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Prices in Canada may be higher \$4.00

Forced Return After Fleeing Iran's Regime

A 'Nightmare' After the U.S. Deports Dozens

By FARNAZ FASSIHI
and HAMED ALEAZIZ

In the hours before dawn one day in early October, Mehrdad Dalar found himself stranded at a bus station in Iran. He recalls feeling the heavy gaze of passers-by and shivering. He looked out of place, dressed in a prison outfit of sorts: gray sweatpants and sweatshirt, and a pair of blue plastic slippers.

About two days earlier, the U.S. immigration authorities had taken Mr. Dalar from a detention facility inside an airport in Alexandria, La., and forced him aboard a plane to Iran as part of an unusual mass deportation to a country with a poor human rights record that the United States had bombed this year in an effort to set back its nuclear program.

Mr. Dalar, 34, says he was shackled and handcuffed, and not given the chance to change out of the prison clothes he had worn during his time in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention. Once in Iran, he made his way by metro and bus from Tehran's international airport to his hometown, Mashhad, in northeast Iran.

After borrowing a cellphone, Mr. Dalar delivered the news to family members still in Mashhad: The United States had sent him back to Iran. "Maman, come and get me," he told his mother, and broke into a sob. A blue backpack contained all his belongings — a few clothing items, his passport, immigration cards, a cellphone with a dead battery and a \$20 bill.

"It feels like I'm in a nightmare," Mr. Dalar said in a three-hour telephone interview from Iran.

He acknowledged that he had entered the United States illegally in April but said he thought he would have a powerful case for asylum because he has been critical of Islamic Sharia law and a political activist. He didn't expect to be sent back to Iran.

"I did everything in my power to stop them, but the ICE officials didn't care. They told me, 'You are either getting on the plane on your own, or we will tie you and send you back.'"

On Sept. 29, the Trump administration deported a plane load of Iranians, including Mr. Dalar, to Iran after reaching an agreement with Tehran. The U.S.-chartered deportation flight was a first. In the past, Iranian deportees were placed individually on commercial flights to Iran. Organizing a plane to Tehran had taken months of negotiations between American and Iranian officials.

For decades, waves of Iranians fleeing persecution found protection in the United States, including many who were at first unauthorized but later gained asylum.

But President Trump has made mass deportation a cornerstone of his immigration policy and signed an executive order, which went into place on the first day of his administration, banning asylum for migrants who crossed the border illegally. The policy has since been partially blocked by a federal court. The Trump administration announced late last month that it was cutting the number of refugees that could enter the U.S. to a record low of 7,500.

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Top, a canal in Vylkove, Ukraine, a Danube River town where men of draft age have vanished to avoid military service. Left, on patrol near the border with Romania; right, selling smoked fish in Vylkove. Women come and go freely in the town, and for some, the changes have been liberating.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY OKSANA PARAFENIUK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ukraine Draft Evasions Drain a Town of Its Men

By MARIA VARENKOVA

VLYKOVE, Ukraine — Draft officers picked Ivan up at a traffic stop and dropped him off at a training base, but he went absent without leave from the army after three days. Since then, he has been hiding at home in Vylkove, a small town in southernmost Ukraine, rarely stepping outside.

Almost four years after the full-scale Russian invasion, Ukraine faces the twin challenges of not having enough troops and men avoiding military service. Many

Void in a Fishing Port Opens Up Jobs Once Closed to Women

men of draft age, 25 to 60, have broken the law that prohibits most of them from leaving the country, while others play a cat-and-mouse game with conscription officers or just hunker down at home.

The unique geography and history of Vylkove, a run-down Dan-

ube River fishing port, have made it an exaggerated version of Ukraine in miniature, where draft-age men have all but vanished.

"Who's left?" asked Ivan, 42, speaking on the condition that his last name be withheld for his safety. "Women, the elderly and men who try not to go out unnecessarily."

National identity is not so deeply rooted in this region, which has changed hands repeatedly between countries, and enthusiasm

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DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Honoring Veterans and Bragging of 'Very Big' Deal

At Arlington Cemetery on Tuesday, President Trump lauded soldiers but talked politics. *Page A13*.

Comet's Close Encounter Takes Strange Turn to Alien Speculation

By KENNETH CHANG

Kim Kardashian excitedly quizzed the leader of NASA just before Halloween.

"Wait . . . what's the tea on 3I ATLAS?!!!!!!?" she wrote on X.

Ms. Kardashian was inquiring about a comet called 3I/ATLAS

that is swinging through our corner of the universe.

Sean Duffy, the acting administrator of NASA and himself a former reality television star, responded with encouragement, like a high school science teacher.

"Great question!" he said, explaining that "3I" labeled it as the third object known to have come

from outside our solar system.

He reassured her that, whatever she might have heard about the comet's possible origins, there was no reason to be alarmed.

"No aliens," he said. "No threat to life here on Earth."

This clump of rock, dust and ice, and whether it was sent by some intelligent beings, is suddenly a

hot item on many people's minds.

Ms. Kardashian asked about it. So did Joe Rogan on his podcast. A surge of people queried Google about NASA's planetary defenses.

Andrew Siemion is the principal investigator for Breakthrough Listen, which is using large radio telescopes to search for extrater-

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Bison Fill the SNAP Void

In one of its largest harvests ever, the Blackfeet tribe in Montana turned to its herd to help feed its members. *Page A12*

Lawsuits Over Flood Deaths

Parents of campers and counselors who died in the July 4 Texas floods said Camp Mystic leaders were negligent. *Page A16*

