

Israel massively expands Middle East war, killing nearly 500 in Lebanon

Andre Damon
23 September 2024

Israel launched a massive attack on Lebanon on Monday killing 492 people, including 35 children, 58 women and two medics in over a thousand separate airstrikes.

Monday's mass killing far outstripped the intensity of Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon, during which 1,000 people were killed during an entire month.

Israel's bombings followed its mass terror attack last week, in which thousands of pagers and other communication devices exploded throughout Lebanon, killing 37 people and injuring thousands.

In language echoing that used to justify the ongoing Gaza genocide, which has already officially killed more than 41,000 people, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Daniel Hagari declared, "Hezbollah uses the civilian population and civilian homes as a human shield for its terrorist activity."

Israel's massacre in Lebanon prompted mass evacuations from Southern Lebanon to the capital city of Beirut. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the population of Southern Lebanon to evacuate, claiming that they would be allowed to return to their homes.

But the real plans of the Netanyahu government and its imperialist backers were spelled out by Amichai Chikli, Israel's Minister of Diaspora and Combating Antisemitism, who called for Israel to carry out a land grab in Southern Lebanon.

"Lebanon, even though it has a flag and even though it has political institutions, does not meet the definition of a country," he said. "The drawing lines of Sykes and Picot, which were based on the distribution of areas of influence and resources between Great Britain and France, did not survive the test of time."

In a testament to the scale of the military operation now being conducted, Israel's National Unity Party

Chairman MK Benny Gantz declared, "We must act not only against Hezbollah but also against the sovereign state of Lebanon, which bears responsibility for terrorism emanating from its territory."

This massive escalation is being coordinated in real time with the United States, which is funding, arming and politically supporting it.

In a press briefing Monday, Pentagon spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder reported that "Secretary [of Defense Lloyd] Austin spoke with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Saturday and Sunday evenings Eastern Time.

"During both calls, Secretary Austin reaffirmed the United States' commitment to Israel's right to defend itself," said Ryder. "The Secretary also made clear that the United States remains postured to protect US forces and personnel in the region."

Ryder announced that the United States would be sending additional US troops to the region. Currently, about 40,000 US troops are deployed throughout the Middle East, including in Iraq and Syria. The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier is currently deployed in the region, while the USS Harry S. Truman is currently underway to the area.

While the Biden administration has publicly claimed that it is seeking a de-escalation of tensions and a "ceasefire," the reality is that it is funding, enabling and encouraging Israel's role in both the Gaza genocide and its wider attacks in the Middle East.

In July, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu received a standing ovation from Democratic and Republican members of both houses of Congress, followed by separate meetings with US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. After her meeting with Netanyahu, Harris, the Democrats' candidate for president, declared, "I will always ensure

that Israel is able to defend itself, including from Iran and Iran-backed militias, such as Hamas and Hezbollah”—an effective green light to expand the war beyond Gaza.

The US press, moreover, is beginning to give a hint about the scale of Israel’s plans. In an article published Monday, *New York Times* chief Washington correspondent David Sanger wrote, “Netanyahu is no longer satisfied with carrying out periodic brush-backs of Hezbollah’s power. In his view, Oct. 7 changed everything and the time has come to solve the problem once and for all—both in Gaza and in Lebanon.”

In other words, Israel and its imperialist backers have seized upon the October 7 attacks to carry out not only their “final solution” of the Palestinian question but to completely reorganize the Middle East under imperialist domination by provoking a region-wide war.

US imperialism sees this war as one front in a global struggle targeting Russia and China, aimed at securing US domination all over the globe.

Just days after launching his massacre in Lebanon, Netanyahu will address the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, which is being turned into a war summit by the imperialist powers.

Ahead of the summit, a group of UN officials issued a statement condemning the catastrophe created by the Israeli siege and bombardment of Gaza. It declared:

More than 41,000 Palestinians in Gaza—the majority of them civilians, including women, children, older persons, and at times entire families—have reportedly been killed, and more than 95,500 have been injured, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. ... More than 2 million Palestinians are without protection, food, water, sanitation, shelter, healthcare, education, electricity, and fuel—the basic necessities to survive. Families have been forcibly displaced, time and time again, from one unsafe place to the next, with no way out.

With the expansion of the war into Lebanon, not only the people of Gaza but broad sections of the population of the Middle East risk a similarly catastrophic fate.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact