

Middle East conflict

Israel strikes Lebanese targets as Hizbollah chief warns of 'red lines' crossed

Hassan Nasrallah says pager and walkie-talkie detonations are 'major security and military blow'



People in Sidon, Lebanon, watch Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah delivering a televised address on Thursday © Aziz Taher/Reuters

Raya Jalabi in Beirut and **Neri Zilber** in Tel Aviv YESTERDAY

Israel struck targets along Lebanon's southern border on Thursday as the leader of the Hizbollah militant group said the Jewish state had crossed "all red lines" with this week's mass detonations of communication devices.

Hizbollah has blamed the explosions of pagers and walkie-talkies across [Lebanon](#), which killed 32 people and injured thousands, on Israel. Many of the devices belonged to members of the Lebanese group, with the attacks dealing a stinging blow to Hizbollah and raising fears of a full-blown war.

"There is no doubt that we have been subjected to a major security and military blow that is unprecedented in the history of the resistance and unprecedented in the history of Lebanon," Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech.



"On Tuesday, Israel simultaneously exploded thousands of pagers — they crossed all red lines," he said.

Nasrallah said some of the explosions took place in "hospitals, pharmacies, markets, shops, homes, cars, streets where there are many civilians, women and children".

In a sober address, Nasrallah said little to reassure a Lebanese public that has been terrorised by this week's detonations. triggering panicked residents across the country

...by the news channels, triggering panicked reactions across the country, to abandon their electronic devices.

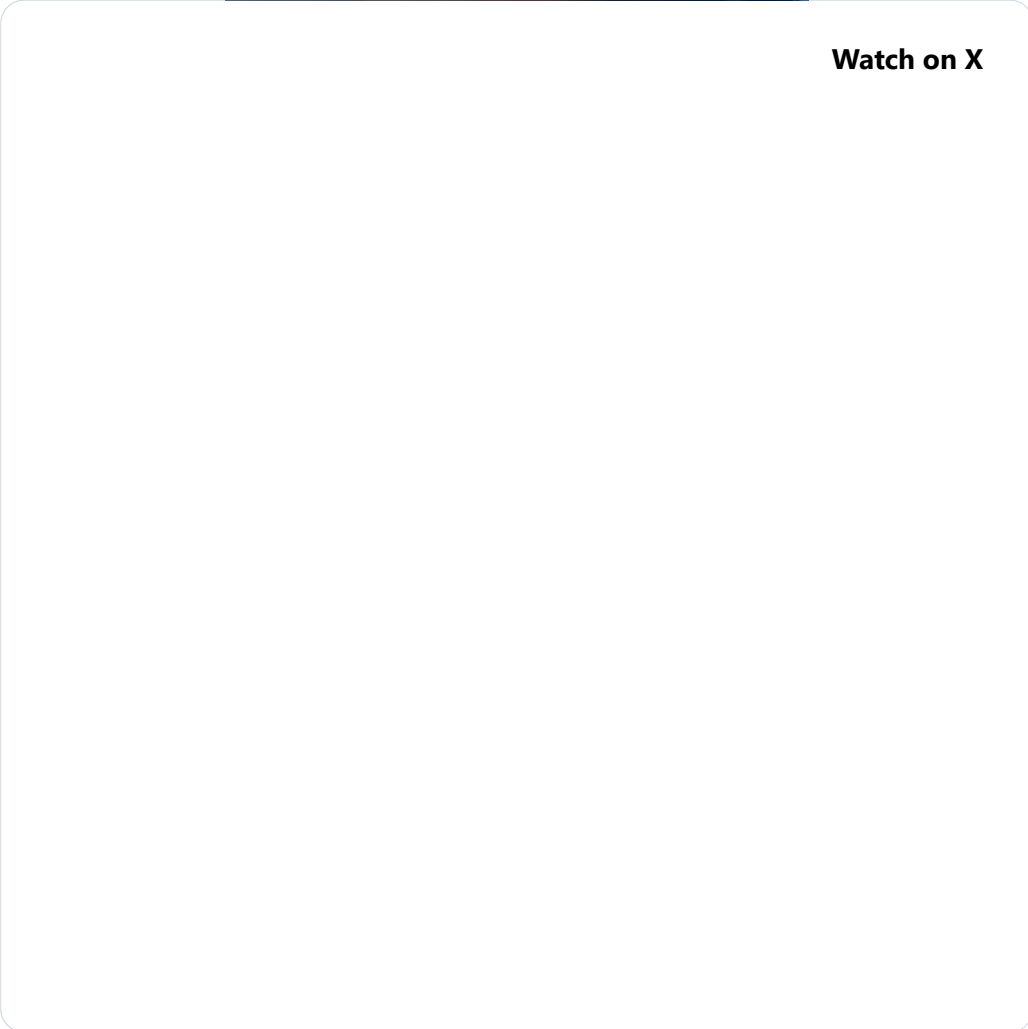
He said Hizbollah was investigating how the bombings were carried out, and vowed retribution against Israel, saying the “major and unprecedented aggression . . . [would] be met with a severe reckoning and just punishment”.


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In an effort to reassure its Lebanese ally, Iran sent a message to Nasrallah, warning that Israel would soon receive “a decisive response from the resistance front”.

Major General Hossein Salami, head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, wrote that Israel's latest attacks would "go nowhere", and that it was "besieged" because it was "under daily strikes from the resistance in the centre, north, east, and south" following the Gaza war.

Sonic booms were heard in the Lebanese capital Beirut, rattling windows and shaking buildings, as Nasrallah spoke.

At the same time Israel's military said it was striking Hizbollah targets in Lebanon, which Lebanese media said spanned the two countries' border.

Hizbollah said it had also struck at least four targets in northern Israel on Thursday. Israel's military said two of its soldiers were killed in the exchange of fire.

Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant, who declared this week that the war was in a "new phase", said on Thursday evening that Hizbollah felt it was being "chased" and said the "sequence of military actions" against the group would continue. He added: "As time goes by, Hizbollah will pay an increasing price."

The Israel Defense Forces said its air force had "struck approximately 100 [Hizbollah] launchers and additional terrorist infrastructure sites, consisting of approximately 1,000 barrels that were ready to be used".

In his speech, Nasrallah said: "Israel intended to kill 4,000 people in one minute when it detonated the pagers because there were 4,000 pagers . . . that does not include how many bystanders would have been killed as well. The next day, they wanted to kill thousands too, [who were] holding walkie-talkies."

The Hizbollah leader described the attacks as unprecedented, saying "they could be considered a war crime, or an announcement of war," but he also downplayed the severity of their impact, saying Hizbollah's structure and command had not been badly affected.

"Yes, we received a big and harsh blow, but this is also the nature of war," Nasrallah said. "We know that our enemy has superiority on the technological level and we have never said otherwise."

In the aftermath of the blasts, the Lebanese army said it was detonating suspicious pagers and communication devices, while Lebanese authorities have banned walkie-talkies and pagers from flights out of Beirut airport.





Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike in the village of Kham in southern Lebanon © AFP/Getty Images

Hezbollah and [Israel](#) have been exchanging intensifying fire for almost a year since Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel triggered the war in Gaza, with the Lebanese militants saying they were acting in "solidarity" with the Palestinian group.

The violence has largely been contained to the Israel-Lebanon border region, but Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to make northern Israel safe enough for displaced people to return.

Israel has not directly commented on the explosions of electronic devices, but on Thursday said that its chief of general staff, Herzi Halevi, had "completed approval of plans for the northern arena" bordering Lebanon.

Additional reporting by Najmeh Bozorgmehr and James Shotter

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