

Syria reports Israel airstrikes on central province of Homs

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DAMASCUS, Syria: Syrian air defenses responded Wednesday to an Israeli airstrike targeting areas close to the historic Syrian town of Palmyra in the central province of Homs, state television reported.

The report said the airstrike took place shortly before midnight without giving further details.

The strikes came five days after Syrian state media reported that Israeli strikes in Homs province wounded six soldiers.

Over the past years, Israel is believed to have been behind many strikes inside government-controlled parts of Syria.

Israel has staged hundreds of strikes against Iran-linked military targets in Syria over the years but rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations.

Israel views Iranian entrenchment on its northern frontier as a red line, and it has repeatedly struck Iran-linked facilities and weapons convoys destined for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group.



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Turkey says it will do 'what is necessary' after Syria attacks Syria's Assad allows exiled uncle to return to avoid prison

[Yemeni government intensifies efforts to end Houthi siege in Abedia](#)

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Wed, 2021-10-13 23:01

AL-MUKALLA: The internationally recognized government of Yemen has intensified diplomatic efforts and military operations on the ground to put an end to the Houthi siege of the district of Abedia, in the central province of Marib, where thousands of civilians are at risk of starvation.

Foreign Minister Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak on Tuesday called UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to alert him about the grave situation in Marib and to urge him to pressure the Houthis to end their siege of Abedia. "On a telephone conversation, I briefed UNSG @antonioguterres on the catastrophic situation in Abedia district which has been under #Houthi siege for more than three weeks now, called UN to condemn this war crime, urgently provide essential needs and evacuate the injured," the Yemeni minister said on Twitter.

On the behalf of the Yemeni government, the country's Permanent Representative to the UN Abdullah Al-Saadi on Tuesday sent a letter to the UN, highlighting the Houthi crimes against thousands of civilians trapped in Abedia and accusing the rebels of depriving more than 35, 000 civilians of food, drinking water, medicine and other vital necessities. Al-Saadi warned that thousands of civilians face death and starvation as the Houthis intensify their missile and drone strikes on civilian gatherings and targets and block the distribution of life-saving humanitarian assistance to the besieged people.

The Houthis, who had previously failed to roll into the district due to fierce resistance from local fighters and army troops, have held the district of Abedia under siege for more than 22 days.

Meanwhile, heavy fighting broke outside the city of Marib as Yemeni government troops launched counterattacks to recapture areas fallen to the Houthis and reinforced defenses in Al-Kasara and Mashjah, west of Marib.

Gen. Abdu Abdullah Majili, Yemen's army spokesman, told Arab News on Wednesday that government forces foiled Houthi attacks on Juba and Abedia as the coalition's warplanes targeted the militia's gatherings and locations outside Abedia in a bid to break the siege.

"The coalition's warplanes carried out intensive airstrikes on the Houthis," Majili said.

Local media reports said on Wednesday that the Houthis heavily shelled the besieged Abedia district with missiles, mortar fire and explosive-rigged drones after failing to break the loyalists' defenses.

An unidentified number of civilians were killed and wounded on Wednesday when a missile fired by the Houthis exploded near a petrol station in government-controlled areas in the district of Juba, local media and officials said.



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US demands end to Houthi militia siege in MaribArab coalition destroys two Houthi explosive-laden boats in Red Sea, hits targets in Abdiya

After attacks in Syria, what is Turkey's military plan?

Author:

Wed, 2021-10-13 00:37

ANKARA: After two Turkish police officers were killed and two others injured on Sunday in a missile attack on Azaz in northern Syria launched from the neighboring Tal Rifaat area by Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, all eyes are on Ankara to see whether it will carry out a ground operation in the region.

In line with rules of engagement, Turkish security forces also retaliated after five mortar shells fired from an area controlled by the Kurdish militia landed in Turkey's southeastern Gaziantep province on Monday.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed late on Monday that Turkey would take necessary steps in Syria as soon as possible, signaling a new operation against the Kurdish militia. "We have run out of patience. Turkey is determined to remove threats arising from northern Syria, either together with the active forces there, or by our own means," he said during a press conference.

Ankara considers both the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units and Syrian Democratic Forces as offshoots of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which seeks autonomy for Turkey's Kurdish minority and has carried out attacks since 1984 against the Turkish state.

The majority part of northeastern Syria is still under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces, whose main component is the Kurdish People's Protection Units.

Last month, two Turkish soldiers were killed and three others injured in another attack in Syria's Idlib de-escalation zone, the latest major opposition stronghold in Syria. Several parts of the region, home to some 4 million civilians, are patrolled by Russian and Turkish troops.

After talks between Russia and Turkey failed to produce a meaningful outcome in September, Turkey deployed more troops and tanks in Idlib to strengthen its presence against Syrian regime attacks and Russian air raids.

Following his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sept. 29, Erdogan said that Turkey was committed to the March 2020 ceasefire with Russia and to "clearing radical elements."

