

Israel bombards Beirut suburbs as fighting rages in southern Lebanon

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Smoke and flames rise after an Israeli strike on a building in the Chiyah district of Beirut's southern suburbs [Mohamed Azakir/Reuters]

Beirut, November 23 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have bombarded southern Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut, killing at least five medics and crumpling a multistorey building, as ground troops have clashed with Hezbollah fighters in the south.

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli warplanes launched strikes on Friday on two buildings just inside Beirut's southern suburbs.

A missile struck the middle of an 11-storey building housing shops, a gym and apartments located on a usually busy street in the heavily populated area. The impact sparked a fireball and caused the structure to collapse on top of itself, littering the road with debris.

The NNA reported people fled an adjacent neighbourhood after Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee warned in a post on the social media platform X that the military would strike "Hezbollah facilities and interests" in Chiyah. Evacuation orders also included the areas of Haret Hreik and Ghobeiry.

The NNA earlier on Friday reported several other Israeli strikes on south Beirut, adding: "Thick smoke was seen rising from the vicinity of the Lebanese University" in the Hadath neighbourhood. The Israeli military said in a statement its "fighter jets completed a new round of strikes" on Beirut's southern suburbs.

In eastern Beirut's Baalbek, an Israeli strike killed the director general of Dar al-Amal University Hospital, Ali Allam. The attack in the town of Douris killed six other people, NNA said, citing the Health Ministry.

In southern Lebanon, Israeli troops on Friday entered for the first time the village of Deir Mimas, about 2.5km (1.5 miles) from the border with Israel, the NNA reported. "Enemy reconnaissance aircraft" were flying over Deir Mimas, which has been largely emptied of residents, warning people "not to leave their homes", the NNA reported.

Hezbollah said its fighters targeted Israeli soldiers in the area with rockets and artillery. The Israeli army has been seeking to advance at several points along the border, most prominently in the town of Khiam, where Hezbollah said it repeatedly attacked troops on Friday.

The Israeli military issued warnings for part of the coastal city of Tyre and nearby areas as well as several other locations in the country's south.

Israeli fighter jets launched a series of strikes on alleged Hezbollah targets in Tyre, including command headquarters, intelligence infrastructure, weapons depots, observation posts and military buildings, Adraee said.

At least five healthcare workers from the Islamic Health Organization were killed in the Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon, according to the Ministry of Public Health. Three were killed in Qatrani in the Jezzine district while two other medics from the same organisation were killed in Deir Qanoun Ras al-Ain. The ministry condemned the killings as "war crimes."

"The trajectory of this conflict is one of escalation at a time when it is becoming clear that the latest attempt by the US administration to bring about a ceasefire has failed," she said, referring to the latest United States-led push to secure a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Also on Friday, four Italian soldiers with the United Nations peacekeeping mission sustained wounds when two rockets hit a UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) base in the village of Chamaa.

Italy's Ministry of Defence said in a statement that the two 122mm rockets hit a bunker and a room near the international military police headquarters, causing damage to surrounding infrastructure.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni decried the incident and expressed “deep indignation and concern” over “new attacks suffered by the Italian headquarters of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon”.

Since Israel launched its ground offensive in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL soldiers have suffered several attacks. “These attacks are unacceptable,” Meloni said in a statement, calling on “the parties on the ground to guarantee, at all times, the safety of UNIFIL soldiers and to collaborate to quickly identify those responsible”.

Josep Borrell, the EU’s foreign policy chief, also condemned the attack. “Attacks against UNIFIL are a grave and unacceptable violation of international law and must stop,” he said in a post on X.

Months of cross-border fire between Israel and Hezbollah over the Gaza war escalated into an all-out conflict in September with Israel conducting an extensive bombing campaign across the country and sending ground troops into southern Lebanon.

More than 3,600 people have been killed in Israeli attacks across Lebanon since October last year, and more than 15,000 have been wounded.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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