution lacks legitimacy and is totally rejected, the spokesman stated, adding, "The countries that have a long record of systematic violation of human rights and of whose anti-human measures the world people have bitter and stinging experiences are in no position to advise the Iranian government and people on human rights." He further noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran is founded upon religious democracy, is serious about promoting human rights and honoring its international commitments, and is prepared for constructive dialogue and cooperation on the promotion of human rights in the world within the framework of mutual respect, equality, fairness, and rejection of political purposes.



# IRAN NEWS



## Over 4m Tourists Have Traveled to Iran in 8 Months

TEHRAN (IP) - Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said that the number of tourists in the first 8 months of the current Iranian year (starting from March 20, 2023,) was 4.4 million people, which has increased by 48.5% compared to last year. During the weekly cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Ezzatullah Zarghani mentioned that despite expectations of a decrease in tourism after last year's protests, the number of tourists increased. He stated that in one of today's cabinet resolutions, 211 historical objects, related to periods before and after Islam, have been permitted to be transferred to China. These objects will be on display in an exhibition named "Glory of Pars" in Beijing for a duration of six months.

## Annual Rail Transit Expected to Set New Record



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran's rail transit is going to set a new record in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2024), according to the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI). Miad Salehi said the rail transit through the country registered a five percent hike in the first five months of the current calendar year (March 21-August 22) compared to the same period last year. Speaking in a news briefing on the sidelines of the seventh edition of Iran International Exhibition of Transportation, Logistics and Related Industries dubbed, Salehi pointed out that 21.6 million passengers were transported in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21) through the rail transportation network, also showing a 10 percent hike compared to the last year's corresponding period. It is expected that 30 million passengers will be transported in the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year, which will be another record in the history of the railway company, he stated. The deputy Transport Minister also pointed to the memorandums of understanding (MoUs) inked with the partners and neighboring states including Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Turkey and stated that a part of these agreements will become operational in early 2024. Salehi also mentioned the high quality of Iran-made freight wagons and noted that the country could export such wagons to other countries. "We do not have any problems in the production of freight wagons, and good facilities are equipped in the country and due to the good quality of domestically produced wagons, there is a possibility of export," the official said. According to Salehi, production of freight wagons has increased by 48 percent in the current year and the production of new freight locomotives has also grown by 92 percent.

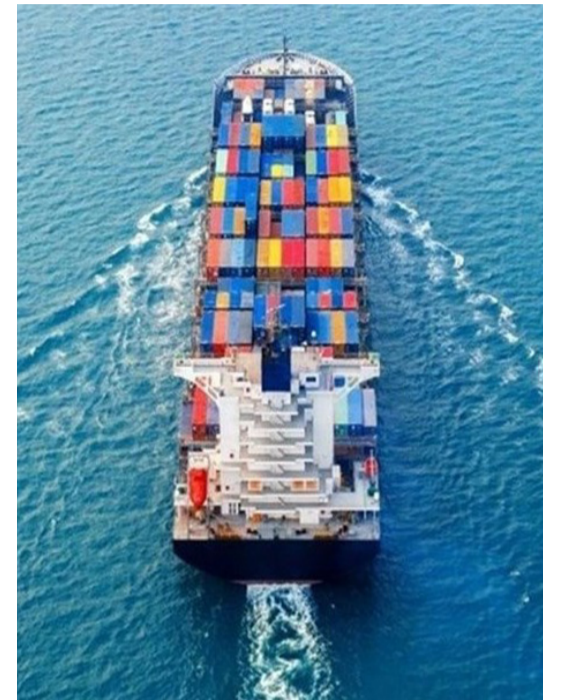


## Gaza War Not Only Rights Violation, But Obliteration of Mankind

TEHRAN (PressTV) - What is happening in Gaza is an "annihilation of human existence" enabled by Washington despite its claim to champion human rights across the globe, says Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs. Ali Bagheri Kani said in an interview with Japan's public broadcaster NHK on Tuesday that the Americans can no longer claim to be "advocates of human rights" whatsoever given their support for the brutal Israeli war. "The Americans claim to advocate human rights but what is happening in Gaza today is not just a violation of human rights but annihilation of human existence," he said. "Therefore, the Americans can no longer claim to be advocates of human rights anywhere in the world." "What we are witnessing in Gaza today is a full-scale genocide and a blatant crime against humanity. Israel has not launched an assault on any military targets in Gaza because there are no military targets there." He further said Israel's targets in Gaza are either people's houses, educational places, people's places of worship, or hospitals. "That is why a significant number of the dead are women and children," Bagheri Kani added. Israel waged the brutal war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas-led Palestinian resistance groups carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. Further expounding on the US role in the devastating war, Bagheri Kani said Washington's support for

Tel Aviv is an important factor in encouraging the occupying regime to continue and intensify its crimes in Gaza. The Iranian diplomat also said other countries, including Japan, can stop the continuation of Israel's crimes against the people of Gaza by exerting pressure on the US and the occupying entity, adding, "Among such measures can be a revision of the political and economic relations with the Israeli regime." Also in a meeting with Japanese experts and thinkers at the Islamic Republic's Embassy in Tokyo, Bagheri Kani pointed to the US unilateralism as an impediment to the establishment of justice across the world, and rebuked Washington's concern about its own interests. "In the current situation where the Americans dominate the world with unilateralism, they do not allow justice to be established in the world. From Iran's perspective, 'rights-centeredness' is a very important keyword in the foundation of international relations, but the Americans do not accept this principle," he said. "They see everything through the lens of their interests. Therefore, they do not acknowledge any rights for any player in the international scene and they regard shares for others based on their interests," he added. Bagheri Kani also underlined that the United States' "share-centeredness" approach in international relations cannot create lasting stability, as opposed to Iran's "rights-centeredness" approach, which brings about multilateralism and stability.

