

Death toll from Israeli strikes on Lebanon rises to 558 as world reacts to massacre

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Beirut, September 24 (RHC)-- The death toll from the Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon has risen to 558 as global condemnations pour in over the regime's bloody offensive.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said 50 children were among those who lost their lives in Monday's massacre. More than 1,800 people were also wounded. The latest attacks marked the deadliest day of violence over the past 35 years in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, during a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart in New York on Tuesday voiced strong support for Lebanon and denounced what he described as "indiscriminate attacks against civilians." "No matter how the situation changes, we will always stand on the side of justice, on the side of our Arab brothers, including Lebanon," Wang told Abdallah Bou Habib.

He emphasized the importance of monitoring regional developments, particularly the recent explosions of communications equipment in Lebanon, and reiterated China's firm opposition to attacks targeting civilians. "Armed force does not represent truth, and might only undermine peace," Wang added.

Arab foreign ministers also issued a robust condemnation of Israel's increasing aggression against Lebanon, reaffirming their steadfast support for the Lebanese government and its citizens, during the annual Arab League Council meeting held on Monday alongside the 79th United Nations General Assembly.

"We strongly condemn the Israeli regime's escalating aggression against Lebanon, particularly the recent assaults that commenced on Monday morning. We express our readiness to support Lebanon in the face of these attacks, while holding the Israeli regime accountable for this alarming escalation," the statement said.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry in a statement warned that Israel's attacks on Lebanon threatened to push the West Asia region deeper into "chaos." "Israel's attacks on Lebanon mark a new phase in its efforts to drag the entire region into chaos," the statement said.

The ministry added that "the countries that unconditionally support Israel are helping [Israeli prime minister Benjamin] Netanyahu shed blood for his political interests."

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot on Monday said that France urged all involved parties and their supporters to deescalate tensions and prevent a regional conflict that could have catastrophic consequences, particularly for civilians. The country has also requested an emergency meeting of the Security Council regarding Lebanon to take place this week.

The ministry urged all institutions responsible for maintaining international peace and security, especially the UN Security Council, as well as the international community, to take necessary measures without any delay.

The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell warned on Monday that the escalating clashes between Israel and Lebanon threaten to plunge the region into an all-out war. "We're seeing more military strikes, more damage, more collateral damage, more victims," Borrell said ahead of a gathering of world leaders at the United Nations.

He emphasized the urgent need for collective action to stop the crisis, stating that everyone must fully commit to finding a solution during discussions in New York.

The top EU diplomat said "despite all the diplomatic capacity that we have deployed, nothing has been able to stop the war" in Gaza.

As he held a meeting with Brazil's Landless Movement in Caracas, Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro referred to the Israeli strikes in Lebanon on Monday as "genocide," calling it a global battle between fascism and the people. "It is no longer simply a threat, it is a reality," Maduro said, adding that what is happening now in Lebanon is genocide against the Arab nation.

Greece's Foreign Minister, George Gerapetritis, said that Israel is not facing sufficient pressure to end the war in Gaza, adding that the escalation in Lebanon is a minefield that the international community may not be able to deal with.

"We have not prevented the spillover, and the more dispersed the war becomes, the more the situation becomes more complicated to be solved," he said, adding "Lebanon could easily be a zone of tremendous hostility, and this is something that we cannot deal with. It's a clear minefield."

Gerapetritis emphasized the importance of collaboration between Arabs and Europeans on coming up with unified initiatives instead of pursuing separate actions, noting that the recent escalation at the Lebanon border with the Israeli occupied territories highlighted a significant international failure.

Jordan's King Abdullah II has affirmed his country's "absolute support for Lebanon, its security, sovereignty, and the safety of its citizens in the face of Israel's war on it."

Speaking with Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Monday, the Jordanian King highlighted the risks posed by Israel's escalating actions and underscored the urgent need for global intervention to avert a regional conflict.

He emphasized that the path to peace begins with an "immediate end to the war on Gaza."

Other countries, including Egypt, Syria, Qatar and Iraq, in separate statements have also condemned Israel's aggression against Lebanon and expressed their solidarity with the Lebanese government and people.

This comes as Mikati urged the United Nations and the world powers to deter what he called Israel's "plan that aims to destroy Lebanese villages and towns."

Residents from different villages in southern Lebanon shared images on social media depicting their towns under attack, which prompted thousands of people to flee southern Lebanon, causing significant traffic jam on the main highway leading to Beirut.

Lebanon has suspended educational activities in universities and schools, as numerous campuses are set to serve as shelters for individuals in need of refuge.

Lebanon's healthcare system is already facing significant pressure as it works to treat the injuries resulting from last week's explosions involving pagers and walkie-talkies.

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