

Israel escalates rampage in Lebanon

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Israeli forces struck Lebanon with more than 120 air raids on Tuesday, the sharpest single-day escalation since Israel resumed its bombing of the country in early March. The Lebanese health ministry said at least 31 people were killed and 40 wounded in attacks across the south and the Bekaa Valley.

The ongoing destruction of Lebanon takes place within the framework of the US-Israeli war on Iran launched February 28. While the US media is focused on the terms of negotiations with Iran, Israel is expanding its campaign of mass murder and annexation in Lebanon. The bombing extends the US-Israeli onslaught across the region that began in October 2023 with the genocide in Gaza.

Israeli forces killed fourteen people in the overnight bombing of Burj al-Shamali, including two children and three women. At Mashghara in the Bekaa Valley, Israeli strikes killed 11, including a woman and two children. They killed five at Kawthariyat al-Ruz and four at Habboush, with two children among the dead at each.

The Lebanese health ministry put the cumulative toll since Israel resumed its bombardment of the country on March 2 at 3,213 dead and 9,737 wounded. The World Health Organization has recorded 608 killed in Lebanon since the cease-fire that took effect April 16.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his security cabinet Tuesday that “the IDF is operating with large forces on the ground and seizing dominant terrain. We are fortifying the security strip to protect the northern communities.”

On Monday Netanyahu posted a video declaring: “We are at war with Hezbollah. We are not taking our foot off the gas. On the contrary, I have instructed them to press the pedal even harder.”

Israeli ground forces on Tuesday pushed beyond the so-called Yellow Line, the buffer zone Israel had declared inside southern Lebanese territory. An Israeli

military official quoted by Reuters said the army was “operating in a targeted manner beyond the Forward Defense Line in Lebanon ... in accordance with the directives of the political echelon.”

Hezbollah claimed 32 separate operations Tuesday, targeting Israeli troops at Zawtar al-Sharqiya with rockets, artillery and explosive drones.

The Israeli army ordered the entire city of Nabatiyeh, the second-largest in southern Lebanon, to evacuate in the early hours of Tuesday. Orders for at least 21 additional towns and villages followed through the day, including Mashghara and Sahmar in the Bekaa, and Khirbet Selm, Bir al-Sanasil, Qabrikha, Majdal Selem, Qalawiya, Kfar Dunin, Touline and as-Sawana in the south.

At the village of Qaraoun, near Lebanon’s largest dam, an Israeli drone struck a man on a motorcycle. A civil defense rescuer, Kamel Youssef Zein, drove past, left his family in the car and ran to administer first aid. A second Israeli strike hit the same spot and killed him. The Lebanese Civil Defence directorate released video of the double-tap, identifying Zein as the victim. In the southern town of Khirbet Selm, the National News Agency reported, an Israeli strike targeted an ambulance bound for the village of Bir al-Salasil, forcing it to withdraw.

Three further Israeli strikes hit the immediate vicinity of the Qaraoun dam itself, raising fears about the safety of the reservoir. Other strikes hit near Beaufort Castle, a 12th-century Crusader fortress UNESCO has called one of the best-preserved of its kind.

Israeli far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich wrote on X: “We must put an end to the Hezbollah explosive drone threat. ... For every explosive drone, ten buildings in Beirut must fall.”

The Lebanese bombardment runs in parallel with continuing US attacks on Iran. The US military struck Iranian missile sites near Bandar Abbas on Monday and

sank two Iranian Revolutionary Guards speedboats, with US Central Command calling the action “self-defense strikes.”

Iran’s foreign ministry denounced what it called a “flagrant violation” of the cease-fire and pledged retaliation. Iran’s Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said Tuesday: “The nations and lands of the region will no longer serve as shields for U.S. bases.”

US President Donald Trump is moving, meanwhile, to make normalization with Israel a central war aim. In a Truth Social post over the weekend he wrote that he was “mandatorily requesting that all Countries immediately sign the Abraham Accords,” naming Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt and Jordan.

The escalation in Lebanon coincides with a deepening crisis within the US political establishment over the Trump administration’s negotiations with Iran. Democrats joined Republicans across the Sunday morning talk shows in attacking Trump from the right, denouncing his prospective Iran deal as insufficiently advantageous to US imperialism.

Senator Cory Booker told CNN Sunday that Trump was “being played as a fool.” “He’s got us in a situation that’s worse than it was before.” The United States, Booker told CNN, had “let go of billions of dollars” in negotiations to dismantle Iran’s nuclear program. Giving Iran more money, he warned, would enable Tehran to “fuel their terrorist proxies.”

The commentary being published in the US media reflects the air of desperate crisis facing US imperialism. Thomas Friedman in the *New York Times* asked on Tuesday “How Much Crow Will Trump Have to Eat on Iran?” “Only two questions remain regarding the U.S. war with Iran,” Friedman wrote. “One, how big a plate of crow will President Trump have to eat to end this conflict with at least some achievements? And two, will he tell us the crow he’s eating is lobster or filet mignon?”

Bret Stephens, in a *Times* column Tuesday, made the case for escalating the war regardless of cost. “Heed the words of Robert Frost,” he wrote: “The best way out is always through.” Stephens called for the US to “destroy a facility of military significance to the regime pending a material Iranian concession, and make good on the threat. The next day, two targets, and so on.”

The *Wall Street Journal* published an editorial

Tuesday titled “Iran’s ‘Skirmish’ Strategy in the Strait,” charging that Hezbollah had fired “more than 900 rockets and 1,300 drones since the April 17 Lebanon ‘cease-fire’ began” and demanding “decisive U.S. or Israeli action” to “reverse the dynamic.”

American imperialism, confronted with crises it has no answer to, can only escalate its effort to secure global hegemony through military means. Whatever agreement is made with Iran, if any, will follow the pattern of the 2025 Gaza cease-fire and the Lebanon cease-fires of November 2024 and April 2026, each of which opened the way for a deeper offensive.



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