## Iran's Sea Trade Up 8.5% in 8 Months



TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The chief executive of the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced an 8.5 percent growth in the country's sea trade in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21 to November 22, 2023). The organization has decided to invest \$200 million for the development of the maritime fleet of the country in the Caspian Sea, Ali Akbar Safaei stated at the Conference of Sea-Based Development, which commemorated the National Port and Maritime Transport Day. He added that giant steps have been taken in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi for materializing most of the objectives of the organization in the ports and maritime sector. The deputy roads minister said Iran's sea trade in the non-oil shipment sector registered an 8.5 percent hike from March 21 to November 22, 2023, compared to last year's corresponding period. Some 50 million tons of commodities have been loaded and unloaded at ports of the country in two years, Safaei further stated.



## Oil Industry Self-Sufficiency Possible by Relying on Knowledge-Based Firms

TEHRAN (Shana) - The Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) head on Tuesday said Iran's oil industry has been targeted by arrogant powers and Western countries' sanctions since the past and the only way to attain self-sufficiency is to rely on domestic knowledge-based companies and research centers. Azim Kalantari-Asl, who made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the 2nd Exhibition and Conference of Technology Management and Increasing Knowledge-based Production in Value Chain of Petroleum Industry dubbed Petro Tech, added the event offers participants a favorable opportunity to get familiar with knowledge-based companies' capabilities. According to him, 22 specialized sessions have been organized today with the aim of beating off technological challenges facing the oil industry. Kalantari-Asl, who is also the 2nd Petro Tech conference and exhibition executive secretary, said several contracts and tens of agreements will be signed during the three-day event. The side exhibition has 120 booths showcasing the knowledge-based companies' achievements free of charge, he continued. The 1st Petro Tech conference and exhibition was held in November 2022.

## Book "Isfahan, City of Polish Children" Unveiled

TEHRAN - On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of arrival of Polish refugees in Iran and in a ceremony which was held in Shahr-e Ketab (Book City) of Isfahan, the translated version of the book "Isfahan, City of Polish Children (Isfahan, Miasto Polskich Dzieci)" was unveiled on Tuesday, December 5. The event was held in the presence of Ambassador of Poland to Iran Mr. Maciej Falkowski, First Secretary and Head of Public Diplomacy of the embassy R. Balkiewicz and translator of the book Ms. Haniwh Mehremotlagh as well as translator and author Neda Torabi. The book has been written by famous Polish writer Irena Stankiewicz and it is one of her works on the World War

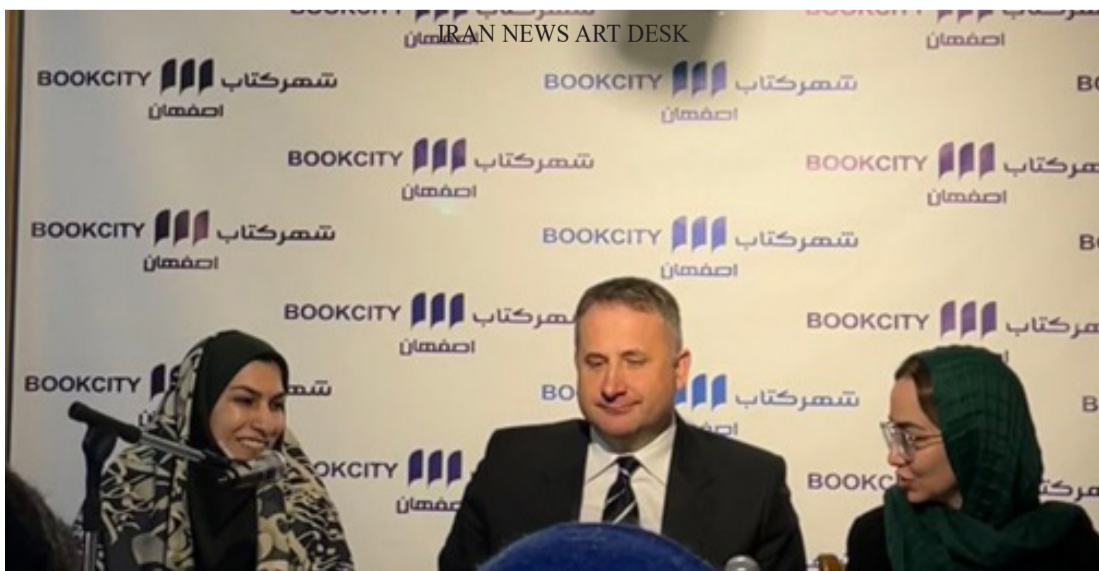


II and now it has been translated in Persian by Ms. Mehremotlagh and published by Negarestan-e Andishe Publication. The book covers the time span between 1942 and 1945 during the World War II when some 10,000 Polish refugees took shelter in Iran and some of them mainly around 2600 children took shelter in Isfahan and after three years they left Iran but some of the refugees even got married in the city. The Polish refugees took shelters in different countries after the Soviet Union attack and around 10,000 arrived in Iran where numerous schools were set up to teach the children the Polish language, maths and other standard subjects.

