

# Syrian air defenses intercept hostile targets in the sky of Damascus: State TV

Thu, 2021-08-19 23:24

DAMASCUS: Loud explosions shook the Syrian capital late on Thursday as state media reported Israeli airstrikes around Damascus.

The state-news agency SANA said Syrian air defenses confronted the Israeli planes, while the pro-Syrian government Cham FM Radio reported airstrikes in the Damascus countryside and in the central province of Homs.

Damascus residents reported hearing at least five loud explosions that shook apartment buildings over a 15 minute time span. The missiles appeared to have been fired from over Lebanon, jolting residents who heard them streak across the sky before striking targets in Syria.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which rarely comments on its military operations in Syria. There were also no immediate reports of any casualties.

Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes inside Syria in the course of Syria's civil war, against what it says are suspected arms shipments believed to be bound for Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, which is fighting alongside Syrian government forces. It rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations.

Earlier this week, Syrian state media reported that Israel carried out a missile attack on southern Syria late on Tuesday, targeting an unspecified military position.



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Syrian TV reports Israeli strike on suburbs of Damascus Loud bang heard in Damascus amid operation to clear explosives

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## [Houthis abduct young journalist in Sanaa amid crackdown on dissent](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-08-19 23:03

ALEXANDRIA: Houthi rebels in Yemen have been holding a young journalist abducted in Sanaa for more than a week, as the militia's crackdown on outspoken academics, journalists and social media activists intensifies.

After detaining Younis Abdul Sallam, the Iran-backed Houthis waited more than 10 days before informing a local lawyer of his whereabouts, his family told Arab News on Thursday.

"Younis is being held in the intelligence service office," said a relative who asked to remain anonymous. "We do not know why they detained him and they refuse to answer our calls."

Abdel Majeed Sabra, a lawyer who defends abductees in Houthi jails, said abducted journalists face mistreatment at the hands of the notorious intelligence agency. He called on local rights groups and activists, including the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, to put pressure on the Houthis to release Abdul Sallam immediately.

"The journalists' union should use all means to secure his release," he said in a message posted on Facebook.

Abdul Sallam, who is from the southern city of Taiz but has lived in Sanaa for several years, graduated from Sanaa University's College of Media in 2017. He is not a particularly high-profile journalist but has posted messages critical of the Houthis on social media.

"The moment one of their preachers shouts from a nearby mosque, warning of the dangers from America and Israel, the group begins targeting populated areas in Marib," he said in a message posted on Facebook on June 10, in which he criticizing the Houthis for launching a deadly offensive on the central city of Marib and targeting residential areas in the city. "How can normal human beings coexist with them?" he asked.

Based on his own horrific jail experience, Haytham Al-Shihab, one of five Yemeni journalists released from Houthi prisons during a prisoner swap in October last year, said Abdul Sallam will have been put in solitary confinement, had his name replaced on documents with a number, and been subjected to intense interrogations.

"During the evenings of the first month of his detention, he will be exhausted and tired from many long interrogations, accusations and fabrications that will deprive him of sleep," Al-Shihab said.

The Houthis are not only targeting journalists. Residents in Houthi-held Sanaa said the militia abducted academic and businessman Osama Al-Shibami weeks ago and refuse to say where he is being held. His friends and students condemned the Houthis for targeting a man they described as a good, apolitical person with no enemies, and called for his immediate release.

On Aug. 4, unidentified assailants shot and killed Mohammed Ali Naeem, a professor at Sanaa University, as he left a friend's house in the city. It happened shortly after he posted a message on social media demanding the Houthis and the Yemeni government increase the salaries of employees. The Houthis denied they were responsible and said they had captured a man who allegedly confessed to killing the professor over an old feud.

Residents in other Houthi-controlled areas, including Amran and Dhamar, said the militia has abducted several journalists and social-media activists who had criticized the rebels' crackdown on singing and weddings, and exposed corruption among the movement's officials.

According to analysts and authorities, Yemen has experienced the biggest displacement of journalists and activists in its history since the Houthis seized power in the country in 2014.

Najeeb Ghallab, an undersecretary at Yemen's Information Ministry and a political analyst, told Arab News that more than 1,000 journalists were forced to flee the country after the Houthis raided and looted media offices and suppressed their work.

