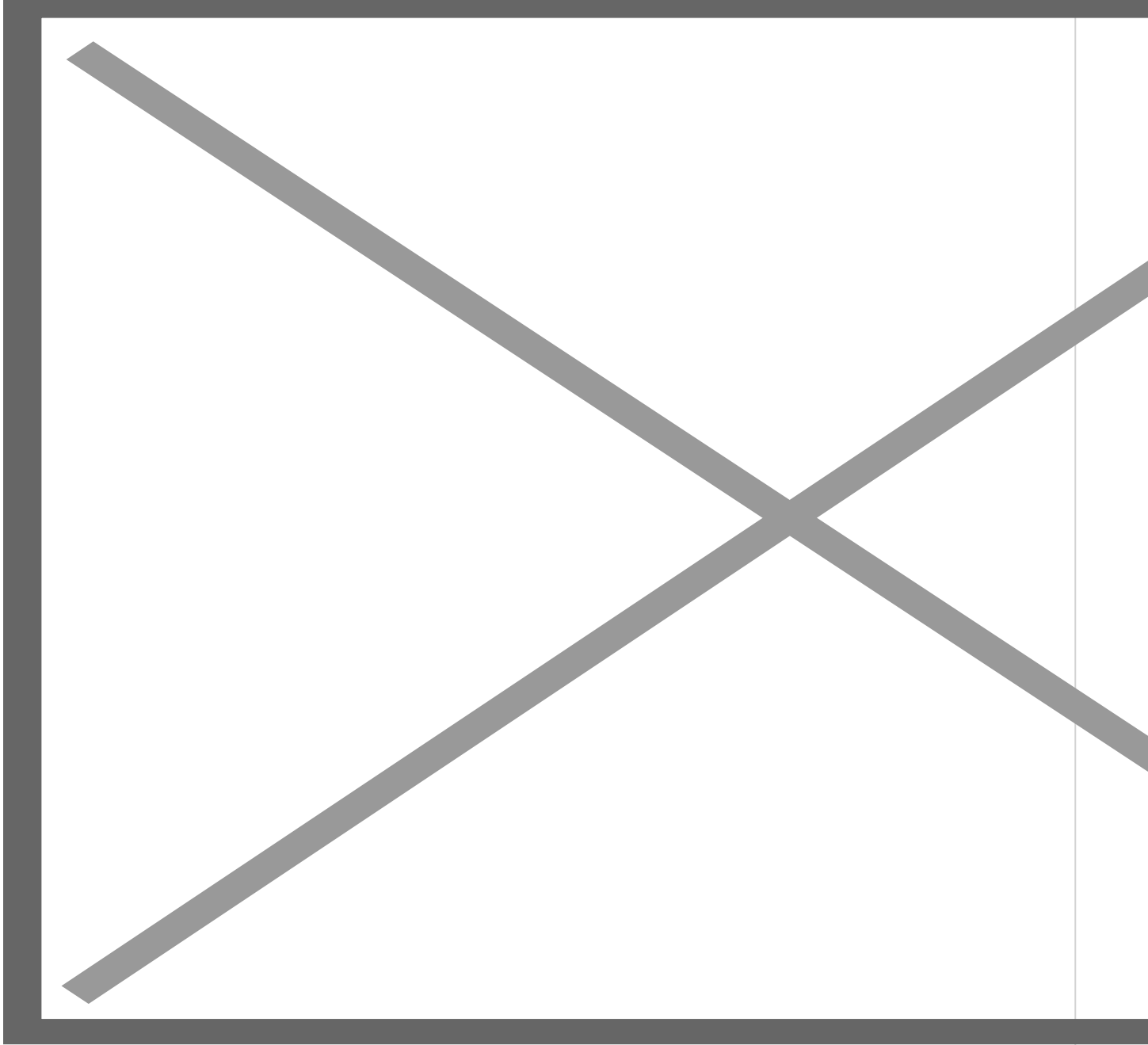


*Thousands of people in south
Lebanon flee intense Israeli
bombardment*

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The Israeli military announced that it hit some 300 targets, saying it was going after Hezbollah weapons sites. Cars sit in traffic in Sidon, southern Lebanon as they flee Israeli air strikes hitting places further south. [Mohammed Zaatari/AP Photo]

Beirut, September 23 (RHC)-- Israel launched hundreds of air attacks in southern and eastern Lebanon on Monday, killing more than 274 people, as the Israeli military called on residents to immediately evacuate places where it claimed that Hezbollah stores weapons.

Thousands of people fled southern Lebanon, jamming the main highway to Beirut. At least 1,024 people were injured in the attacks, the Health Ministry said.

The Israeli military said it hit 300 targets linked to Hezbollah weapons sites on Monday. It said it was expanding the operation to include areas of the Bekaa Valley, along Lebanon's eastern border.

Residents of different villages in southern Lebanon posted photos on social media that they said showed their towns being struck. The wave of air attacks came a day after Hezbollah fired more than 100 rockets into northern Israel, with some landing near the city of Haifa.

Hezbollah's rockets were in response to an Israeli air strike on a Beirut suburb on Friday that killed a top Hezbollah military commander and more than a dozen of the group's members, along with civilians including women and children.

Last week, thousands of communications devices, used mainly by Hezbollah members, exploded in different parts of Lebanon, killing 39 people and wounding nearly 3,000. Lebanon blamed the attacks on Israel, but Israel did not confirm or deny its responsibility.

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