## Iran Successfully Loads Radiation Source at Tehran Facility



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran has successfully loaded the radiation source at the Tehran Gamma Irradiation Facility in a move that will help significantly cut the time needed to irradiate medical items, the country's nuclear chief has announced. "The reloading and recharging of Tehran's Gamma system initially have the impact of reducing the time required for irradiating medical items to two and a half minutes," Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said on Tuesday. This will in turn boost efficiency by more than four times, he added. Eslami explained that irradiation of medical consumables is a standard requirement to ensure their safety within the healthcare sector. He pointed out that the Tehran Gamma Irradiation Facility plays a major role in this respect, providing services to the country's healthcare system round the clock.



### Trump Barred From Colorado Ballot for Role in Attack on U.S. Capitol

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Former president Donald Trump cannot appear on the ballot in Colorado in next year's presidential election due to his role in the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by his supporters, the state's top court ruled yesterday in a historic judgment that is likely to find its way to the US Supreme Court. The 4-3 ruling from the Colorado Supreme Court makes Trump the first presidential candidate in U.S. history to be deemed ineligible for the White House under a rarely used provision of the U.S. Constitution that bars officials who have engaged in "insurrection or rebellion" from holding office. The court concluded that the U.S. Constitution bars the frontrunner for the Republican nomination in 2024 from appearing on the ballot because of his role instigating violence against the U.S. government. "We do not reach these conclusions lightly," the majority justices wrote. "We are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us. We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach."



### Erdogan Says EU Will Stall Ukraine, Moldova Accession



ANKARA (Dispatches) - Türkiye President Tayyip Erdogan was cited as saying the European Union would stall Ukraine and Moldova's accession to the EU, adding that Ankara had long earned the right to join the bloc but was being kept waiting for political reasons. EU leaders agreed last week to open talks with Ukraine even as it continues to fight Russia's invasion, while also starting talks with Moldova. But the bloc could not agree on a 50 billion euro package of financial aid for Kyiv due to opposition from Hungary. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy hailed the move as a "victory" for Ukraine and the European continent. Speaking to reporters on a flight back from Hungary, Erdogan said Türkiye, which has been an EU candidate since 2005, had long earned the right to join the bloc but had been stalled over what he called political obstacles. "Giving them candidate status does not mean they will become EU members. A process will start with them, they will be stalled too. None of these countries are a Turkey," Erdogan was cited as saying by his office. "It is wrong for Turkey, which is more ready to join the EU than some member states, to be kept waiting at the door for years due to political obstacles," he added. Türkiye's bid to join the EU has been frozen for years due to EU concerns over Turkey's record on human rights and differences over regional policies, namely in the eastern Mediterranean and over the ethnically-split island of Cyprus. The bloc depends on NATO member Turkey's help, particularly on migration. Although membership would likely be years away, the decision at a summit in Brussels takes Ukraine a step closer to its long-term strategic goal of anchoring itself in the West and freeing itself from Moscow's orbit. Erdogan said Türkiye's "strategic and economic" potential had long earned it the right to join the bloc - which Ankara says is a strategic goal - and added that progress might be seen in this process during the term presidency of Hungary, with which Turkey has good ties. "The EU needs to turn back from this mistake now," he said, according to his office.



### Israel Battles Hamas in Gaza as UN Delays Vote Again

GAZA (Dispatches) - Israeli troops and Hamas militants fought fierce gunbattles on the streets of Gaza's second-biggest city on Wednesday as the United Nations delayed a vote on a bid to boost aid deliveries to the Palestinian enclave facing a humanitarian disaster. Israel's campaign to eradicate Hamas militants behind an Oct. 7 massacre has left the coastal enclave in ruins, brought widespread hunger and homelessness, and killed nearly 20,000 Gazans, according to the Palestinian enclave's health ministry. Under foreign pressure to avoid killing innocents, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the war will not stop until Iran-backed Hamas releases the remaining 129 hostages it is holding in Gaza and the Islamist group is obliterated. A United Nations Security Council vote to set up aid deliveries was delayed by another day on Tuesday as talks continue to try and avoid a third U.S. veto of action over the two-month long Israel-Hamas war. The 15-member council was initially going to vote on a resolution - drafted by the United Arab Emirates - on Monday. But it has repeatedly been delayed as diplomats say the UAE and the U.S. struggle to agree language citing a cessation of hostilities and a proposal to set up U.N. aid monitoring. When asked if they were getting close to an agreement, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters on Tuesday: "We're trying, we really are." The conflict has spread beyond Gaza, including into the Red Sea where Houthi forces based in Yemen have been attacking commercial vessels with missiles and drones, prompting the creation of a multinational naval operation to protect trade routes. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in Bahrain that joint naval patrols would be held in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which encompass a major East-West global shipping route. "This is an international challenge that demands collective action," Austin said. British maritime security firm Ambrey said on Tuesday it received information of an unsuccessful boarding attempt west of Yemen's Aden port city. Some shippers are re-routing around Africa. The Houthis said they would carry on attacking commercial shipping in the vital trade

