

## **Syria accuses Israel of targeting key airbase in Damascus, warns Jerusalem of repercussions**

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**Beirut:** The Syrian army on Friday officially accused Israeli warplanes of targeting a key military airport west of the capital Damascus, triggering a fire, and warned Jerusalem of repercussions.

### **File pic - Syria accuses Israel of targeting key airbase in Damascus**

According to reports, army said that several rockets landed in the airport compound in Mezzeh, after midnight --- the third such incident recently.

In a statement carried on the official news agency SANA, the military said several missiles were launched just after midnight from an area near Lake Tiberias that fell in the vicinity of the Mezzeh military airport on the western edge of the capital. It did not say whether there were any casualties.

Residents of Damascus reported hearing several explosions that shook the capital. The Mezzeh airport compound located on the southwestern edge of the capital had been used to launch attacks on rebel-held areas near Damascus and has come previously under rebel fire.

The Syrian army statement said Israel through its attacks was assisting "terrorist groups" fighting the Syrian government.

"The Syrian army command and armed forces warn the Israeli enemy of the repercussions of this blatant attack and stresses it will continue its war on terrorism," the army statement said.

It was the third such Israeli strike into Syria recently, according to the Syrian government. On Dec 7, the Syrian government reported Israel fired surface-to-surface missiles that also struck near Mezzeh airport. A week earlier, SANA said Israeli jets fired two missiles from Lebanese airspace toward the outskirts of Damascus, in the Sabboura area.

### **Israeli military declines to comment**

The Israeli military has declined to comment on those incidents, and there was no immediate comment on today's reported attack. But Israel is widely believed to have carried out a number of airstrikes in Syria in the past few years that have targeted advanced weapons systems, including Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles and Iranian-made missiles, as well as positions of the Lebanese Hezbollah group in Syria.

The Shiite group has sent thousands of its fighters to Syria to support President Bashar Assad's forces in the country's civil war, now in its sixth year.

Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman recently reiterated his government's position to not get involved in the Syrian war.

- With AP Inputs