“Due to problems, corruption, sabotage, systematic robberies and mismanagement by the Houthis in Sanaa, opposition began to grow, not only among journalists but intellectuals and academics,” he added.



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[\*\*UAE to host international humanitarian\*\*](#)

# summit during Expo 2020 Dubai

Author:

Thu, 2021-08-19 23:09

LONDON: The UAE announced that it will host an international humanitarian summit in Dubai next year as part of its Expo 2020.

The summit, to be held on March 30, aims to find appropriate solutions to some of the ongoing issues around the world, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other issues related to racism, gender equality, women empowerment, intolerance and discrimination.

It will bring together governmental, charitable, religious, and human rights institutions, intellectuals, artists, media professionals, cultural associations and the private sector to hold dialogues and shed light on current concerns that the world needs to address at Expo 2020 Dubai.

The announcement was made to coincide with World Humanitarian Day and comes a day after Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, UAE vice president and prime minister, and ruler of Dubai, said the Emirates would offer Golden Visas to charity and humanitarian aid workers in recognition of their efforts and sacrifices. A further announcement to provide long-term residence visas was also made on Thursday.

The summit will provide a platform to discuss the challenges of providing humanitarian assistance in crises, "in order to lead, coordinate, and put efforts toward assistance overseas responding to humanitarian crises, natural disasters and manmade disasters," the announcement on state-run WAM news agency said.

"The International Humanitarian Summit will play a major role in promoting and assisting international humanitarian organizations that can better people's lives and save more lives," it added.

"The UAE's policies put humanitarian and development work at the center, which is evident by the establishment of hundreds of humanitarian projects and institutions," said Dawood Al-Shezawi, secretary-general of the summit's board of trustees, said. "Globally, the UAE plays a leading humanitarian role, dedicating resources and efforts to empowering communities and removing barriers to sustainable development," he added.

The summit will feature a Global Leaders Debate to discuss "the increased fragmentation around the world due to extremism and intolerance, which play a destructive role in achieving global happiness and prosperity," and find "policies to counter these problems and propose initiatives to further boost human fraternity and tolerance," the statement said.

The International Humanitarian Summit will also feature an art and photography gallery showcasing works from around the world that promote humanitarian values, and anecdotal segments providing encouraging stories about life-changing initiatives to help improve society. The event will also host a digital exhibition where local governments, private institutions and international organizations will unveil their humanitarian efforts.



Main category:

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Expo 2020 launches 'Thrive Together' business program for networking

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## [Tunisia to impose compulsory quarantine on visitors who have not been fully vaccinated](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1629401417876223100

Thu, 2021-08-19 22:32

TUNIS: Tunisia will from Aug. 25 require 10 days of quarantine for visitors who have not been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The move is to help keep the pandemic under control as cases have begun to fall, the health ministry said on Thursday. Effective on Thursday, the North African country relaxed its nightly curfew and allowed cafes and restaurants to remain open until 10 p.m., in a partial easing of restrictions imposed to curb COVID-19 contagion. The moves come amid a decline in the number of coronavirus infections and a clear increase in vaccination rates.



Main category:

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[Women in Turkey stand in solidarity](#)

## with their Afghan sisters

Thu, 2021-08-19 21:46

ANKARA: Zakira Hekmat, president of the Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association in Turkey, said her nights have been sleepless since hearing that the civilian government in Afghanistan had fallen to the Taliban.

She fears this political change in her homeland will take the heaviest toll on educated women who had come to expect a bright future for themselves and all girls and women in the country.

Hekmat, 33, believes that some high-profile women will be in the fortunate position to be able to leave the country, but the majority of ordinary citizens will be forced to live under the Taliban regime and require help and support.

“At first, it will be difficult to reach out to all women in Afghanistan,” she told Arab News. “However it would be wise to start with specific segments of society, by providing scholarships for students at high school and encouraging them to finish their school studies and start university education.”

According to the latest UN data, women and children account for about 80 percent of displaced Afghans. Hekmat, who was born into an internally displaced family in the Jaghuri district of Ghazni province in Afghanistan, graduated from high school while living under Taliban rule. She briefly attended Kabul University before moving to Turkey on a scholarship to study medicine at Erciyes University in Kayseri and becoming a doctor.

