

Israel-Hamas war

Seventeen killed on deadliest day of Israel-Hizbollah conflict

Cross-border fire has ramped up in recent days, fuelling concerns about a broader regional war



People gather around the remains of a paramedic centre in Hebbariyeh, southern Lebanon, which was destroyed in an Israeli air strike on Wednesday © Mohammed Zaatari/AP

Raya Jalabi and **Malaika Kanaaneh Tapper** in Beirut and **James Shotter** in Jerusalem YESTERDAY

Israeli air strikes killed 16 people in Lebanon overnight and a barrage of retaliatory rocket fire by Hizbollah militants killed one person in Israel, making Wednesday the deadliest day of fighting across the Lebanese border since the Israel-Hamas war began in October.

The incidents came amid an uptick in crossfire in recent days between Israel's military and Iran-backed [Hizbollah](#), including Israel's deepest strikes into Lebanese territory during the current conflict. The latest outbreak of violence followed a relative lull in the tit-for-tat cross-border attacks that began at the same time as the war in Gaza.

The clashes between [Israel](#) and Hizbollah, and targeted assassinations by Israel of senior figures in Hamas and Hizbollah on Lebanese soil, have fuelled concerns about a broader regional conflagration, and have led to the mass evacuation of civilians on both sides of the frontier.

On Wednesday, Israel struck a paramedic centre affiliated with al-Jamaa al-Islamiya, killing seven of its members in the village of Hebbariyeh, according to Lebanon's state news agency NNA. On Tuesday, the leader of al-Jamaa al-Islamiya had said the group had joined Hizbollah in its fight against Israel to "[defend our](#)

[land](#)” and in “support of our brothers in Gaza”.

Later on Wednesday, Israel conducted further strikes, saying it had struck a Hizbollah military compound in Teir Harfa and a “terrorist cell” in Naqoura, both in southern Lebanon. Nine members of Hizbollah and its allied Amal movement were killed, including two paramedics linked to Hizbollah and a local Amal commander, according to the groups and the NNA. The paramedics had been preparing to respond to the Teir Harfa strike, said the NNA.

Hizbollah claimed responsibility for a barrage of rockets fired into the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona and a military base, which killed one person. The group said the rockets were launched as a “response” to the deadly strike on their allies’ paramedic centre. Israel’s military said 45 rockets were fired.

Since October, more than 230 Hizbollah fighters and almost 50 civilians have been

killed in Lebanon, according to a tally by the Financial Times. On the Israeli side of the border, 14 soldiers and eight civilians have been killed in the conflict with Lebanese militants, according to the Israeli military. The US has been leading diplomatic efforts aimed at brokering a deal to de-escalate the situation.

In the wake of Hamas's October 7 attack, Israeli officials have said they will no longer tolerate the presence of Hizbollah forces on the country's northern border, fearing that they could launch a similar assault.

Ori Gordin, head of Israel's northern command, said on Wednesday that Israel was "conducting very significant strikes against Hizbollah", and that it would "continue to be aggressive in order to strike and push Hizbollah back significantly".

"We are determined to change the security situation in the north so that the residents can return to the north safely," he said, referring to the tens of thousands of Israelis who were evacuated from border towns in the early days of the war.



A man inspects a damaged home in Kiryat Shmona, northern Israel, after it was hit by a Hizbollah rocket on Wednesday © Jalaa Marey/AFP/Getty Images

Despite the preparations for a broader conflict, Israeli officials say their preference would be for a diplomatic solution to the fighting with Hizbollah. Hizbollah and Iranian officials have repeatedly said they do not want a broader war with Israel and the US.

Officials and diplomats said, however, that any deal in the north would require an end to hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. "The big question is how you

delink the north from Gaza,” said one diplomat.

“The Israelis know that they need to leave space for things to play out [diplomatically]. But they don’t want to show any weakness and let Hizbollah pick and choose [the course of events].”

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