

Israeli air strikes target Ghaziyeh in southern Lebanon



**Smoke rises from a site hit by an airstrike near the town of Ghaziyeh on Lebanon's coast
[Hassan Hankir/Reuters]**

Beirut, February 20 ((RHC)-- Israeli forces have carried out at least two air strikes on the coastal town of Ghaziyeh in southern Lebanon, according to the Israeli military and Lebanese state media. The Lebanese armed group Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging near-daily fire across the border since Israel launched its genocidal assault on Gaza in October last year.

“Israeli warplanes carried out ... strikes on the town of Ghaziyeh,” the state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported on Monday, saying that a vehicle was targeted and ambulances rushed to the scene, without providing further details. It was not immediately clear if there were casualties.

The town is about 5 km (3 miles) away from the southern port city of Sidon, and about 60km (37 miles) north of the border with Israel.

Avichay Adraea, an Israeli army spokesman, said on Monday: “We targeted Hezbollah weapons depots near Sidon in response to the explosion of an enemy craft whose wreckage we found near the Tiberias area this afternoon. We will continue to act forcefully in response to Hezbollah attacks.”

Al Jazeera’s Zeina Khodr, reporting from Beirut, said that a factory was targeted in the strikes. “The owner of the factory said the targeted facility manufactured electrical generators,” she said. She added that strikes hitting deeper inside Lebanon are becoming more frequent.

The strikes came shortly after the Hezbollah group claimed responsibility for two attacks on Israeli posts in the border area of Shebaa Farms. Khodr said “this tit-for-tat exchange of fire” appeared likely to continue.

“Hezbollah has made it clear that it will not halt the fighting until Israel’s aggression on Gaza ends,” Khodr said. “This was a military target and Hezbollah will respond as such. Both sides have been trying to confine their attacks to military targets.

“It’s very much a controlled escalation; yes, civilians have been killed, but we’re still steps away from a comprehensive war. No doubt, this is an escalation. Many in Lebanon fear that this conflict is a slippery slope and it could get out of hand.”

The Israeli military last week said it killed a Hezbollah commander, his deputy and another fighter in a strike in the south Lebanon city of Nabatieh.

On Friday, Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah vowed that Israel would pay “with blood” for civilians it killed in Lebanon. He warned that the group possesses missiles that could reach anywhere in Israel.

Hezbollah has reported around 200 of its fighters have been killed since the cross-border escalation started.

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