route, possibly with a sea operation every 12 hours. "Our position in support of Palestine and the Gaza Strip will remain until the end of the siege, the entry of food and medicine, and our support for the oppressed Palestinian people will remain continuous," Houthi official Mohammed Abulsalam told Reuters, saying only Israeli ships or those going to Israel would be targeted. In Gaza, residents of Khan Younis on Wednesday reported intensifying gun battles between Hamas fighters and Israeli forces in the centre and eastern districts of the southern city. Gaza health officials said 12 Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike on a house in the city. Israel has lost 132 soldiers in the fighting inside Gaza since it invaded the territory in response to the Oct. 7 raid by Hamas that Israel says killed 1,200 people and saw 240 people taken hostage. The Al Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, released a video of two male Israeli hostages who identified themselves as Gadi Moses and Elad Katzir. The Gaza health ministry said on Tuesday that 19,667 Palestinians had been killed and 52,586 wounded in the war. The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA said more than 60% of Gaza's infrastructure had been destroyed or damaged and more than 90% of the 2.3 million population uprooted. Israeli President Isaac Herzog signalled readiness on the part of the country on Tuesday to enter another foreign-mediated "humanitarian pause" in fighting to recover more hostages held by Hamas and enable more aid to reach Gaza. A truce in late November mediated by Qatari and U.S. diplomats lasted for a week before collapsing and yielded the release of 110 hostages in exchange for 240 Palestinian women and children from Israeli prisons. Basem Naem, a senior Hamas official based outside Gaza, ruled out further negotiations on exchanging prisoners while the war continued. A source briefed on diplomatic efforts told Reuters on Tuesday that Qatar's prime minister and the heads of the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services had held "positive" talks in Warsaw to explore ways of reviving negotiations. But a deal was not expected imminently, the source added.

### Russia Tells Finland It Will Respond to Defense Pact With U.S.



MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia summoned Finland's ambassador on Tuesday to object to a new defense agreement granting the United States broad access to the vicinity of the new NATO member's long border with Russia, Moscow's foreign ministry said on Tuesday. The ambassador was told Moscow would "not leave unanswered the buildup of NATO military potential on our border, which threatens the security of the Russian Federation, and would take the necessary measures to counter the aggressive decisions of Finland and its NATO allies," spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement. Finland became the U.S.-led NATO military alliance's newest member this year in response to Russia's dispatch of troops into Ukraine in early 2022. Monday's agreement with the United States is aimed at allowing swift military access and aid to Finland in case of conflict, officials said ahead of the announcement. The agreement lists 15 facilities and areas in Finland to which the U.S. military will have unimpeded access and where it can also store military equipment and ammunition, including four air bases and a military port. The U.S. has similar agreements with many countries in Eastern Europe. The Kremlin said on Friday the pact would "pose an obvious threat to us" and lead to tensions with Helsinki.



### Zelenskiy Says No One Knows When War in Ukraine Will End

KYIV (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that there was no end in sight to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as fatigue builds among Kyiv's allies nearly two years into the war and the Kremlin voices growing confidence of victory. Zelenskiy said he had turned down a request from the military - for now - to mobilise as many as 500,000 Ukrainians for the army, an unpopular proposal that could hit his worsening poll ratings among Ukrainians. His meeting with local and foreign journalists wraps a difficult year in Ukraine, with Kyiv's forces under pressure on the front and allies wavering on military and financial backing. "No one knows the answer," Zelenskiy told reporters in response to a question of whether the war with Russia could end next year. "Even respected people, our commanders and our Western partners, who say that this is a war for many years, they do not know," he said. The question of how long Western countries will provide essential support for Kyiv has grown increasingly urgent. Zelenskiy last week embarked on a tour of Western countries to make the case for more military and political support as Russia's invasion grinds closer to its two-year anniversary in February. But he failed to convince the US Congress to immediately approve \$60 billion in support, while in Brussels, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban blocked an aid package of around 50 billion euros (\$55 billion). Zelenskiy said Tuesday that he wanted to organise talks with Orban to "find solutions" to their differences, and voiced confidence that Washington would follow through on aid. "I am confident that the United States will not betray us," he said. But hours later, the Democratic and Republican leaders of the US Senate, said that Washington would not be able to approve new aid for Ukraine before year's end as the two sides continued to seek a compromise. With elections looming in the United States next year, Zelenskiy acknowledged that the result of the November poll could have a "very strong impact" on the course of the war, saying Republican favourite Donald Trump would "surely have a different policy" from Joe Biden. Those setbacks on the diplomatic front come in the wake of a disappointing counteroffensive that Kyiv launched in June using Western-supplied tanks and weapons stockpiled over months. Responding to growing weariness over the war, UN human rights chief Volker Turk said

