

Syrian Intelligence Says Foiled Daesh Attempt to Target Damascus Shrine



An aerial view of the Sayyida Zeinab Shia shrine, the grave of the granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad, in the southern suburbs of Damascus, on December 11, 2024.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – State news agency SANA reported, citing an unnamed official in the General Intelligence Service, that members of the Daesh cell planning the attack were arrested. It quoted the

official as saying that the intelligence service is “putting all its capabilities to stand in the face of all attempts to target the Syrian people in all their spectrums.” Sayyida Zeinab has been the site

of past attacks on Shia pilgrims by Daesh. In 2023, a motorcycle planted with explosives detonated in Sayyida Zeinab, killing at least six people and wounding dozens a day before the Shia holy day of Ashoura. The announcement that the attack had been thwarted appeared to be another attempt by the country’s new leaders to reassure religious minorities, including those seen as having been supporters of the former government of Bashar Assad. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, the former militant group that led the lightning offensive that toppled Assad last month and is now the de facto ruling party in the country, is an insurgent group that formerly had ties with Al-Qaeda. The group later split from Al-Qaeda, and HTS leader Ahmad al-Sharaa has preached religious coexistence since assuming power in Damascus. Also Saturday, Lebanon’s caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati arrived in Damascus to meet with al-Sharaa. Relations between the two countries had been strained under Assad, with Lebanon’s political factions deeply divided between those supporting and opposing Assad’s rule.

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weakening of Iran’s armed forces following attacks by Israel on Iran and its regional allies.

Salami said the IRGC Aerospace Force will unveil more new missiles and missile facilities in the near future.

During the tour of the missile facility, Gen. Salami praised the IRGC forces involved in the two operations against Israel and rejected the enemy’s mistaken belief that Iran’s capability to produce missiles had been harmed.

“Every day, the number of systems and missiles is augmented in the far corners of this land. Maybe the enemy thought that our production power has stagnated, but the growth rate of our missile power is up to date,” the IRGC chief said.

“All components of our power are improving, but missiles, their capacity and capability are increasing and improving every day both in quantity and quality and in efficiency and design.”

On Monday, General Ali Muhammad Naeini announced that Iran would be holding new drills this month that would reveal “missile and drone cities” including an underground city storing missiles and another facility accommodating vessels in the south of Iran.

On Friday, Iranian Basij (volunteer) forces held a large-scale exercise involving 110,000 members in the capital, Tehran, as part of several war games held in recent days by the Iranian armed forces.

Vehicles mounted with rocket launchers, artillery and naval commandos moved through the streets. Fighters in combat gear marched on foot with rocket launchers, and black-clad women carried rifles.

Some dragged coffins decorated with Israeli flags, as flags of Hezbollah flew along with Iranian and Palestinian banners.

An IRGC commander, General Muhammadreza Naghdi, singled out Iran’s enemies the United States and Israel during the gathering. The United States, he said, is “behind all the misfortune in the Muslim world”.

As for Israel, “if we are able to destroy the Zionist regime and withdraw the American bases in the region, one of our big problems will be resolved,” he said.

The IRGC’s commander for the capital, General Hassan Hassanzadeh, said one aim of the rally was to “support the population of Gaza and Palestine”.

Supporting the Palestinian cause has been a pillar of Iranian foreign policy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

“We also want to show that the Basij are ready to confront all threats from enemies of the Islamic revolution,” Hassanzadeh said.

The Islamic Republic launched some 200 missiles at the Israeli entity’s military, and espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories on October 1 as part of Operation True Promise II.

The operation came in response to the Zionist regime’s assassination of senior leaders of the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance and a senior IRGC commander.

In the early hours of October 26, Israel targeted two Iranian border provinces, Ilam and Khuzestan, as well as Tehran. The country’s integrated air defense system successfully intercepted and countered the aggression.

Los...

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“At least to say goodbye until we can rebuild. I will let God lead me,” Doss said.

Many Altadena residents said they were worried government resources would go to wealthier areas and that insurers might short-change those who cannot afford to contest denials of fire claims.

Beyond those who lost their homes, tens of thousands remained without power, and millions of people were exposed to poorer air quality, as the fires lofted traces of metals, plastics and other synthetic materials.

Private forecaster AccuWeather estimated the damage and economic loss at \$135 billion to \$150 billion, portending an arduous recovery and soaring homeowners’ insurance costs.

California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara called on insurers on Friday to suspend pending non-renewals and cancellations that homeowners received before the fires began and to extend the grace period for payments.

President Joe Biden has declared the fires a major disaster and said the U.S. government would reimburse 100% of the recovery for the next six months.

Zionists...

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United States and Britain in the Zionist regime’s genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza.

The targeting of Yemeni civilians, especially the gathering at Sabeen Square in Sana’a which was held to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza Friday, constitutes a war crime, the group stated.

“ Hamas reiterates its full solidarity with the Yemeni nation, the country’s armed forces and the Ansarullah movement, and appreciates their efforts in support of Palestine,” the statement read.

Yemenis have been hitting Israeli and American targets in support of Palestinians in Gaza since Israel launched its devastating war on Gaza on October 7, 2023.

