

Middle East conflict

Israeli troops move into Lebanon

Land offensive comes after relentless wave of air strikes against Hizbollah across Lebanon



An Israeli military helicopter fires a missile at Lebanon on Tuesday © Ilia Yefimovich/dpa

James Shotter in Jerusalem and **Raya Jalabi** in Beirut 18 MINUTES AGO

Israel has begun a ground offensive into Lebanon, intensifying its campaign against Hizbollah after launching waves of devastating air strikes against the Lebanese militant group.

In a brief statement, the Israeli military said in the early hours of Tuesday that it had begun “limited, localised, and targeted ground raids” against Hizbollah in southern [Lebanon](#).

People in the vicinity of the border said that they had heard heavy artillery fire overnight.

But, while the Israel Defense Forces had previously said that “heavy fighting” was taking place, an Israeli security official said on Tuesday morning that Israeli forces had not yet engaged Hizbollah fighters.

The IDF warned Lebanese residents to stay north of the Litani river, which runs as much as 30km from the border.

The scale of the Israeli incursion was not clear. But there are concerns it could lead to an open-ended occupation of the border region — a fear that is widespread in Lebanon, whose south was occupied by Israeli forces for 18 years.

Hizbollah did not immediately comment on the land offensive, which Israel launched despite calls from its western allies for a ceasefire.

Denouncing what it described as Israel's "increasingly barbaric attacks", the Lebanese army said it was coordinating with UN peacekeepers and had "repositioned" some forward observation posts away from the border.

Israeli ground troops move into southern Lebanon

Lebanon 5km evacuation zone

Israel 5km evacuation zone



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*Seized by Israel from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981 in a move not recognised by most of the international community

The incursion is Israel's first land offensive against [Hizbollah](#) since 2006, when it fought a 34-day war with the Iran-backed group that ended in a stalemate. It marks a further escalation of the conflict that has engulfed the region since Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

It follows a dramatic two-week escalation of hostilities, during which Israel [assassinated Hizbollah's leader](#) Hassan Nasrallah, decimated its chain of command and launched an overwhelming bombing campaign that has killed more than 1,000 people in Lebanon, and displaced as many as 1mn.



A fire following Israeli bombardment of an area in south Lebanon on Monday © AFP/Getty Images

Hizbollah's deputy leader Naim Qassem said on Monday that the group would not stop its fight, and was prepared for an Israeli land offensive.

"If the Israelis want a ground incursion, the resistance forces are ready for that," Qassem said, in the first remarks by Hizbollah's leadership since Nasrallah's assassination on Friday.

The Israeli land offensive was accompanied by heavy bombing of Beirut's southern suburbs overnight, shortly after the military issued evacuation warnings to residents

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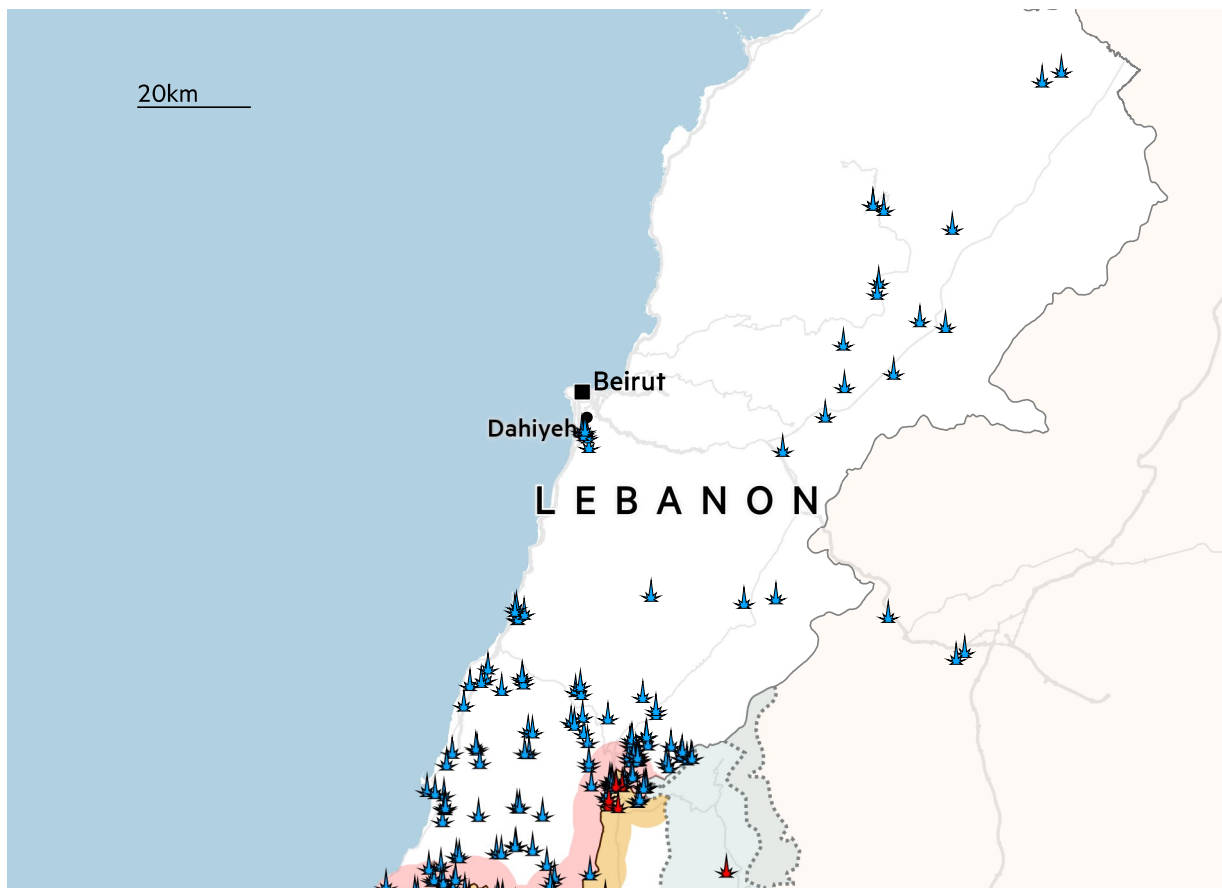
At least 95 people were killed in the past 24 hours of Israeli strikes on Lebanon's south, north-east and the capital Beirut, the health ministry said. Israel also struck a building in Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp, in the country's south, for the first time, Lebanese media reported.