Tuesday that the world had become "jaded" by the Ukraine conflict, where war crimes continue to be committed "primarily by the forces of the Russian Federation". In contrast, Russian President Vladimir Putin has vowed victory and said during a Tuesday meeting with defence officials that society had rallied behind the war effort. Putin, who has announced he will run for re-election in March, lashed out at the West and claimed it was seeking Moscow's destruction. "Well, we are not going to give up the goals of the special military operation, either," he said, using the Kremlin's term for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Zelenskiy was facing growing discontent at home before becoming the global face of Ukrainian resistance after Russia's invasion, but he is once again feeling political pressure. Recent polling shows that the number of Ukrainians who trust Zelenskiy has dropped to 62 percent compared to 84 percent one year ago, when Kyiv's forces were celebrating gains in the east and south. The advances from this year's counteroffensive were much more modest, with just a few villages in the south and east recaptured after months of fighting against entrenched Russian forces. Zelenskiy said he had received a request from the army to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people to replenish Kyiv's forces, but that he had told the military it "needed more arguments to support this idea". Hours before Zelenskiy was due to speak, Russia's defence ministry said its forces had foiled a drone attack on a facility in Moscow. But a senior Ukrainian military official at the same time conceded that fighting with Russian forces in the eastern Kharkiv region was "complicated", with Ukrainian forces outnumbered and outnumbered. In an overnight attack, meanwhile, Ukraine reported that nine people were wounded by Russian shelling in the southern city of Kherson, as drones also targeted the capital Kyiv and second-largest city Kharkiv. Despite recent setbacks, Ukrainians still overwhelmingly back both the armed forces and its commander, Valery Zaluzhnyi. In a move that illustrates growing political divides, Kyiv residents have been gathering in the city center to demand more funds to help the military reclaim territory. Zelenskiy has highlighted the Black Sea as a recent success story. Ukrainian drones have forced some Russian warships to redeploy following several successful attacks.



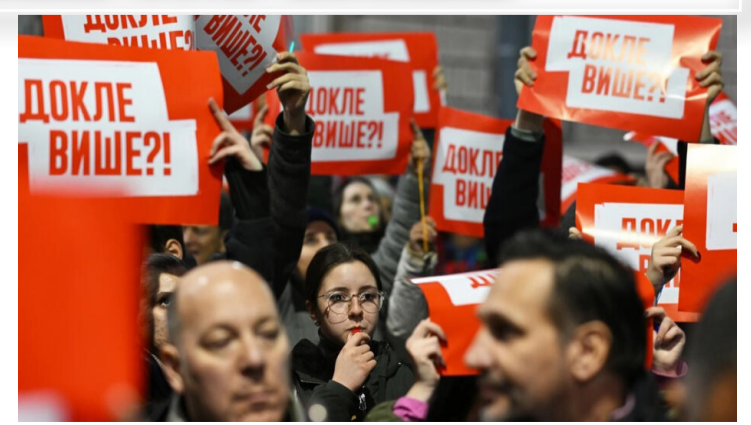
### France, UK to Support Ukraine for as Long as It Takes

PARIS (Dispatches) - France and the UK will support Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion "for as long as it takes", British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Tuesday, adding it was "essential" that President Vladimir Putin was defeated. His comments came as concern grows in Kyiv that Western patience and unity could be cracking in the fight against Russia, almost two years after the invasion began in February 2022. "Britain and France have been staunch supporters of Ukraine and we will continue to be for as long as it takes," Cameron said after talks in Paris with French counterpart Catherine Colonna, adding: "I have no doubt that we can make sure Putin loses and it is essential he does lose." "We must be absolutely staunch in how we back Ukraine," he said. The White House warned Monday that the United States has only enough authorised funding for one more aid package to Ukraine this year, with headline Republicans in Congress blocking additional aid. Insisting that the West must stay the course, Cameron compared the fight against the Russian invasion to a play in different acts. "The first act was the stunning failure of Russia to achieve its objectives" in the initial phase of the invasion, said Cameron. "The second act was the brilliance the Ukrainians showed in driving back the Russians... and of course the third act has been more difficult on land," he said in apparent reference to the failure of the Ukrainian counteroffensive this summer to achieve a breakthrough. Cameron, the former prime minister who was unexpectedly appointed Britain's top diplomat last month, added: "But the fourth act is yet to be written and we must be sure we write it in the correct way." Both Cameron and Colonna were eager to emphasise that Britain and France were on the same page over the major international issues, including Ukraine and the Middle East, even after Brexit. "Our two countries, shoulder-to-shoulder since the beginning, have worked together to ensure that Russian aggression cannot be rewarded, that it is a failure and that Ukraine can recover its freedom, its sovereignty, its territorial integrity," said Colonna.

