

## Syria downs Israeli missiles as new raid targets Homs



### International Desk

Syrian air defenses have intercepted and shot down Israeli missiles after the regime carried out a new airstrike against targets near the western city of Homs, the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) quoted a military source as saying. The Israeli military staged the airstrike "from the direction of the northeast [of the Lebanese capital city] of Beirut targeting some areas in the vicinity of the city of Homs," the military source said, Press TV reported.

Following the strike, Syrian air defenses responded by intercepting the incoming Israeli missiles midair and shooting down most of them.

The air raid only led to some material damage, the source concluded.

In a brief statement early Sunday that did not mention the airstrikes, Israel's army said a Syrian anti-aircraft rocket "appears to have exploded in the air" in Rahat.

Several hours later the military claimed it had targeted "an anti-aircraft battery in Syria, as a response to the launch of an anti-aircraft rocket from Syria," AFP reported. Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of neighboring Syria in recent years, but it rarely acknowledges them.

The last Israeli airstrike on Syria was on June 14, near the capital Damascus that left one soldier wounded.

Israel has also targeted the international airports in Damascus and the northern Syrian city of Aleppo several times over the past few years, often putting it out of commission.

This photo released by SANA, shows missiles flying into the sky near the international airport in Damascus, Syria, on January 21, 2019.  
● SANA via AP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### S. Korean president tells ministry to be less soft on North

REUTERS - Having appointed a new unification minister days earlier, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol said on Sunday that the ministry had focused too much on providing aid for North Korea in the past and needed to change. "The Unification Ministry has been acting like the ministry of North Korea aid and it is wrong," Yoon was quoted as telling staff in a statement issued by his press secretary. "It's time for the unification ministry to change."

## Two dead, 28 injured at US mass shooting



A view of the scene where a shooting took place, in Baltimore, US on July 2, 2023  
● REUTERS

Police in the US city of Baltimore said that two people had died and 28 others were injured in a mass shooting early on Sunday morning at a housing block in the city. The city's police department said three of the injured were in a critical condition after the incident at 800 block in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Baltimore soon after midnight, Reuters reported.

MedStar Harbor Hospital's emergency department treated 19 patients on Sunday morning, all suffering varying degrees of injury from gunshot wounds after the incident, MedStar Health Baltimore told Reuters in an emailed response.

The police department said that at about 12:35 a.m. on Sunday officers responded to calls of a reported shooting at 800 block of Gretna Court.

Hundreds of people were gathered in the area for an event called "Brooklyn Day," a witness told TV station Fox 45, adding that they had heard 20 to 30 shots fired. CNN quoted Baltimore Police Acting Commissioner Richard Worley as saying there was as yet no information on suspects or a motive, but investigators were "working an extensive crime scene."

## Thousands rally across Australia in support of Indigenous reform

Thousands rallied in Australia on Sunday to back a campaign to recognise the country's Indigenous people in the constitution ahead of a referendum later this year, after a recent dip in support for the change.

The referendum, likely to be held between October and December, seeks to amend the constitution and establish an advisory body, called the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a direct say in policies that impact them, Reuters reported.

Prime Minister Anthony

Albanese's centre-left Labor government backs the change, while the opposition Liberal-National conservatives urge a "No" vote.

On Sunday, an Australian Council of Social Service tweet showed Sydney rally attendees in T-shirts with the words "Vote Yes" and caps with the words "The Uluru Statement", referring to a key document that calls for an Indigenous Voice.

Yes23, the group behind more than 25 rallies nationwide, said the crowd in Sydney was around 3,000 and that it expected up to 25,000 people to

participate in total.

The day of action comes after support for the referendum appeared to be ebbing, according to a poll last month, which showed "No" ahead for the first time, 51% to 49%.

Opponents, including some Indigenous people, have said the proposal lacks detail and will divide Australians.

Indigenous Australians, who account for 3.8% of the population, face disadvantages including discrimination, poor health and education outcomes and high incarceration rates.

## Protesters keep pressure on Netanyahu over reform plan



AFP - Israelis protested again on Saturday against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposed judicial reform plans, days after he said he had dropped a key provision in the controversial project.

The demonstrators have kept up the pressure with weekly rallies against Netanyahu, who returned to power last December at the head of a coalition with ultra-Orthodox Jewish and extreme-right parties. As they have done every Saturday for months, protesters thronged the heart of Tel Aviv to demonstrate against his cabinet's judicial overhaul proposals.

## OIC: Measures needed ...

The body's secretary general, Hissein Brahim Taha, "stressed the need to send a clear message that acts of desecration" of the Qur'an are "not mere ordinary Islamophobia incidents," the statement said. "We must send constant reminders to the international community regarding the urgent application of international law, which clearly prohibits any advocacy of religious hatred."