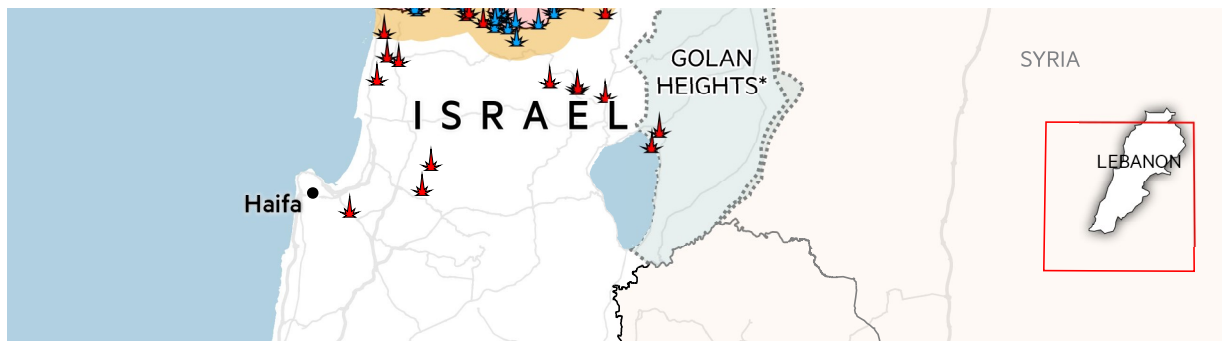
Israeli forces and Hizbollah began trading fire last year when the Iran-backed militants launched rockets in support of Hamas the day after the Palestinian militant group's October 7 attack.

In the ensuing months, the exchanges have displaced 60,000 people on the Israeli side of the border. Israeli forces have pounded southern Lebanon, which is controlled by Hizbollah, for months, causing massive damage and forcing more than 110,000 Lebanese people to flee the region.

IDF strikes across Lebanon as Hizbollah continues to target northern Israel

LIVE updating map showing strikes reported in past 24 hours





FINANCIAL TIMES

Source: [LiveUA](#) • Map updated 05:37, 01 Oct 2024 *Seized by Israel from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981 in a move not recognised by most of the international community

For most of that time, the fighting had been contained in a limited strip of land on either side of the border. But as Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza has lowered in intensity, its military has shifted its focus to the confrontation with Hizbollah, as well as stepping up strikes on other Iranian proxies elsewhere in the region.

Speaking to troops on Monday ahead of the operation, Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant said his country's goal was to "return the residents of the north to their homes".

"We will use all the means at our disposal to achieve this goal," he said.

Despite the damage to Hizbollah caused by Israel's strikes, Israeli troops risk being sucked into protracted combat in the militant group's backyard, eroding some of Israel's technical military superiority.

The region's most heavily armed non-state actor, thought to have tens of thousands of battle-hardened fighters and a vast arsenal of rockets and missiles, has continued to launch hundreds of projectiles at Israel since Nasrallah was killed.





Israeli army tanks in a staging area in northern Israel near the border with Lebanon on Tuesday © Baz Ratner/AP

Hizbollah said on Tuesday that its fighters fired artillery at the Israeli border town of Metula as well as several rocket and missile salvos on what it said were military targets. Later on Tuesday morning sirens warning of incoming fire also sounded in Tel Aviv.

One person was injured as a rocket landed near a motorway some 15km east of central Tel Aviv, local media reported.

US officials on Monday said Israel had discussed the incursion with them, adding that Washington had sought to limit the scope and duration of the operations.

The land offensive comes a week after the US and its western and Arab allies proposed a 21-day truce to the Israeli-Hizbollah conflict, warning of the risks of a wider regional war. A US official said Israel had agreed to the truce before changing its mind overnight when it saw it had an opportunity to assassinate Nasrallah.

But the US administration has also stood by Israel, sending additional troops and fighter jets to the region to help defend its ally and deter Iran.

US secretary of defence Lloyd Austin spoke to Gallant on Monday, the Department of Defense said in a statement.

“They agreed on the necessity of dismantling attack infrastructure along the border to ensure that Lebanese Hizbollah cannot conduct October 7-style attacks on Israel’s northern communities,” the DoD said. “The secretary reaffirmed that a diplomatic resolution is required to ensure that civilians can return safely to their homes on both sides of the border.”

Asked whether he was aware of reports of Israeli plans for a limited ground invasion and comfortable with one going ahead, US President Joe Biden said: “I’m more aware than you might know, and I’m comfortable with them stopping. We should have a ceasefire now.”

Additional reporting by Polina Ivanova

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