But he added that Turkey expected its partners to do the same and contribute to the de-escalation.

As part of its commitments to Russia, Turkey pledged to combat militancy in Idlib and eradicate Al-Qaeda-linked militant group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, while it also committed to reopen M4, a vital link between Aleppo and

Latakia. Russia claims that these commitments remain unfulfilled so far.

Prof. Emre Ersen, an expert on Turkey-Russia relations from Marmara University in Istanbul, said that these attacks demonstrated the two leaders had failed to reach a conclusive agreement on Syria during their latest meeting in Sochi last week.

“However, it is unlikely that the attacks will significantly change the status quo in the region as Turkey has strengthened its military position in Idlib in the last few months and this is also why Russia will not risk a direct confrontation with the Turkish forces in order not to upset the delicate military balance in Syria,” he told Arab News.

According to Ersen, there is still no better alternative for Ankara and Moscow than trying to sustain the shaky Sochi deal they reached in March 2020 on Idlib.

“More importantly, at a time when Turkey has significant problems in its relations with the US, Russia will most probably try to take advantage of the rift between the two NATO allies and make sure that the Syrian issue does not cause a major crisis in Turkish-Russian relations for the time being,” he said.

Turkey has launched three cross-border operations in Syria since 2016 to drive the Kurdish militia and Daesh threat from its border.

Navvar Saban, a conflict analyst and expert at Omran Center for Strategic Studies, and a nonresident researcher at ORSAM in Ankara, thinks that the latest attacks against Turkish-controlled zones in Syria carry a strong message from Russia.

“These regions from where the attacks were carried out are mostly controlled by Russians and they somehow allow SDF to launch any kind of offensive. When Turkish soldiers were killed last month by the YPG (Syrian Kurdish People’s Protection Units) attack, Turkey retaliated and interestingly Russians responded to Turkey by hitting an empty area. This is a diplomatic message,” he told Arab News.

According to Saban, this latest episode underscores Russia’s willingness to push the Turkish side to communicate with Moscow instead of directly launching any kind of attack against the Kurdish militia-held areas.

“They want to show that they have the leverage in this area and although they have the ability to stop these attacks against Turkish-controlled zones, they don’t do it because they want to remind Ankara to go through its Russian counterparts before launching any operation in the area,” he said.

However, Levent Kemal, a Middle East political commentator, does not expect an imminent Turkish ground operation in the Tal Rifaat region.

“Russia accords high importance to its military depth in Syria’s Aleppo province and Tal Rifat region is considered as the forefront of such a depth. In case Turkey insists on launching an operation to Tal Rifaat, it would

probably have to offer something big in return to Russia,” he told Arab News.

Tal Rifaat has been at the center of Turkish-Russian negotiations for a long time, as the region is also known as an important logistical hub for Kurdish militias while attacks against Turkish troops have been mainly carried out from this region.



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[US, Israel, UAE to launch working groups at trilateral meeting: State Department](#)

Tue, 2021-10-12 23:36

WASHINGTON D.C.: The US, Israel and the UAE will launch two new working groups on Wednesday, a senior State Department official said, as Washington hopes to expand the agreements between Israel and its neighbors known as the Abraham accords.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken will host a trilateral meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan at the State Department on Wednesday.

One working group will focus on religious coexistence and the other on water and energy issues, said the official, who briefed reporters ahead of the meeting.



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Blinken to meet Israeli, UAE counterparts next week
INTERVIEW: The social, cultural impact of the Abraham Accords is beautiful, says Ariella Steinreich

[Tunisian PM says implementing economic reforms top government priority](#)

Tue, 2021-10-12 22:38

TUNIS/WASHINGTON: Tunisian prime minister said on Tuesday that fixing public finances and implementing economic reforms will be a priority – the first sign of the government’s intention to launch reforms demanded by lenders – as Tunisia suffers a financial crisis.

Tunisia’s president unveiled a new cabinet government on Monday, but gave no hint when he would relinquish his near total control after seizing most powers in July.

Under rules President Kais Saied announced last month when he swept aside much of the constitution, the new cabinet will ultimately answer to him rather than Prime Minister Najla Bouden.

Meanwhile, the US on Tuesday praised the appointment of the new Tunisian government as a positive step and encouraged further action three months after a presidential power grab.

“The new government, which includes 10 female ministers, is a welcome step forward toward addressing the significant economic, health and social challenges facing the country,” State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

“We look forward to further announcements to establish a broadly inclusive process for a rapid return to constitutional order,” he said.

Bouden was named Monday as the North African country’s first female prime minister and vowed that she would put a priority on fighting corruption.

Saied in July suspended parliament and sacked a government supported by Islamist-inspired party Ennahdha, following months of growing public anger over an economic crisis and the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(With Reuters and AFP)



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Saudi Arabia welcomes new Tunisian government
Tunisian prime minister names new government