

Israel continues to bomb Lebanon, as US media demands renewed onslaught against Iran

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Israeli airstrikes killed at least seven people in the town of al-Abbassieh in southern Lebanon on Thursday, as the bombardment of the country entered its second day since the proclamation of a US-Iran ceasefire.

Thursday's strikes followed Wednesday's onslaught—the deadliest single day in Lebanon since the full-scale war began on March 2. The Israeli military deployed 50 fighter jets that dropped 160 munitions across more than 100 sites in 10 minutes, destroying residential buildings, shops and offices from central Beirut to the southern suburbs. At least 303 people were killed and more than 1,150 wounded, including children. Several strikes hit busy neighborhoods during rush hour without prior warning. Lebanon declared a national day of mourning. At a mosque in the capital, funeral prayers were held while tented settlements for the internally displaced stood across the street.

The massacre came less than 24 hours after US President Donald Trump announced a two-week ceasefire with Iran. The deal was brokered by Pakistan. When Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made the announcement Tuesday evening, he said the ceasefire covered “everywhere, including Lebanon.” Hours later, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that Lebanon was not covered by the deal. Trump dismissed the war in Lebanon as “a separate skirmish.”

The latest attack on Lebanon is part of a US-Israeli onslaught across the Middle East that has used the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas as a pretext for war on a regional scale. Since October 2023, the United States and Israel have waged war in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iran. The combined

death toll across the region runs into the tens of thousands.

In Gaza, more than 72,000 Palestinians have been killed and the territory's hospitals, universities and civilian infrastructure systematically destroyed. In Lebanon, 1,739 people have been killed since the latest Israeli onslaught began on March 2, with nearly 1 million displaced.

In Iran, the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) has documented 3,636 killed since February 28, including 1,701 civilians. Millions have fled their homes. The five-week US bombing campaign has cost American taxpayers at least \$45 billion, with 13 service members killed and nearly 370 wounded.

The Strait of Hormuz remained effectively shut on Thursday. The *New York Times* reported that only a handful of vessels had crossed since the truce began, with shipowners, insurers and others wary of safe passage.

In Washington, the ceasefire produced sharp divisions. Significant sections of the US political establishment argued that the United States had agreed to pause military operations before achieving any of its stated strategic objectives. Iran had not dismantled its nuclear program. The Strait of Hormuz remained under Iranian control. Hezbollah had not been disarmed.

The *Washington Post* editorial board published a column Wednesday headlined, “Ahead of Iran talks in Pakistan, a bad deal is worse than no deal.” The *Post* argued that “the Trump administration negotiates knowing that the Islamic Republic stands to lose more from the war resuming than Washington does.” It noted that “this war killed dozens of Iran's top leaders, but the regime remains intact” and warned that Iran's

“goal will be to string out negotiations as long as possible so they can regroup and rebuild.” Its conclusion: “The desire to seek a settlement is understandable, but no deal is better than a bad one.”

The *Wall Street Journal* editorial board struck a similar note Wednesday in a piece headlined, “Trump Declares Premature Victory in Iran.” The board warned that “the unfortunate truth is that Mr. Trump put himself in this position” through “inconsistent rhetoric on the war—claims of victory amid threats of unleashing ‘Hell.’” Its objection was not that threatening to destroy a civilization is a crime, but that it “raised global fears and undermined support at home and abroad.” If Iran plays “its usual games,” the *Journal* counseled, Trump must “finish the job.”

Democratic Senator Chris Murphy told CNN Wednesday that if Iran retains permanent control of the Strait, “then what, what an error, what a miscalculation this entire endeavor was.”

Trump, for his part, threatened further military escalation. In a post on Truth Social, he declared that “all US ships, aircraft, and military personnel... will remain in place in, and around, Iran, until such time as the REAL AGREEMENT reached is fully complied with.” He warned that if the terms were not honored, “the ‘Shootin’ Starts,’ bigger, and better, and stronger than anyone has ever seen before.”

He concluded: “In the meantime our great Military is Loading Up and Resting, looking forward, actually, to its next Conquest.” He signed off: “AMERICA IS BACK!”

On Wednesday, Trump met with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte at the White House. *Politico* reported that Trump berated Rutte over NATO’s refusal to provide airspace and military bases for the US war on Iran. Trump called the alliance “very disappointing” and demanded that NATO allies send warships to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within days.

On Thursday, Trump posted on Truth Social: “Iran is doing a very poor job, dishonorable some would say, of allowing Oil to go through the Strait of Hormuz. That is not the agreement we have!”



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