

**Hiszbollah**

## Hiszbollah walkie-talkies explode in Lebanon in second day of blasts

20 dead and at least 450 wounded in explosions a day after thousands of pagers detonated



Smoke rises from a mobile shop on Wednesday in Sidon, Lebanon © Hassan Hankir/Reuters

**Raya Jalabi** and **Malaika Kanaaneh Tapper** in Beirut, **Neri Zilber** in Tel Aviv and **Mehul Srivastava** in London 6 HOURS AGO

Handheld walkie-talkies and other wireless communication devices used by Hizbollah were detonated across Lebanon on Wednesday, killing at least 20 people and injuring at least 450 a day after thousands of pagers exploded in the country.

The blasts compounded the shock in Lebanon following Tuesday's unprecedented attack using pagers, which [Hizbollah](#) blamed on Israel, vowing revenge. The militant group and Israel are engaged in a war of attrition across the Israel-Lebanon border, which has raised fears of a broader conflict.

The latest deaths and injuries brought the toll from the [two days of blasts](#) to 32 dead, including at least two children, and more than 3,000 injured. Almost 300 of those wounded in Tuesday's blasts remained in a critical condition on Wednesday.

Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant, speaking at an air base in Israel on Wednesday, signalled that the country was entering a new phase of fighting on its northern border with Lebanon.

He spoke after the Israeli army's 98th division — which includes paratroopers and commando units — was ordered to move to Israel's northern border, according to a person familiar with the matter.

“The ‘centre of gravity’ is moving north, meaning that we are allocating forces, resources and energy for the northern arena,” said Gallant. “I believe that we are at the start of a new phase in the war and we must adapt.”

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a brief video statement on Wednesday: “I’ve already said [that] we will return the residents of the north securely to their homes. And this is precisely what we will do.”

Israel has not commented directly on the blasts.

PLAY | 00:27

Emergency services attend an explosion in Sidon, Lebanon's third-largest city, on Wednesday © Reuters

Hizbollah, which has yet to comment on Wednesday's explosions, was left reeling after the co-ordinated attacks [dealt a humiliating blow](#) and triggered widespread panic and confusion.

Many across Lebanon are anxiously awaiting the group's response, but with its communications networks largely struck down, experts said it was hard to see how it could launch an immediate retaliation.

Hizbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, is expected to address the security breaches in a speech on Thursday.

The UN's high commissioner for human rights, Volker Türk, said of the pager attacks on Tuesday that "the fear and terror unleashed is profound". He urged world leaders to step up "in defence of the rights of all people to live in peace and security".

Hizbollah and Israel have been exchanging cross-border fire since [Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel](#), raising fears of a wider regional conflagration. On Wednesday, Hizbollah said it had launched rockets at Israeli artillery positions across the frontier.

Asked about Tuesday's explosions, US secretary of state Antony Blinken said on Wednesday in Cairo that he was focused on agreeing a ceasefire deal in Gaza that could also bring calm to the Israel-Lebanon border.

National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby reiterated the US position that Israel had the right to defend itself but added "how they do so matters to us" and warned that the US did "not want to see an escalation of any kind".





Smoke billows from a house in Baalbek in east Lebanon after a reported explosion of a radio device © AFP/Getty Images

Wednesday's explosions — including from handheld radios — took place in southern Beirut, Tyre, Nabatiyeh, Hermel and the Bekaa Valley, as well as in dozens of villages and towns in the south, according to the state National News Agency and emergency responders.

The NNA also said there was heavy Israeli surveillance drone traffic over the country's south. All are areas with a heavy Hizbollah presence.

Local media reports said some of the devices bore the brand of Japanese radio equipment maker Icom and model number V82. The company said in a statement on Thursday that it was “investigating the facts surrounding this matter”.

In another statement, Icom said its IC-V82 handheld radio “was produced and exported, including to the Middle East, from 2004 to October 2014”, but the model “was discontinued about 10 years ago, and since then, it has not been shipped from our company”. Icom added that it had also discontinued production of batteries for the devices.

The radios also appeared to be missing a holographic seal used to distinguish counterfeits, “so it is not possible to confirm whether the product shipped from our company”, Icom said.

Gruesome images circulated on social media for the second day running showed fire-damaged cars and motorbikes, homes and shops ablaze, and bloodied people being rushed to hospitals in ambulances.

At least one explosion on Wednesday took place near a funeral in Beirut's southern suburb of Ghobeiry for several of the people killed on Tuesday.

As ambulance sirens sounded, a man ran through the crowd shouting: “It exploded in his hand.” A Lebanese soldier stationed near the funeral, where weeping family members held up images of their slain relatives, said: “Two devices had exploded.”

*Additional reporting by Steff Chávez in Washington and David Keohane in Tokyo*

---

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2024. All rights reserved.

---

### **Follow the topics in this article**

**Middle East conflict**

**Israel-Hamas war**

**Terrorism**

**Hizbollah**

**Lebanon**