

Israeli attacks kill at least 109 people in Lebanon as aggressions escalate

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People stand on the rubble at the site of the Israeli air strike that killed Lebanon's Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut's southern suburbs, September 29 [Ali Alloush/Reuters]

Beirut, September 30 (RHC)-- Lebanon has seen another bloody day as relentless Israeli bombardment killed at least 109 people across the country and injured 359 others, according to health officials.

A single attack in Ain al-Delb near the southern Sidon flattened two residential buildings, killing 32 people, Lebanon's Health Ministry said. Many displaced families sheltering at the site were among the victims.

While Israel said it attacked dozens of Hezbollah targets, Lebanese officials said the bombardment struck homes and buildings in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa, Baalbek-Hermel governorate and the southern suburbs of Beirut.

In the early hours of Monday, local media outlets reported an Israeli air strike in the Kola bridge area in the heart of Beirut. The bombing is Israel's first attack within the city limits since the start of the hostilities last year and will likely be seen as another escalation of the conflict.

The bombing of municipal Beirut suggests that the Lebanese capital, which was previously seen as a safe haven from Israeli attacks, is now in the line of fire as well – like much of the rest of the country.

It came two days after Israel assassinated Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah in an enormous series of air raids in the southern suburbs of Beirut that flattened several buildings.

Despite the heavy damage Israeli assassinations have inflicted on Hezbollah's political and military leadership, the group continued to launch attacks against Israel on Sunday. Hezbollah announced several military operations against Israeli bases as well as a rocket attack targeting the city of Safad.

Israel launched a major bombing campaign against Lebanon on September 23 with the stated aim of pushing Hezbollah off its border. The offensive has killed hundreds and left widespread destruction in villages and towns across Lebanon – especially in the south of the country.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said on Sunday that as many as one million people had been displaced by the violence, accusing Israel of conducting "criminal operations daily" across the country.

Mikati said about 118,000 displaced people were staying at 778 designated shelters, but that the real number was much larger, with many people staying with friends and relatives or renting out their own places.

"One million people moved from one place to another in days in the largest displacement crisis in the region," he said.

When Israel started attacking south Lebanon earlier this month, it warned people to leave areas where Hezbollah may be storing weapons before proceeding to bomb homes in hundreds of villages across the area in an apparent unprecedented campaign.

Then early on Saturday, the Israeli military issued specific evacuation orders for large parts of southern Beirut's suburbs – akin to the forced displacement directives used in Gaza over the past year.

That resulted in thousands of people scrambling to reach Beirut's city limits. Many have been sleeping in the city's streets and on its beaches.

Ali Hijazi, Lebanon director for the international charity Lutheran World Relief, said displaced Lebanese people had to leave their homes in minutes with few belongings as they fled for their lives. "People are really now living in fear and they are really going to the unknown," Hijazi told Al Jazeera.

"They are really scared and worried whether this crisis will last longer ... they are really in limbo."

The Lebanese group has said it would continue its attacks on Israeli bases in the north of the country until Israel ends its Gaza offensive.

For months, the violence was contained to the border region. But earlier this month, Israel started an escalatory campaign against Hezbollah.

On September 17th and 18th, booby-trapped wireless communication devices associated with Hezbollah exploded across Lebanon, injuring thousands and killing dozens, including civilians. Lebanon blamed the unprecedented attack on Israel.

Days later, an Israeli strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut targeting a top Hezbollah commander killed at least 45 people and injured dozens more.

Now, the fighting is appearing increasingly like an all-out war. Yemen's Houthis and other resistance organisations have also fired missiles and drones at Israel in support of Hezbollah and Palestinian groups in Gaza.

On Sunday, Israel carried out air raids at ports and power plants in Yemen.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military has pushed on with its offensive in Gaza, which has killed more than 41,500 Palestinians and destroyed large parts of the territory.

[Source: Al Jazeera]

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