## Hundreds Rally in Fresh Protest Over Serbia Vote Results

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Hundreds of people demonstrated against alleged voter fraud in the Serbian capital of Belgrade Tuesday, following calls by the main opposition camp to protest the weekend's election results that have been marred by reports of "irregularities". The protest came a day after thousands rallied in front of Serbia's election commission following the vote that saw President Aleksandar Vucic claim a commanding victory in parliamentary and local elections. The crowd on Tuesday was smaller than the previous protest, with demonstrators, including a large number of students, chanting anti-government slogans and hoisting signs targeting Vucic. "I am here tonight because I am very angry because of the voter fraud, not only in Belgrade but in all of Serbia," Marko Radicevic, 29, told AFP. Opposition leader Marinika Tepic indicated that protests would continue, saying more rallies would be needed to pressure the government. "We caught them committing voter fraud, and we can't accept that," Tepic said. Among the demands from the protesters, Tepic said opposition leaders were hoping to appear on a major state broadcaster, where coverage of the rallies and alleged fraud has not been shown. Earlier in the day, the country's leading opposition coalition called on people from across the political spectrum to join the demonstration. "We invite all opposition parties and movements, citizens and civil society to join us," said Miroslav Aleksić, a leader from the Serbia Against Violence (SPN) movement, at a press conference in Belgrade. Criticism of the elections mounted after a team of international observers, including representatives from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), denounced

a string of "irregularities" including "vote buying" and "ballot box stuffing". Germany later labelled the reported allegations "unacceptable" for a country hoping to join the European Union, while the United States called on Belgrade to address the "concerns" of the election monitors. "Claims of irregularities reported both by OSCE and other election observation teams should be investigated, and violence directed at election authorities, journalists, accredited observers -- of which we have seen reports -- is unacceptable," US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said. The EU also joined the chorus of criticism, saying Serbia's "electoral process requires tangible improvement and further reform". Even though Vucic was not personally on the ballot for the parliamentary and local elections over the weekend, the contest was largely seen as a referendum on his government. Vucic's right-wing Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) earned roughly 46 percent of votes in the parliamentary elections, while the leading opposition coalition secured 23.5 percent of ballots, according to official results. The SNS also said it won in municipal elections in the capital Belgrade, where the party faced their stiffest challenge from a loose coalition of opposition parties and candidates running under the SPN banner. The SPN movement was formed in the wake of back-to-back mass shootings earlier this year, which spurred hundreds of thousands to take to the streets in rallies that morphed into anti-government protests over several months. Opposition groups have cast doubts over the validity of the contest following accusations that the government allowed unregistered voters from neighboring Bosnia to cast ballots illegally in the capital.





## Chelsea Back From Brink to Reach League Cup Semis

LONDON (Dispatches) - Chelsea came back from the brink to reach the League Cup semi-finals with a dramatic penalty shoot-out victory against Newcastle after Mykhailo Mudryk's last-gasp equalizer on Tuesday. Mauricio Pochettino's side were joined in the semi-finals by Fulham, who beat Everton on penalties, and second-tier Middlesbrough, 3-0 winners against Port Vale. Beaten three times in their previous five games, a wretched run that started with their 4-1 loss at Newcastle, Chelsea showed some much needed fighting spirit to win the quarter-final 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge. Languishing in 10th place in the Premier League, Chelsea were two minutes from being knocked out before Ukraine winger Mudryk came to the rescue with the leveller that set the stage for the Blues' shoot-out success. Pochettino's only silverware as a manager is a French league title and domestic cup with Paris Saint-Germain. Chelsea's progress keeps the Argentine in contention for his first trophy in England after he lost the 2015 League Cup final during his time at Tottenham. "We are so happy. The fans and the club deserve this sort of feeling. It's a big motivation," Pochettino said. "We are so young. We are creating a very good bond. This type of result will help us." The defeat was a painful blow for Newcastle, who failed in their attempt to avenge last season's League Cup final loss to Manchester United at Wembley. After crashing out of the Champions League group stage, Newcastle's exit was another setback for the Saudi-backed club in their bid to land a first major trophy since 1969. "It hurts a lot. We defended really well but didn't get over the line," Newcastle manager Eddie Howe said. "It's a very painful moment for us. We'll just have to accept it and digest it." Newcastle had been gifted the lead by Chelsea's shambolic defending in the 16th minute. Callum Wilson seized possession inside his own half and accelerated away from