The act outside the Stockholm Central Mosque prompted international condemnation. Several Muslim countries have also summoned Swedish ambassadors in protest. Swedish police had granted Momika a permit in line with free speech protections, but authorities later said they had opened an investigation over "agitation."



By Abolqassem Delfi  
Ex-Iran envoy to Paris

### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Protests engulfing several cities in France, including Lyon, Marseille, and parts of Paris, have witnessed a disturbing surge of violence perpetrated by both protesters and law enforcement. However, such unrest is not an isolated incident within the country. Ever since France relinquished its colonies, particularly the brutal departure from Algeria, it has consistently grappled with protests of this nature. Presently, Macron's government finds itself caught in the crossfire, torn between the demands and pressure emanating from opposing factions. These conflicting demands encompass the rights of immigrants who, by virtue of their citizenship, are considered French nationals, as well as the grievances voiced by French citizens who oppose the presence of immigrants within the country.

The immigrant population in France comprises individuals mainly from North African countries such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, predominantly pro-

fessing the Islamic faith. Another segment includes people from African nations commonly referred to as Black Africa. Additionally, France has seen an influx of immigrants in recent years, driven by the conflicts in the Middle East, particularly in countries like Syria and Lebanon.

Over the past few decades, successive French governments have struggled to transcend the immigrants' deep-seated animosity, fueled by France's colonial history. Presidents, including Macron, have undertaken numerous initiatives, such as his visit to Algeria, in an attempt to move beyond the contentious events of the past. However, thus far, their efforts have yielded limited success in achieving reconciliation. When the longstanding animosity is coupled with aberrant behavior exhibited by government institutions, it reignites the flames of historical grievances. This concerning pattern emerges once again, as exemplified by a recent incident involving the tragic killing of a 17-year-old Algerian boy at the hands of the French police.

Simultaneously, amidst the historical discontent and grievances expressed by immigrants toward policies and behaviors, we witness the emergence of a fac-

tion within France known as "White France." These French citizens vehemently oppose immigration policies and advocate for the implementation of more stringent measures. They

due to heightened security concerns. However, President Macron has thus far refrained from acquiescing to their demands.

Another significant aspect to consider is the tendency

## Forsaking moral high ground



predominantly align themselves with right-wing and far-right political parties. Of great concern is the escalating support for extreme right-wing ideologies, as evidenced by the substantial share of votes garnered in the last presidential election, amounting to approximately 47%. In the recent protests, this faction has exerted considerable pressure on the government to declare a state of emergency

of French security forces and police to exhibit heightened levels of violence when encountering immigrants, particularly Algerians. This behavior can be traced back to the remnants of the colonial era, and more specifically, the brutal clashes that ensued during the Algerian revolution. Reports suggest that the police officer involved in the assault on the 17-year-old boy harbored racist inclinations.

Against this backdrop, the French government finds itself grappling with both economic and security challenges. The aftermath of the war in Ukraine has exacerbated these problems and fueling growing dissatisfaction. These circumstances have provided fertile ground for opposition parties to challenge Macron and his party in the forthcoming elections.

Simultaneously, France not only faces internal turmoil but also encounters unfavorable circumstances within the broader European context. Consequently, external pressure is exerted, further stoking internal tensions. Opposition political parties predominantly align themselves with right-wing and far-right ideologies, alongside associated unions. Additionally, a fraction of the traditional left-wing parties, which have been marginalized in recent years due to the rise of "Macronism," also contribute to the opposition's ranks.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that the far-right's influence has gained traction not only in France but also in several other European nations, including Italy, Greece, and even Britain. Macron's stance on the war in Ukraine and his attempts at engagement with Putin have garnered disapproval

from numerous European governments. Consequently, right-wing and left-wing factions in other European countries, leveraging their connections with Macron's political opponents, seek to instigate domestic opposition and fuel protests. The recent riots in France have received extensive coverage and prominence in European media, particularly within British outlets.

It is important to acknowledge that these observations do not diminish the issue of violent treatment by French security forces and police against protesters. However, there is a lesson here for Macron and other European leaders. In similar circumstances occurring primarily in non-European countries, Europeans often support opposition groups by interfering in those nations' internal affairs. They advocate for restraint against protesters, respect their freedom of speech, and champion their citizenship rights. Yet, when such incidents occur within their own countries, these leaders forsake their moral high ground and resort to responding with force. Macron should have anticipated such eventualities when he visited opposition leaders of other countries and posed for supportive photographs with them.