

Israel strikes Lebanon as Western diplomats warn of escalation

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Beirut, July 28 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime has carried out airstrikes against the positions of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah in southern Lebanon as Western diplomats are scrambling to prevent any further escalation in fighting between the two sides.

The Israeli military conducted air raids in several towns in southern Lebanon overnight on Saturday after it accused Hezbollah of firing a rocket that killed a dozen people in the town of the Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights earlier in the day.

At least 12 people were killed and several others wounded on Saturday in a rocket attack on a football pitch in the town of the Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

In a statement, Hezbollah denied responsibility for the strike, saying “the Islamic Resistance has absolutely nothing to do with the incident, and categorically denies all false allegations in this regard.”

Some reports said the explosion was likely caused by a stray projectile fired by Israel’s so-called Iron Dome missile system. The Israeli regime, however, insisted on blaming Hezbollah for the incident.

Israel’s minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant described the strike “a terrible tragedy” as he visited the scene of the rocket attack in Majdal Shams. “Hezbollah is responsible for it and they will pay the price,” Gallant said, as thousands of mourners gathered in the village for the victims’ funeral ceremonies.

Israeli foreign minister Israel Katz also said Hezbollah had “crossed all red lines”, warning that the regime’s response will be accordingly. The latest Israeli strikes come amid fears that the fighting would spiral into a regional war.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said caution was necessary, stressing that Washington doesn’t want to see the conflict escalate.

The UN’s special coordinator for Lebanon, as well as the UN’s peace-keeping force along the Lebanese border with the occupied territories, urged “maximum restraint” after the rocket attack.

They went on to say that both sides must “put a stop to the ongoing intensified exchanges of fire,” adding that “It could ignite a wider conflagration that would engulf the entire region in a catastrophe beyond belief.”

Meanwhile, Norway’s Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide condemned the Majdal Shams attack, warning that “an escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah could represent a turning point” in the region.

He also called on all relevant parties to urge conflicting sides to exercise restraint and avoid this developing into a major regional war, emphasizing that an escalation of retaliatory attacks could have consequences for the security situation in the entire region.

The French Foreign Ministry also denounced the rocket attack in a statement, while demanding that everything possible be done to avoid a new military escalation.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock also condemned the “deplorable” rocket strike on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

“The perfidious attacks must stop immediately. It is important to act with cool heads. Far too many people have died already in this conflict,” Baerbock said in a post on X.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October last year, shortly after the regime launched a genocidal war against the Gaza Strip following a surprise operation by its resistance groups.

The resistance group has vowed to keep up its retaliatory attacks as long as the Israeli regime continues its Gaza war. Hezbollah officials have repeatedly said they do not want a war with Israel while stressing that they are prepared in case it occurs.

Two Israeli wars waged against Lebanon in 2000 and 2006 were met with strong resistance from Hezbollah, resulting in the retreat of the regime in both conflicts.

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