

Israel bombing southern Lebanon as government and military officials threaten full-scale invasion

Oscar Grenfell
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On Thursday, Israel conducted its largest bombing raids against Lebanon in years, as the Zionist regime's imperialist-backed campaign of genocidal violence, terrorist attacks and military aggression brings the Middle East to the brink of all-out war.

The aerial bombardment came after Mossad-orchestrated explosions of pagers maimed thousands across Lebanon on Tuesday and Wednesday, in a massive act of state terrorism.

Unnamed Lebanese security sources told Reuters that Thursday's Israeli air raids were the most intensive since the genocide in Gaza began last October. In that time, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has conducted repeated air incursions into Lebanese territory, targeting villages in its south and killing an estimated 600 people.

According to Lebanon's National News Agency, yesterday's Israeli strikes, beginning in the late afternoon local time, struck the southern towns of Adshit-Qusayr, Qabrikha, Bani Hayyan, Markaba, Reb Thalatheen, Majadel and Mahrouneh. The two regional districts targeted, Marjeyoun and Tyre, have estimated populations of 86,000 and 270,000 respectively.

There are conflicting accounts of the number of Israeli strikes, but they range between 50 and 100 in the space of two hours. Unverified footage posted to X/Twitter has shown massive fires in the wooded areas of southern Lebanon, as well as extensive damage to houses and other civilian buildings. As of this writing, the death toll is unknown.

Israeli war planes also flew over Beirut deliberately breaking the sound barrier to cause sonic booms in a "mock" raid aimed at terrorising the capital city's population of 2.4 million.

Israeli government and military leaders have openly threatened a full-scale onslaught on Lebanon and are increasingly massing troops on its southern border to that end.

On Wednesday, as pagers were exploding in Lebanon,

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant visited the Ramat David Airbase and addressed its troops. Ramat David is the northernmost Israeli air base and would have been where the war planes that struck Lebanon the next day departed from.

The visit of Gallant, one of the main butchers of Gaza, to the north was a clear signal of the massive escalation that is underway. The Defence Minister proclaimed "The center of gravity is moving north. We are diverting forces, resources, and energy toward the north." This, he said, marked "a new phase of this war."

IDF chief Herzi Halevi visited the army's Northern Command also on Wednesday, declaring that the military has "many more capabilities." Halevi added, "The rule is that every time we take action at a certain stage, the next two stages are ready to go forward strongly."

The head of Northern Command Major General Ori Gordin stated, "The mission is clear: We are determined to change the security reality as soon as possible. The commitment of the commanders and the troops here is complete, with peak readiness for any task that will be required."

The flurry of visits to the north coincided with drills by IDF reservists, which the *Times of Israel* said "simulated fighting in Lebanon, including maneuvering in enemy territory and extracting wounded under fire."

At the same time, the IDF's 98th Division has been transferred from Gaza to the northern border, joining the 36th Division which is already stationed there. The 98th Division is composed of elite paratroopers, i.e., they specialise in being transferred by airplane into hostile territory, while the 36th Division, comprising regular troops, has been used over decades in incursions into Syrian and Lebanese territories during major wars.

Clearly, what is being threatened and planned is a full-scale ground invasion, on a scale of the 2006 invasion that displaced an estimated 1 million Lebanese civilians or even more.

The situation now, however, is far more explosive. The Zionist regime is simultaneously threatening a massive land war against Lebanon, continuing its ethnic cleansing operations in Gaza and increasingly the West Bank and has carried out direct attacks on Iran, including the July assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in its capital, Tehran.

Each stage of the Israeli escalation, tending inexorably towards a massive regionwide conflagration, has been encouraged and directly aided by American imperialism and its allies. The Zionist plans for a greater Israel, through an onslaught against the Palestinians and on Lebanon, Syria and Iran, are part of a US-led war drive particularly targeting Tehran, which Washington has for years viewed as an obstacle to untrammelled dominance over the resource-rich Middle East.

The Biden administration, together with its closest partners, has greenlit the latest Israeli operations, refusing to condemn Mossad's terrorist atrocities involving the tampered pagers. Sections of the political and media establishment in the US, Britain and other allied states such as Australia have made plain the real position of the major powers, glorifying and celebrating the terrorist attacks.

The subsequent developments, including yesterday's Israeli bombing campaign and the massing of IDF troops at the Lebanese border, show that the pager attacks were a link in a chain of a broader military operation tending towards a ground invasion, which could only be prepared in conjunction with Washington. That underscores the bogus character of claims that the US and its allies were unaware of the terror that Israel was planning to unleash.

Lebanon's Minister of Public Health Firas Abiad reported yesterday that the death toll from the pager attacks had increased to 37, with 200 others still in critical condition. At least two children are among those who have perished. Some 3,000 people had been admitted to around 90 hospitals all over the country.

The devices were set off in the mid-afternoon, in a clear attempt to inflict maximum carnage. While Israel claimed to be targeting the Hezbollah movement, pagers blew up in hospitals, clerical offices and shopping centres. That too was a calculated outcome, given that Hezbollah is one of Lebanon's largest political parties and is involved in governmental and civilian activities in southern Lebanon. Some 5,000 pagers are reported to have been affected.

In a letter to the United Nations seen by Reuters, Lebanese authorities reportedly stated that initial investigations showed the pagers to have been implanted with explosive material before being delivered to the country and to have been detonated via electronic messages.

The pagers were products of Taiwanese company Gold

Apollo. Taiwan has been transformed into a frontline territory for US provocations against mainland China and has close ties to Israel, having repeatedly hosted high-level Israeli delegations over recent years. The *New York Times* has reported that a Hungarian-based company, contracted by Gold Apollo to manufacture the pagers, was in fact a Mossad front. Gold Apollo and representatives of the Hungarian company have denied any knowledge of the plot or involvement.

Whatever the truth to the various assertions, it is clear that the terror in Lebanon was the outcome of a complex global operation, spanning multiple countries and continents. It would inevitably have been known to the CIA and other Western intelligence agencies.

In addition to Lebanese civilians, among the victims was Iran's envoy to the country Mojtaba Amani, who reportedly lost an eye in one of the explosions. Pagers were also detonated in Syria.

In a rare unscheduled address Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah, said yesterday that Israel had "crossed all red lines," and that the pager attacks amounted to a "declaration of war."

Even as it is setting the region ablaze, Israel is intensifying its genocide of the Palestinians which has claimed as many as 200,000 lives during the last 11 months. Over the past 24 hours, there have been reports of intensive Israeli operations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, to which much of the Gaza Strip's population was forced earlier this year.

The IDF is also carrying out murderous operations in the West Bank, to where the genocide is increasingly being extended. On Thursday, an Associated Press reporter filmed IDF troops pushing apparently lifeless bodies of Palestinians off the roof of a multi-level building during a raid in the town of Qabatiya.

The events in Lebanon are a warning that the barbarism that has been inflicted on the Palestinians is and will be broadened, as part of the eruption of imperialist militarism throughout the Middle East and globally.



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