

Lebanon lodges protest with UN over Israeli attacks

Fri, 2021-07-23 01:05

BEIRUT: Lebanon informed the UN Secretariat on Thursday that Israel had violated Lebanese sovereignty by using Lebanese airspace to target Syrian territory on Thursday morning.

Lebanon claims that Israel violated its airspace while launching attacks on military sites in Al-Qusayr in Syria's Homs governorate believed to belong to Hezbollah.

It says that a missile from an Israeli plane landed in an area of forest near the town of Lehfed, 56 kilometers north of Beirut in the Byblos region. The people of Lehfed awoke to the sound of a huge explosion that shook buildings and shattered windows.

A missile had landed within hundreds of meters from populated areas, blasting a hole in the ground about 20 meters deep, according to the townspeople. Initial information suggested that the missile weighed about 250 kg. No casualties were reported.

Residents of the town of Majdal and neighboring villages in the Koura district also heard the explosion and said they saw flashes of light in the area, which they believed to be the result of Syrian air defenses intercepting the Israeli attack. People in Akkar, a northern region that borders Syria, particularly those in Wadi Khaled and Akroum, said they heard missiles being fired at Shayrat Airbase in Homs.

The Syrian News Agency (SANA) reported: "The air defenses of the Syrian army intercepted the missiles and shot down most of them, causing material damage."

BACKGROUND

Hezbollah took control of Al-Qusayr in June 2013 during its intervention in the war in Syria, and it is now the site of security headquarters and training centers for the Iran-affiliated militia.

Former Byblos lawmaker Fares Souaid commented on the incident in a tweet, saying: "The source of the downed missile was the conflict in the region and against the region. Today, it was Lehfed; where will it be next?"

Hezbollah took control of Al-Qusayr in June 2013 during its intervention in the war in Syria, and it is now the site of security headquarters and training centers for the Iran-affiliated militia. Al-Dabaa Airbase, northeast of Al-Qusayr, has been turned into an air supply base for Hezbollah camps. In 2016, Hezbollah demonstrated its control over the area by holding a huge military parade.

According to several Syrian refugees in camps in Aarsal, a Lebanese town on the border with Syria, residents of Al-Qusayr who opposed the Syrian regime fled to Aarsal and adjacent rural areas after Hezbollah took control.

They also said that Hezbollah has ammunition and weapons depots west of Al-Qusayr city.

Since February 2014, no refugees have been allowed to return to the city of Al-Qusayr. In September 2019, Hezbollah urged residents to return, but specified a number of conditions, most notably that they must “be loyal to Hezbollah.”

Also on Thursday, the Israeli army arrested two people who crossed Lebanon’s southern border into the Galilee region.

Candice Ardell, deputy director of the media office at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), told Lebanon’s National News Agency: “UNIFIL is aware of reports that the Israeli authorities arrested two people who had crossed from Lebanon to Israel early this morning. We are in contact with the (concerned) parties and are following up on the incident.”





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Tunisia rescues 166 migrants at sea, 16 dead
UN envoy: Lebanon's salvation lies in the hands of its leaders

[Nonseasonal floods kill 14 people in south and east of Yemen](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-07-23 01:42

Flooding in Yemen killed at least 14 people this week after nonseasonal rainstorms hit parts of the country, security officials said.

The provinces of Al-Mahrah, Hadramawt, Shabwa, Abeen and Jouf in the south and east of Yemen have seen instances of flooding.

In Shabwa, local officials said a father and daughter are believed to have drowned after swiftly moving waters carried their car away.

Searchers had only recovered the body of the father.

The storms are not seasonal for the south and the east of Yemen, which is usually dry this time of year.

The country's northwestern highlands experience seasonal rain from late spring through early fall.

The storms also damaged crops, roads, and telecommunications infrastructure.

Yemen's weather service warned late on Wednesday that the rest of the country should be prepared for more rain in the coming two days. Yemen is located at the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, overlooking the Red and Arabian seas.



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Yemeni army repels Houthi attacks on two governates
Saudi aid center provides prosthetic services in Yemen

[Mobile internet disruptions seen in Iran amid water protests](#)

Fri, 2021-07-23 01:15

DUBAI: Mobile phone internet service in Iran is being disrupted a week into protests in the country's southwest over water shortages, a monitoring group said on Thursday, unrest that has seen at least three people killed. Internet access advocacy group NetBlocks.org attributed part of the disruption to "state information controls or targeted internet shutdowns." It identified the outages as beginning July 15, when the protests began in Khuzestan amid a drought affecting the region neighboring Iraq. While landline service continues, NetBlocks warned its analysis and user

reports were “consistent with a regional internet shutdown intended to control protests.”

The effects represents “a near-total internet shutdown that is likely to limit the public’s ability to express political discontent or communicate with each other and the outside world,” NetBlocks said.

There was no acknowledgement of an internet shutdown in Iranian state media. Iran’s mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

July 21 – Izeh, southwest [#Iran](#)

Reports indicate regime security forces are cracking down on locals and widespread internet disturbances reported. [#IranProtests](#)

[خوزستان](#) pic.twitter.com/b6CJ8ukiVb

– People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK)
(@Mojahedineng) [July 21, 2021](#)

Activist groups abroad have described internet disruptions in the region in recent days as well.

Since the country’s 2009 disputed presidential election and Green Movement protests, Iran has tightened its control over the internet.

Tehran deployed a complete shutdown of the nation’s internet in November 2019 during protests over gasoline prices. That both limits demonstrators’ ability to communicate with each other, as well as the spread of videos of the protests with the wider world.

