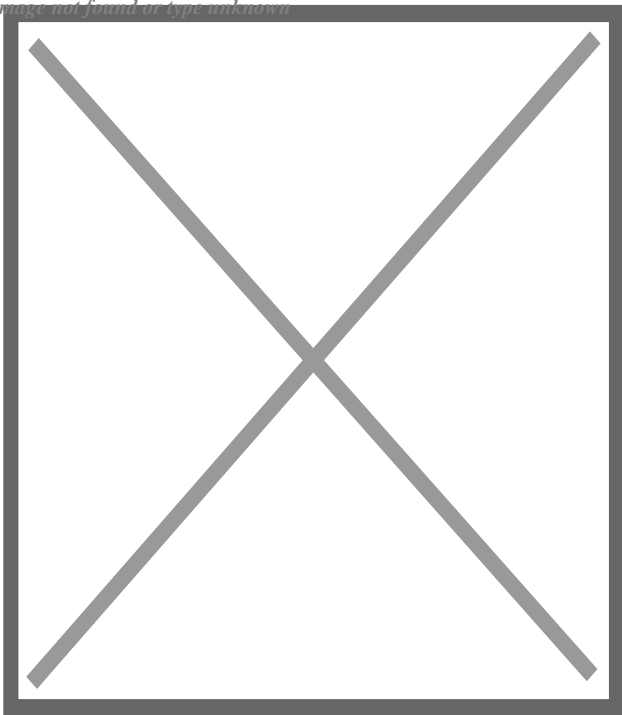


Israeli jets bomb eastern Lebanon for the first time since Gaza war began

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Beirut, February 26 (RHC)-- Lebanese security officials say Israel has targeted eastern Lebanon for the first time since the war on Gaza began in October last year.

At least two people were killed on Monday after Israeli military planes carried out three air strikes on the outskirts of Buday village near Baalbek, a Hezbollah stronghold in the Bekaa Valley about 100km (62 miles) from the Israel-Lebanon border.

The attacks targeted a convoy of trucks, with the Israeli military saying it struck "Hezbollah terror targets deep inside Lebanon".

Confirming the strikes, Israel's army said its jets targeted sites used by Hezbollah for its aerial defence system, adding that they came "in response to the launch of a surface-to-air missile" that downed an Israeli drone earlier on Monday in southern Lebanon, where most Israeli attacks had happened so far.

A Hezbollah official told the Reuters news agency the Israeli strikes hit a warehouse, killing two people. The warehouse is part of Hezbollah's Sajjad Project that sells food products to people in its stronghold at prices lower than the market.

A video posted by Lebanese media outlets showed a plume of smoke rising from the vicinity of the Aadous plain in Buday, west of the city of Baalbek. Two separate videos showed a destroyed area with a burned-out and overturned truck and a damaged SUV lying next to a road, as well as a huge pile of rubble from what seems to be a building.

The air strikes came hours after Hezbollah said its fighters shot down an Israeli drone over its stronghold in a province in southern Lebanon. Another missile fired by Hezbollah towards the drone was intercepted by Israel and landed near a synagogue in a town close to Nazareth in northern Israel. There were no injuries or damage.

The strike on Baalbek, because of its location deep inside Lebanon, is the most significant since the strike in early January on Beirut that killed top Hamas official Saleh al-Arouri.

Hezbollah and Israeli forces have been trading fire nearly daily along the border since the war in Gaza started on October 7, killing at least 47 civilians.

The Iran-backed Shia group, with deep ties with Hamas, says it will stop its attacks on Israel after a ceasefire is reached in Gaza. But Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on Sunday said anyone who thinks a temporary truce for Gaza will also apply to its northern front is "mistaken."

Israel has killed nearly 30,000 Palestinians and displaced 80 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million population after Hamas launched an unprecedented attack into southern Israel on October 7th, killing more than 1,100 people and taking about 240 captive.

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