“The Turkish government should also help university-age girls in Afghanistan through scholarships and help them leave the country and continue accomplishing their dreams in this way,” she said.

Hekmat is a well-known rights activist in Turkey, a country she now considers her home. In particular she campaigns for the rights of girls and women in Afghanistan. She is not alone; in recent days people from all walks of life in Turkey, across the political spectrum, have expressed solidarity with Afghan women and urged the international community not to abandon them to the mercy of the Taliban.

They fear that women will face great challenges under an oppressive regime that could once again strip women and girls of the rights they painstakingly reclaimed over the past two decades, especially in the realms of education and employment.

As the Afghan government fell and the Taliban took control of the country in recent days, hashtags such as “#TurkishWomenforAfghanWomen” and slogans such as “Be Their Voice” quickly began to trend on social media in Turkey.

Turkish group the Women’s Platform for Equality on Wednesday call on the international community to mobilize in support of Afghan women and share the

responsibility for hosting the refugees from the country in a fair and responsible way.

“We consider that abandoning Afghanistan to the Taliban’s rule is as ruthless as the methods of the Taliban,” the group said. “Act now for Afghan women and Afghan people.”

Gulsum Kav, a campaigner for women’s rights and co-founder of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, said: “Afghan women are never alone. We are the women of the world. We will absolutely get our freedom one day.”

Authorities in Ankara are currently in talks with all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, but the extent to which they will be able to use political leverage to protect the rights of women and girls in the country remains unclear.

On Tuesday the Taliban pledged to respect women’s rights within the norms of Islamic law. However, memories of women largely being confined to their homes under the previous Taliban regime, and facing the threat of public execution, remain fresh in the minds of many.

Begum Basdas, a gender and migration scholar at Humboldt University in Berlin, shares the concerns raised by human rights organizations that have warned the world must not fall for the Taliban’s “charm offensive” and its claim to now support women’s rights.

“I do not believe that the Taliban has changed,” she told Arab News. “Many female activists and women in high-profile jobs such as judges, journalists, government posts, as well as teachers, fear that their lives are at risk.

“The Taliban claim that women will not be discriminated against, but only within the framework of Shariah. We have observed their interpretation of Islam in the past, and more recently since they started to gain power. There are reports of women and girls who are barred from schools, dismissed from their jobs and ordered not to appear in public spaces. Already their actions do not conform to their statements.”

Yet the world has also witnessed the immense strength and resilience of Afghan women, Basdas added.

“They are still on the streets reporting, filming, protesting and fighting against the Taliban,” she said. “Our task is not to repeat the past mistakes of the Western world and treat them merely as people to be ‘saved;’ we must stand with them in solidarity to protect their lives and rights in Afghanistan.”

Some prominent women have managed to leave the country, including Sahraa Karimi, a leading female filmmaker who thanked the Turkish government for helping her to get out of Kabul this week.

According to Basdas, all Afghan women who have fled to other countries must have access to effective asylum procedures and other safe legal paths to resettlement in Europe and elsewhere.

“They should not face the risk of deportation ever,” she said. “I agree with the call to authorities in Turkey that instead of further military interventions, we must ensure all women, and everyone who needs protection, are evacuated from Afghanistan urgently.”

However, this potential wave of refugees from Afghanistan is already causing tensions to rise in domestic Turkish politics. On Wednesday the main opposition Republican Peoples’ Party displayed a banner on its headquarters that read “Borders are our honor.” Hundreds of Afghan refugees have arrived in the country in recent weeks, resulting in public anger among some and calls for the government to boost border security by building walls.

“Human rights should not be used as political leverage but Turkey first must ensure that Afghans in Turkey are safe and have access to international protection procedures without the fear of deportation,” Basdas said.

She also noted that discriminatory comments about migrants and refugees must end, and that the introduction of effective migration policies that respond to the needs of local populations as well as the refugees can help to achieve this.

“Not just Turkey, the entire international community must stand to protect human rights in Afghanistan,” she added. “The EU’s call to the Taliban ‘to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law’ will not suffice.

“The actions of the West are partly to blame and so there should not be any negotiations with the Taliban that could endanger women’s rights. We should support Afghan women and show them that we are not just watching but taking action.”



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[Begum Basdas](#)

Former Afghan women's football captain tells players to burn kits, delete photos