Protests took place across eight cities and towns in Khuzestan into the early hours of Thursday, according to the group Human Rights Activists in Iran. Security forces fired tear gas, water cannons and clashed with demonstrators, the group said.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price told journalists that Washington was following closely reports that Iranian security forces fired on protesters.

"We support the rights of Iranians to peacefully assemble and express themselves ... without fear of violence, without fear of arbitrary detention by security forces," Price said.

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Ned Price, US State Department spokesman

Water worries in the past have sent angry demonstrators into the streets in Iran.

The country has faced rolling blackouts for weeks now, in part over what authorities describe as a severe drought. Precipitation had decreased by almost 50 percent in the last year, leaving dams with dwindling water supplies.

The protests in Khuzestan come as Iran struggles through repeated waves of infections in the coronavirus pandemic and as thousands of workers in its oil industry have launched strikes for better wages and conditions.

Iran's economy also has struggled under US sanctions since then-President Donald Trump's 2018 decision to unilaterally withdraw America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers, crashing the value of the currency, the rial.





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Iran's Rouhani says water protesters have 'right' to demonstrate
Danish military spots Iranian vessels in the Baltic Sea

[Tunisia rescues 166 migrants at sea, 16 dead](#)

Fri, 2021-07-23 01:02

TUNIS: Tunisia has rescued 166 migrants stranded at sea for nearly a week, recovering the bodies of 16 others who died attempting the dangerous Mediterranean crossing to Europe, security officials said.

The migrants, who included 65 Moroccans, 62 Bangladeshis and 15 Egyptians, and who were aged between 15 and 48, set off from Libyan coast overnight Friday to Saturday, Tunisian Defense Ministry spokesman Mohamed Zekri said. Their boat broke down off Tunisia near the southern port Zarzis.

National Guard spokesman Houcem Eddine Jebabli confirmed 16 of the group had died on board, and said investigations were underway to determine the cause of death.

The route between Libya and Europe is considered the most dangerous one across the Mediterranean.

Over 890 people are known to have died attempting to cross the Mediterranean

so far this year, a rise of 130 percent on the same period of last year, the International Organization for Migration said last week. Since the start of summer, the number of crossings have increased as migrants take advantage of the good weather and calmer seas. Despite being plunged into chaos after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi's regime in 2011, Libya has become a favored springboard for migrants seeking what they believe will be a better life in Europe.



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NGO slams abuse of migrants in Libyan detention centers
UN migration official: 20 migrants drown off Libya's coast

[UN envoy: Lebanon's salvation lies in the hands of its leaders](#)

Thu, 2021-07-22 23:38

NEW YORK: The UN reiterated its call for the formation of a "fully empowered government" in Lebanon that can put the country on the path of recovery.

"The UN is doing what it can to mitigate the situation, but ultimately, the

responsibility for salvaging Lebanon lies in the hands of Lebanon's leaders," UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka told the security council on Thursday.

Last week, and after nearly nine months of failed negotiations with Lebanon President Michel Aoun to form a cabinet, Saad Hariri stepped down from his role as prime minister-designate, sending the country into deeper chaos as its beleaguered currency hit its lowest level.

The parliamentary consultations, aimed at designating a new Sunni figure to form a government, are set to take place on Monday. But there is little prospect of a turnaround for the country's devastated economy.

During a meeting to discuss the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on Lebanon, Wronecka highlighted the country's "multiple and accumulating" socio-economic, financial, and political crises.

The World Bank dubbed Lebanon's economic free fall as one of the world's worst financial crises since 1850. Lebanese lira is now 21,000 to the US dollar on the black market, having lost 95 percent of its value this year because of crippling financial mismanagement, state corruption, and a severe banking crisis.

With the inaugural commemoration of the 2020 Beirut Port explosion less than two weeks away, Wronecka repeated calls for an impartial, thorough, and transparent investigation into the blast.

"The families of the victims and thousands whose lives have been changed forever by that terrible blast are still waiting," she said to council members. "They deserve justice and dignity."

On August 4, 2020, a large amount of ammonium nitrate stored at the port of the Lebanese capital exploded, which resulted in more than 200 deaths, 7,500 injuries, and \$15 billion in property damage. It also left more than 300,000 people homeless.

Lebanese authorities have failed so far to deliver any justice following the catastrophic explosion as a lack of accountability has continuously hampered the investigation from moving forward.

"The stalled domestic investigation, riddled with serious due process violations, as well as political leaders' attempts to stop the investigation reinforce the need for an independent, international inquiry," Human Rights Watch said.

Discussions at the security council also highlighted the importance of holding free and fair elections in 2022 within the constitutional timelines, "as a key marker of democratic accountability and an opportunity for the people to articulate their grievances and aspirations."

Recalling the goal of Resolution 1701 to enhance Lebanon's security, state authority, and sovereignty, the special coordinator hoped for a real commitment for the implementation of that resolution in its entirety.

Unanimously adopted in the wake of the month-long war in 2006 between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah, the resolution called for a full cessation of hostilities and a phased withdrawal of the Israel Defence Forces from southern Lebanon. It also allowed up to 15,000 UN peacekeepers to help Lebanese troops take control of the area.

Wronecka praised the role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces in safeguarding the country's security and stability, including its close cooperation with the UN Interim Force In Lebanon. She called for continued support for this key institution and also welcomed the international community's continued readiness to help Lebanon.



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Report: Lebanon could turn into 'Venezuela of the Mediterranean' Hezbollah's Iranian weapons undermine Lebanon, US national security: Joe Biden