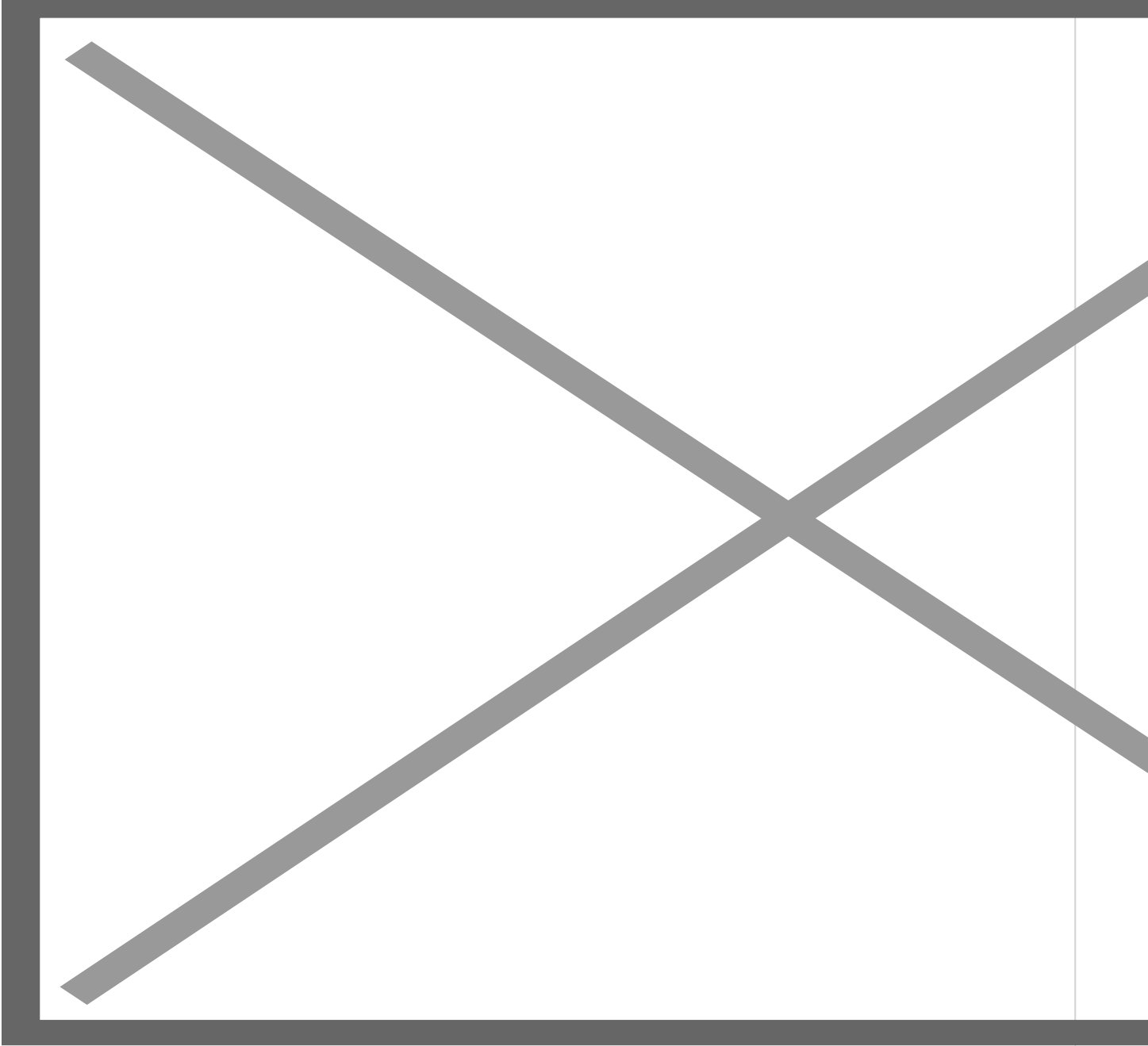


*UN secretary-general warns
Middle East is fast becoming an
inferno*

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A southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, following another Israeli attack

United Nations, October 3 (RHC)-- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Wednesday reiterated his urgent call for an end to violence and a diplomatic resolution in the Middle East shortly after Israel's foreign minister declared that the U.N. chief was barred from entering the country, a move that drew international condemnation.

"The raging fires in the Middle East are fast becoming an inferno," Guterres told an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Wednesday, denouncing Israel's "relentless airstrikes across Lebanon," devastation of the Gaza Strip, and obstruction of a cease-fire agreement that could pull the region back from the brink of all-out war.

"Since last October, Israel has conducted in Gaza the most deadly and destructive military campaign in my years as secretary-general," said Guterres. "The suffering endured by the Palestinian people in Gaza is beyond imagination."

"Each escalation has served as a pretext for the next," he continued. "We must never lose sight of the tremendous toll that this growing conflict is taking on civilians. We cannot look away from systematic violations of international humanitarian law. This deadly cycle of tit-for-tat violence must stop. Time is running out."

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