Thiago Silva as his lung-bursting run carried him into the Chelsea area. Benoit Badiashile should have snuffed out the danger, but the defender's woefully miscued attempt to clear allowed Wilson to fire home with ease. With 20 minutes left, France forward Christopher Nkunku came on for his Chelsea debut after a prolonged injury absence since his close-season move from RB Leipzig. Two minutes into stoppage time, Chelsea forced a shoot-out as Newcastle defender Kieran Trippier made a hash of dealing with a cross, misdirecting his header to Mudryk, who drilled into the bottom corner. Trippier's misery was compounded when he smashed Newcastle's second penalty wide in the shoot-out. Nkunku converted Chelsea's third penalty in his first significant contribution for the club. Djordje Petrovic sealed Chelsea's victory as he dived to his left to make a brilliant save from Matt Ritchie's kick. Fulham moved into the semi-finals for the first time after a 7-6 shoot-out win against Everton following a 1-1 draw at Goodison Park. Cottagers boss Marco Silva enjoyed a measure of revenge on the club that sacked him in 2019 by leading Fulham into their first domestic semi-final since the 2002 FA Cup. Tosin Adarabioyo scored the decisive spot-kick after Everton's Idrissa Gueye hit the post. Amadou Onana had missed a chance to win the tie for Everton earlier in the shoot-out when his kick was saved by Bernd Leno. Fulham went ahead in the 41st minute through Michael Keane's own goal before Everton substitute Beto equalised with eight minutes left. "It's incredible what the players have been doing," Silva said. "We wanted to make history in the football club." Middlesbrough cruised past third tier Port Vale to reach the semi-finals for the first time since they lifted the trophy in 2004. Michael Carrick's Championship side ruined Vale's first quarter-final appearance with goals from Jonathan Howson, Morgan Rogers and Matt Crooks.

## De Zorzi Guides South Africa to Eight-Wicket Win Over India



NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Left-handed opener Tony de Zorzi scored a career-best unbeaten 119 from 122 balls to lead South Africa to an emphatic eight-wicket win over India in the second One-Day International at St George's Park in South Africa and level the three-match series at 1-1. South Africa won the toss and sent India into bat, restricting the visitors to 211 all out in 46.2 overs on a wicket that was not easy to score on. They chased down their target with 45 deliveries remaining to set up a series decider in Paarl on Thursday. De Zorzi, 26, playing in his fourth ODI and a replacement for Quinton de Kock at the top of the order, started cautiously before taking the attack to the tourists as he put on 130 for the first wicket with Reeza Hendricks, who scored a more sedate 52 from 81 balls. The rate accelerated in a second wicket stand of 76 with Rassie van der Dussen (36) as India's bowling attack failed to apply the same pressure with the ball as their hosts. "It was a flood of emotions," De Zorzi said of his maiden ODI century. "I first thought of my Mom, hopefully she was back from work and watching. There have been a lot of doubters (of his ability) and you are just happy you could prove it to yourself and to the people who care about you. I will never forget this moment." India had skittled South Africa for 116 in the first game of the series in Johannesburg on Sunday, the latter's lowest ever score on home soil, as the visitors won comfortably by eight wickets. They looked set for a competitive total in Gqeberha when they reached 114 for two, but lost their last eight wickets for the addition of 97 runs as South Africa put the squeeze on the scoring rate. Seamer Nandre Burger took 3-30 in 10 overs, with Beuran Hendricks (2-34), in the side for the injured all-rounder Andile Phelukwayo, also among the wickets in his first ODI since April 2021. India opening batter Sai Sudharsan followed up his unbeaten half-century on debut with a fluent 62 from 83 balls, while captain KL Rahul scored 56 from 64 balls. They were the only two innings of any substance.

## Man City Ease Into Club World Cup Final

JEDDAH (Dispatches) - Manchester City will have to cope without Erling Haaland as they aim to lift the Club World Cup for the first time in Friday's final against Fluminense. The European champions shrugged off their sluggish Premier League form to cruise past Urawa Red 3-0 in Tuesday's semi-final in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Haaland watched on from the stands as Mateo Kovacic and Bernardo Silva struck after Marius Hoibraten's own goal opened the scoring. The Norwegian still provoked the biggest cheer of the night from a barely half-full King Abdullah Sports City Stadium when he offered the crowd a wave as he appeared on the big screens during the first half. But City boss Pep Guardiola confirmed his top scorer will miss the final and does not know when Haaland will be fit to feature again. The 23-year-old has already missed four matches due to a foot problem. City have won only one of their last six Premier League matches to fall behind Arsenal and Liverpool in the title race. And they face in-form Everton away on their return to England on December 27. "Erling still cannot train," said Guardiola after Haaland was left out of the City squad. Tournament rules state that the 23 players selected in the semi-final are the only players allowed to feature in the final. Kevin De Bruyne will also miss the final despite making his return to training on Monday from a four-month layoff due to a hamstring injury. Despite missing their biggest goal threat and creative hub, City were never troubled as an unblemished record for European sides against Asian teams at the Club World Cup was extended to 14 games. "Happy to get to the final against Fluminense. It's the last step to win the title, the only title the club doesn't have, so we go for it," added Guardiola. City lacked penetration and punch for the first 45 minutes despite enjoying over 80 percent of possession against the Asian champions. Urawa had lost six of their previous 10 games but largely kept their opponents at bay before a self-inflicted blow opened the game up for City on the stroke of half-time. Matheus Nunes fired a low cross into the box that Hoibraten turned into his own net under little pressure. As Urawa tired from chasing the ball in the sweltering Saudi heat, City were then able to cut loose in the second half. Kovacic drilled in his first City goal after racing onto Kyle Walker's pass that cut the Japanese defence wide open. Both Kovacic and Nunes have struggled to make a meaningful impact since arriving at the treble winners in the summer transfer window. Nunes should have followed the Croatian's lead by netting his first goal for the club when he headed a glorious chance wide from Jack Grealish's cross. A third goal for City did not take long to arrive as Hoibraten's bad luck continued when Silva's shot deflected in off the Norwegian defender. Silva warned of the heightened risk of injury put upon players by a "crazy" schedule after FIFA confirmed that the Club World Cup will expand to 32 teams and a month-long competition in 2025. A hugely one-sided contest did little to whet the appetite for many more matches

