

# Israel threatens to turn Beirut into Khan Younis and Lebanon into Gaza

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Days after launching attacks on Lebanon, as Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich toured the border with Lebanon he vowed that "very soon, Dahiya will look like Khan Younis." The city in southern Gaza has been decimated in Israel's genocidal war against Palestinians in the enclave.

The methods that Israel has employed in Gaza against the Palestinians are now Israel's standard operating procedures in eliminating its opponents in Iran and Lebanon and extending its borders to establish a Greater Israel, a longstanding Zionist policy.

That Smotrich's threat was barely reported in the mainstream media confirms that the imperialist powers consider Israel's methods and aims their own.

Israel has said it intends to disarm and destroy Hezbollah, which is allied with Tehran, and thereby eliminate Iran's remaining influence in the Middle East, once and for all. Hezbollah, backed by the Shi'ite Amal party and the impoverished Shi'ite masses, emerged in the 1980s as a mass movement amid the bloody convulsions of Lebanon's civil war, fuelled by US interference and Israel's brutal occupation of the south.

Having already prepared plans for a renewed offensive against Hezbollah before the US-Israeli attack on Iran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seized upon Hezbollah's rocket fire into Israel. The launches—carried out in response to the US-Israeli assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei—were used as the pretext for a broad military operation aimed at disarming and destroying the Islamist group.

This was the first time Hezbollah had attacked Israel since the November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end the year-long hostilities, during which Israel's bombardment killed 4,000 people, including 300 children, injured 17,000 and destroyed buildings and infrastructure estimated to cost \$11 billion to reconstruct. Israel in contrast had violated the ceasefire more than 10,000 times, according to the United Nations.

This time, the attack takes place amid US President

Donald Trump's war of extermination against Iran aimed at bringing its vast resources and strategically critical position under full imperialist domination, as part of broader preparations for war against China.

Israeli military officials have said eliminating Hezbollah will take months of ground operations inside Lebanon and is likely to continue beyond the end of the war against Iran.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has called up 100,000 reservists. It has deployed tanks, infantry-fighting vehicles and mine-clearing bulldozers to the border, while ground forces have pushed into southern Lebanon, seizing hilltops near the border. This signals a return to the Israeli occupation that lasted from 1982 to 2000.

The IDF instructed all residents south of the Litani River, many of whom had been displaced multiple times during earlier Israel's bombardments, to evacuate to the north. It then ordered the evacuation of Beirut's southern suburbs that together have resulted in the displacement of nearly 760,000 people. More than 10 percent of the country's six million population have now been displaced and the true number is likely higher, as many families have fled without registering.

Some are now in their third year of displacement without having returned home. Tens of thousands are living in schools and government buildings while others are sleeping in cars and on street corners and Beirut's Corniche. Lebanese leaders and international aid groups have warned of a mounting humanitarian crisis in a country still recovering from the previous hostilities.

Lebanon's Sunni elite are collaborating with Israel. On March 2, Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's prime minister, declared "all Hezbollah's security and military activities" illegal, effective immediately and demanded it hand over its weapons to the state, a call that Hezbollah rejected. This was a remarkable escalation against the party which has been cast adrift following the US-aligned, former Jihadist Ahmed al-Shara'a's takeover in Syria and the US-Israeli war on Iran. Hezbollah's longtime ally, Nabih Berri, the speaker of parliament who heads the Shi'ite Amal party, supported the

move that leaves it politically isolated.

The IDF has carried out hundreds of air strikes on Beirut, targeting the densely populated southern suburbs, killing more than 600 people and injuring at least 1,000, as well as hitting Tyre and other southern towns and cities. It claims it has killed 200 Hezbollah fighters. It has also bombed Hezbollah's Al-Qard al-Hasan financial institution that provides interest-free loans and other financial services to the Shi'ite community, aimed at severing Hezbollah's links with its support base.

An IDF drone attacked a seafront hotel popular with tourists in Raouche, killing at least four people and wounding 10, according to health officials. Israel said the attack had killed five senior commanders of Iran's elite Quds Force, the overseas operations arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Human Rights Watch, the New York-based rights group, issued a report Monday stating it had evidence that Israel had fired white phosphorus munitions over a residential area in southern Lebanon's Yohmor, with fires breaking out in at least two homes on March 3. White phosphorus use in war against civilians is outlawed. Israel used white phosphorus missiles in the 2006 war on Lebanon, as well as more recently in the 2023-24 hostilities, even firing within 100 metres of a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) base, injuring 15 peacekeepers, after an incident where Israeli tanks had broken into the base.

Israel's warplanes carried out waves of attacks across southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, east of Beirut, while the military ordered residents of Tyre and Sidon to evacuate cities north of the Litani River, ahead of "imminent" strikes on alleged Hezbollah infrastructure.

The Lebanese government has reportedly proposed direct negotiations with Israel, mediated by the Trump administration, to end the war and reach a broader peace arrangement. However, both Washington and Jerusalem rejected this, with US officials insisting that the Lebanese government had to carry out "real action" to disarm Hezbollah and US envoy Tom Barrack telling his Lebanese counterparts, "Stop with the bullshit."

A great deal more than the disarmament of Hezbollah is on the Israeli agenda, as the Lebanese government announced when banning the party's military activities on March 2. It is seeking Hezbollah's complete outlawing and dissolution as a political party.

The war now unfolding across Lebanon, Iran, and the wider Middle East is the expression of a deepening crisis of imperialist domination in a region whose ruling classes—whether in Beirut, Riyadh, Doha, Cairo, or Tel Aviv—are all tied by a thousand threads to global finance capital and the strategic imperatives of Washington.

Israel's assault on Lebanon is inseparable from the broader effort by the US to reassert control over a region destabilised by decades of war, sanctions and economic collapse as it prepares to take on its economic rival China. The Gulf monarchies, whose wealth rests on the exploitation of migrant labour and the recycling of oil revenues into Western markets, have aligned themselves fully with this project. Their support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, their pressure on Beirut to curb Hezbollah and quiet coordination with Israel reflect the interests of a regional bourgeoisie whose survival depends on the suppression of all social and political opposition.

The working class and rural poor of the Middle East—Lebanese, Palestinian, Iranian, Iraqi, Egyptian, Kurdish, Syrian, and beyond—bears the full weight of war, displacement, unemployment, inflation and the destruction of social infrastructure. The mass displacement of Lebanese civilians is a continuation of the same imperialist logic that has produced the devastation of Gaza, the ruination of Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria and the immiseration of millions across the region.

What is emerging is a unified imperialist-led front—Washington, Israel, the Gulf monarchies, and the comprador elites of the Arab world—against the masses of the Middle East. Their aim is to redraw borders, crush resistance, and secure the region for global capital. The rivalries between them are secondary to their shared class interest in suppressing any movement that threatens their rule.

The only force capable of halting the descent into a region-wide catastrophe is the working class. The struggles of Lebanese workers against austerity, the mass protests in Iraq and Iran, the Palestinian resistance to occupation, and the growing discontent across the Arab world all point to the same conclusion: the fight against war is inseparable from the fight against the capitalist system that produces it. A unified, internationalist movement of the working class across the Middle East—independent of all bourgeois factions, sectarian parties, and imperialist powers—is the only viable path to ending the cycle of war, occupation, and exploitation.



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