

CHICAGO (Reuters) -- A near-record number of U.S. chickens and turkeys have died in this year's outbreak of avian flu, as a different form of the virus than farmers battled before has infected more wild birds that then transmit the disease, officials said.

More than 47 million birds have died due to infections and cullings. This has spurred export bans, lowered egg and turkey production, and contributed to record prices of the staples ahead of the U.S. holiday season. The outbreak exacerbates economic pain for consumers grappling with soaring inflation.




ROME (Dispatches) -- Italians have marched in the capital Rome to protest against the country's membership of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance, as energy and cost-of-living crisis worsen across Europe amid the raging war in Ukraine.

The massive demonstration, organized by the USB (Unione Sindacale di Base) union, saw people burning energy bills in protest against skyrocketing costs of living, which are taking a huge toll on ordinary people in the southern European country. The protesters called on the government to leave NATO.

**Viewpoint**

### Borell's Babble Betrays Blockhead Background

### Envoy Censures EU's 'Double Standard' on Human Rights



### APC President Thanks Iran's Leader for Supporting Paralympics



### Reuters: Maritime Deal Proved Hezbollah's Pragmatism



## Malaysia Frees Palestinian Kidnapped by Mossad

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) -- Malaysian police have freed a Palestinian man who had allegedly been kidnapped and interrogated by agents of Mossad, the occupying regime of Israel's notorious intelligence agency, in Kuala Lumpur, reports said Tuesday.

They said the Palestinian computer programmer, who is from Gaza and has not been named, was forced into a car in the capital on September 28 by Malaysian nationals who had been trained by Mossad.

The man was then taken to a chalet on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur where he was questioned over a video call on matters related to Hamas and its armed wing the Qassam Brigades, the New Straits Times said.

"A video call had been set up in front of the victim. On the line were two men, believed to be Israelis, whose opening line to him was: 'You know why you are here,'" the Malaysian daily said. "For the next 24 hours, the victim was interrogated and beaten by the Malaysian operatives when his answers were not to the Israelis' satisfaction."

"The Israelis wanted to know about his experience in computer application development, Hamas' strength in developing software, members of the Al-Qassam Brigade that he knew and their strengths," a source with knowledge of the case told the New Straits Times.

A second Palestinian man, who was there at the time of the abduction, was able to contact police who raided the chalet and

freed the captive. "The operatives who did the snatch-and-grab may have had a miscommunication with their Israeli handlers and several other Malaysians waiting at the chalet, because they bungled and let the other Palestinian get away... in fact, he would have been the more prized capture," a source with knowledge of the case told the newspaper.

The two Palestinians have since left Malaysia, according to the report, and at least two Malaysian nationals are being held by police.

A "well-informed Malaysian source" told Al Jazeera Arabic that an investigation had uncovered a "Mossad cell" in the country that was involved in spying on a number of sites, including airports, and seeking to penetrate "government electronic companies".

The source said Mossad had used Malaysian nationals it trained in Europe to carry out the operation, according to Al Jazeera Arabic, which also cited Malaysian media as reporting that Mossad had recruited a cell of at least 11 Malaysians to track down Palestinian activists.

On 21 April 2018, Fadi Muhammad al-Batsh, 35, a Palestinian engineer and member of Hamas, was shot dead outside a Kuala Lumpur mosque.

The Malaysian government said that "foreign agents" were responsible for the killing, while Batsh's father said he suspected that Mossad was behind his son's murder.

## Strikes Spread in France Autumn of Discontent in Europe



Workers in sectors such as transport, energy, education, waste collection, and agriculture join strikes in France.

PARIS (Dispatches) -- It started several weeks ago at refineries. Then it spread to nuclear plants. And finally, on Tuesday, railway workers, some teachers and even high school students across France joined a snowballing strike that has become the biggest test so far of President Emmanuel Macron's second term.

The widening strike came on the heels of a large march against rising costs of living held in Paris on Sunday and increases pressure on Macon's government, which is already embattled in parliament, where opposition parties are refusing to pass the budget.

Macron is now struggling to mollify anger on three different fronts — in factories, on the streets and

in parliament — before it coalesces into a major episode of social unrest. That could threaten his agenda, including plans for a contentious pensions overhaul, as he seeks a direction for his new term.

The original strikes at refineries across the country have left more than a quarter of the pumps across the country fully or partly dry. While Macron promised the situation would return to normal this week, with his government issuing back-to-work orders, lines at gas stations around Paris continued on Tuesday, adding to the frustration among drivers and other commuters.

Left-wing politicians and striking union leaders called for mass

mobilization and painted the rising sentiment in the country as an "autumn of discontent".

Many high school students also joined the protest, with some in Paris blockading the entrance of their schools. Students at the Hélène Boucher high school, in the east of the capital, barricaded themselves behind large green garbage cans and were holding signs denouncing recent changes in education policy, warning that students' lives had become more precarious, or protesting police violence.

"More teachers, less cops!" they chanted Tuesday morning.

The strike on Tuesday — which organizers planned to coalesce into a large march in Paris — coincided

ed with efforts this week by Macron's government to get its budget through parliament. The last legislative elections in June left Macron short of an absolute majority in the National Assembly, the lower and more powerful house of parliament.

Legislators are threatening to vote down the spending bill. So Macron's government is likely to use special constitutional powers to push it through without a vote. Olivier Véran, the government's spokesman, said it would "probably" do so on Wednesday.

Étienne Ollion, a sociologist at the Polytechnique engineering school who specializes in French parliamentary life, said the mechanism, allowed under Article 49.3 of France's 1958 Constitution, was "a bit of an authoritarian measure." Though the mechanism had been used 60 times since its introduction, he said, Macron's lack of a parliamentary majority and the current climate of social unrest could make it a more delicate move.

"It could have an effect on the mobilizations," Ollion said, referring to the strikes and protests, adding that protesters might see such a move as "an attempt to avoid confronting the reality of the situation, that is one of political difficulties."

Using these constitutional powers would also allow members of the opposition to put forward no-confidence motions, which leftist and far-right groups in parliament have already promised to do.

Similar protests have erupted around Europe in recent months as people complain about the impact

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## France's Lafarge Admits Supporting Daesh in Syria

NEW YORK (Dispatches) -- French cement maker Lafarge pleaded guilty on Tuesday to U.S. charges of supporting Daesh by keeping a factory running in Syria after conflict broke out in 2011, according to a court hearing.

The admission in Brooklyn federal court marked the first time a company has pleaded guilty in the United States to charges of providing material support to a terrorist organization. Lafarge, which became part of Swiss-listed Holcim in 2015, is also facing charges of complicity in crimes against humanity in Paris.

The cement maker previously admitted after an internal investigation that its Syrian subsidiary paid armed groups to help protect staff at the plant. But it had denied charges that it was complicit in crimes against humanity.

Holcim has said that events

concerning Lafarge's Syria plant go against its values and were concealed from the board at the time of the 2015 merger.

Rights groups in France in 2017 accused Lafarge of paying 13 million euros (\$12.79 million) to armed groups including Daesh terrorists to keep operating in Syria between 2011 and 2015.

A report published by the French daily Liberation in July 2021 said French intelligence officials were aware of the agreement between Lafarge and Daesh in the summer of 2014.

A document from the General Directorate of External Security (DGSE), published by Liberation, showed that the state "was well aware of the conditions under which Lafarge maintained its activity in Syria in territory partly occupied by" Daesh. "It is a document that leaves no room for doubt," the paper said.

According to the deal, Daesh

allowed Lafarge to maintain its operations in Jalabiya in northern Syria in exchange for 13 million euros.

In June 2018, Lafarge was charged with complicity in crimes against humanity and financing a terrorist organization over payments it made to militant groups in Syria.

However, an appeals court dropped the crimes against humanity charges in November 2019, after finding four rights organizations - Sherpa, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), Chredo and Life for Paris - could not act as plaintiffs in the case.

The cement giant was accused of paying armed groups, including Daesh, millions of dollars through middlemen in an effort to keep its factory in Syria's Jalabiya open. It was also accused of selling cement from the factory to Daesh.

## Russia Denies Using Iranian Drones Against Ukraine

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russia on Tuesday rejected allegations concerning the use of Iranian drones in his country's military campaign in Ukraine, saying Russia is using domestically-manufactured drones.

Asked whether Russia had used or purchased Iranian drones, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the hardware that is used in the war is Russian.

"No, we do not have such information. The hardware that is used is Russian. You know that. It has Russian names. You can address all other questions to the Defense Ministry," he said.

U.S. State Department has claimed that Iranian drones were used on a Monday morning attack on the Ukrainian capital Kiev.

Iran has on numerous occasions dismissed as "baseless" the reports about sending combat drones to Russia to be used in the Ukraine war.

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani reiterated that the Islamic Republic "has not provided weaponry to any of the parties."

He stated that the published news has political motives, adding that Iran continues to support a political solution to the conflict.

Back in July, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan claimed Washington had received "information" indicating that Iran was preparing to provide Russia with "up to several hundred UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), including weapons-capable UAVs on an expedited timeline" for use in the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Late last month, Ukraine announced that it would withdraw the accreditation of the Iranian ambassador and significantly reduce the number of diplomatic staff at the country's embassy in Kiev over what it called Tehran's "unfriendly" decision to supply Russian

forces with drones.

Reacting to the decision, Kanaani said it was "based on unconfirmed reports and resulted from media hype by foreign sides."

On Tuesday, Ukraine's foreign minister said he was submitting a proposal to President Volodymyr Zelensky to formally cut diplomatic ties with Tehran after a wave of Russian attacks using what Kyiv claims are Iranian-made drones.

Ukraine claims the attacks were carried out with Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones. Tehran denies supplying the drones.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said he had urged the European Union to impose sanctions on Iran.

"Severe sanctions against Iran are especially relevant right now, as we are witnessing reports on Iranian intentions to give Russia ballistic missiles to be used against Ukrainians," he said.

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