The Yemeni army has been also targeting ships linked to Israel, the United States, or the United Kingdom to force an end to the Tel Aviv regime’s brutal war on Gaza.

The operations have effectively shut down the Eilat port south of the occupied territories, causing significant economic setbacks for the Israelis.

Yemeni armed forces have said they will not stop their attacks until Israel’s ground and aerial offensives in Gaza end.

Protesters Urge Poland to Arrest Netanyahu

WARSAW (Dispatches) – Hundreds of people have marched in Warsaw to protest against the Polish government’s confirmation that it won’t arrest Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu if he visits the country.

In November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his former war minister, Yoav Gallant, on charges of committing war crimes in Gaza.

On Thursday, the office of Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced that Warsaw would not arrest Netanyahu if the Zi-

onist regime official travels to Poland for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Auschwitz death camp during World War II.

Protesters rallied outside the Presidential Chancellery building, waving Palestinian flags and posters with anti-Netanyahu slogans.

Because the ICC lacks any police force or enforcement powers of its own, it relies on the countries that signed the Rome Statute to enforce its warrants.

Poland signed the treaty. Francesca Albanese, the UN special rapporteur, on Friday

called on Poland to uphold the principles of universal justice by arresting Netanyahu if he visits the country.

Her statement highlighted the importance of consistent application of international law.

Albanese’s remarks were a response to Poland’s earlier condemnation of Mongolia for failing to detain Russian President Vladimir Putin under an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant.

“ICC members are obliged to arrest persons subject to an #ICC warrant,” Albanese wrote. “Poland, which condemned Mon-

golia for not arresting Pr. Putin, should arrest PM Netanyahu, if he visits. Selective application of the law erodes the universality of international justice and multilateralism.”

Since Oct. 7, 2023, Palestinian civilians have been subjected to a brutal Israeli military campaign, which has killed more than 46,000 people, mostly women and children, and injured over 109,000.

Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its deadly war on the enclave.

London Met Under Fire for Banning Pro-Palestine March Outside BBC

LONDON (Dispatches) – British parliamentarians and cultural figures have criticized the London Metropolitan Police for blocking a pro-Palestine march from starting outside the BBC headquarters on Saturday.

Organizers of the pro-Palestine march said it had agreed on the route with the police months in advance.

But organizers now face objections from the police after pro-Zionist groups, MPs, and peers reportedly urged Met Commissioner Mark Rowley to change the route after claims it could disrupt a nearby synagogue.

An organizer of the march told Middle East Eye that the police

informed them in December that Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis had made representations to them.

Mirvis confirmed in December that he was in talks with the police about the march.

Organizers dismissed the claims as “baseless,” noting the synagogue is not on the route and that “there has not been a single incident of any threat to a synagogue attached to any of the marches”.

In an open-letter, the pro-Palestine coalition criticized the police for “misusing public order powers to shield the BBC from democratic scrutiny”.

The open letter described the BBC as “a publicly-funded state broadcaster” that must be held

accountable for its reporting on Gaza.

The organizers accused the police of undermining democratic freedoms by deciding to block the protest marching from the BBC.

“The rights to protest and free speech are precious. It is not acceptable in a democratic society that, in the face of an ongoing genocide in Gaza, people should be barred from protesting at the BBC,” the open letter said.

The open letter was also signed by dozens of British parliamentarians, cultural figures, including actors, academics and trade union activists.

Among the signatories of the open letter include Jeremy Cor-

byn, Diane Abbott, musician Brian Eno, and actors Mark Rylance and Maxine Peake. Trade union leaders like Mick Lynch and Dave Ward also signed the open letter.

The open letter highlighted the diversity of the pro-Palestine movement, pointing out that “Jewish people have been joining the marches in their thousands”

It condemned attempts to link the protests to anti-Jewish sentiment as “false and dangerous”.

Activists argue the BBC’s coverage of Gaza has failed to portray Palestinian suffering adequately and view the march as a critical opportunity to hold the broadcaster accountable.

Taliban Confirm Prisoner Swap Talks With U.S., Say No Deal Reached Yet

KABUL (Anadolu) – The Afghan Taliban on Saturday confirmed negotiations with the U.S. for a prisoner swap deal but said it yielded no result yet, according to local media.

Afghan Taliban deputy spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat said that negotiations are still underway, Tolo News reported.

Earlier, the Wall Street Journal reported that the outgoing Biden administration is in

secret talks with the Taliban over a prisoner swap deal that would see Americans held in Afghanistan set free in exchange for the release of at least one Guantanamo Bay prisoner.

The talks, which have been going on since July, crossed a threshold in November when the Biden administration proposed the release of Muhammad Rahim al-Afghani, an

alleged aide to slain Al-Qaeda mastermind Osama bin Laden, in exchange for the release of three Americans seized in Afghanistan in 2022 -- George Glezmman, Ryan Corbett, and Mahmoud Habibi.

The Taliban proposed instead that the U.S. release Rahim and two unspecified others for the release of Glezmman and Corbett. The group denies having Habibi in custody.