between Europe's elite clubs and the rest of the world as the financial gulf between the two continues to grow. "A lot of our players now know what is the gap between a Premier League team and our team," said Urawa coach Maciej Skorza. "We expected possession of the ball will be huge for Manchester City, but we had our plan to counter-attack. Maybe this match showed also quite a big difference in physical aspect between these two teams." European teams are now unbeaten in 21 Club World Cup matches stretching back to 2012.



## Getafe Hold 10-Man Atletico Madrid to 3-3 Draw



MADRID (Dispatches) - Getafe fought back to grab a 3-3 draw at 10-man Atletico Madrid on Tuesday as Borja Mayoral scored his second with a stoppage-time penalty to level a pulsating LaLiga encounter in which Antoine Griezmann equalled the hosts' all-time scoring record. France international Griezmann also bagged a brace to draw level with Luis Aragones as the club's record marksman with 173 goals, but it wasn't enough to take all three points as Getafe clawed their way back from 3-1 down. It was the first time Diego Simeone's side, who had Stefan Savic sent off in the 38th minute, dropped points at home this season. They next host Sevilla on Saturday. "After playing every three days and being down to 10 men with so much time to play, the boys made a huge effort. It was a tough game, we knew that," Atletico manager Simeone told DAZN. "I am absolutely delighted for Griezmann, a player who is part of the club's history. He has always given everything and is very important for us." Atletico moved third in the table with 35 points, level with fourth-placed Barcelona, who host Almeria. Girona are top with 44 points. "It's a shame, we had made a great effort with 10 men. It's a shame that Savic fouled twice and got two yellow cards. We wanted the three points," said Griezmann. "We are always fighting for the league, there is peace of mind. There are games that you win, others that you end up suffering. There is no fatigue, we are very happy." Atletico took the lead just before half-time as Griezmann scored with a close-range finish from Rodrigo Riquelme's superb cross from the right. Getafe equalized eight minutes into the second half when Mayoral, the league's second top scorer, pounced on a rebound from keeper Jan Oblak's superb save to find the net with a fine header. Atletico substitute Alvaro Morata restored their lead in the 63rd minute with a towering header before Griezmann added to their advantage with a penalty in the 69th minute. Getafe pulled one back three minutes from full-time with Oscar Rodriguez's deflected shot from inside the box, before Mayoral equalized again from the penalty spot with his second of the night. "Oh my God. The first 30 minutes were calm, then it was a crazy game. A fair draw, a lot of emotions and we'll have to analyze it afterwards," said Mayoral, who took his LaLiga tally to 12 goals this season. "I'm happy, things are going well for me. I'm very fit and I've had a great season."

## Lillard Scores 40 as Bucks Streak Past Spurs

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Damian Lillard poured in a season-high 40 points, 19 in the first quarter, as the host Milwaukee Bucks roared out of the gate and beat the short-handed San Antonio Spurs 132-119. Milwaukee has won five straight games while the hapless Spurs dropped their 20th game in the past 21. San Antonio played without rookie phenom Victor Wembanyama (right ankle) for just the second time this season. The Bucks dominated the first seven minutes and never looked back, leading by 13 points at halftime and by 24 late in the third quarter -- never seriously challenged in the fourth quarter. San Antonio missed 13 of its first 14 shots. Bobby Portis added 23 points and 10 rebounds for the Bucks, with Khris Middleton hitting for 17 points, Brook Lopez scoring 14 and recording six blocks and Giannis Antetokounmpo racking up 11 points, 14 rebounds and a season-high 16 assists. Keldon Johnson led San Antonio with 28 points and 12 rebounds. Zach Collins scored 22 points, Devin Vassell 17, Tre Jones 14 and Cedi Osman 10. Jeremy Sochan came close to a triple-double, with nine points, 11 rebounds and eight assists. Milwaukee took charge early on, scoring 21 of the first 24 points. A 19-1 run was capped by Portis' put-back layup at the 5:19 mark of the opening quarter. Lillard's pull-up 3-pointer punctuated his 19-point first quarter and gave the Bucks a 44-26 lead after a period of play. After that initial surge by Milwaukee, the Spurs played the rest of the half almost even. The Bucks pushed their lead to 22 points early in the second period before San Antonio swung back, cutting the deficit to just 13 after Vassell's 3-pointer with 4:15 to play and then to 72-59 at the break after Jones hit a running layup with 27 seconds remaining. Lillard's 24 first-half points led all scorers while Portis pitched in with 17 off the bench and Antetokounmpo added 10 points and nine rebounds. Collins and Jones led the Spurs with 12 points each.

