

Middle East war

Israel and Hizbollah clash near Lebanese border

Iran-backed militant group says it confronted Israeli troops trying to 'infiltrate' border village



Israeli troops operate on the ground near the border with Israel in southern Lebanon on Tuesday © Israel Defense Forces/AFP/Getty Images

Heba Saleh and Raya Jalabi in Beirut and Mehul Srivastava in Tel Aviv 43 MINUTES AGO

Israeli troops and Hizbollah fighters clashed near the Lebanese border in the early hours of Wednesday, a day after Israel carried out one of its largest waves of air strikes on southern Lebanon since the conflict erupted a year ago.

Israeli air strikes [pounded targets across Lebanon](#) on Tuesday and overnight, including in southern Beirut, as its invading ground forces attempted to push into the south of the country and fought battles with Hizbollah fighters embedded in the rugged terrain.

Videos shared on social media showed soldiers raising the Israeli flag in the border village of Maroun al-Ras where fighting had taken place in recent days. It is not clear if the Israeli troops remain there. Hizbollah said it had fired rockets at soldiers south of the village on Wednesday.

The Iran-backed militant group said overnight that its fighters had confronted Israeli troops trying to “infiltrate” the border village of Blida after targeting them with an explosive device. Hizbollah also said its militants fired rockets and artillery shells, forcing the retreat of [Israel Defense Forces](#) trying to advance near Labbouneh in the south-west.

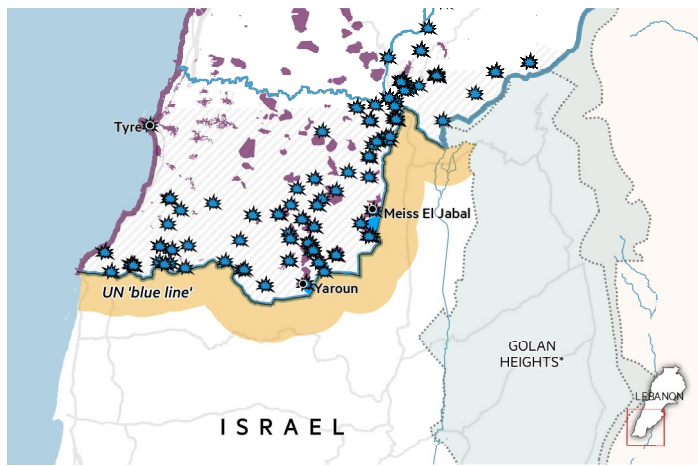
Israel said at least three soldiers were wounded in the fighting this week, as its ground offensive swelled to four combat divisions — as many as 20,000 troops at maximum strength. The Israeli army is breaching the border in at least four locations after [launching its invasion last week](#), with each division probably supporting each point of entry, an Israeli official said, declining to provide more details.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday released a video message in which he called on the Lebanese population to rise up against Hizbollah, urging them to “save” their country “before it falls into an abyss of destruction and suffering like Gaza”.

### Israel deepens offensive in Lebanon

- Israel ground advance
- Israel 5km evacuation zone
- Israel artillery strikes since Oct 1
- Under IDF evacuation order
- ▨ UN resolution 1701 zone





FINANCIAL TIMES

Sources: Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project • Seized by Israel from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981 in a move not recognised by most of the international community  
Map updated Oct 9 08:00 BST, data to Oct 8

While much of the direct fighting between Israeli troops and Hizbollah fighters continues to be limited to an area close to the border, the Israeli air force has carried out a large series of co-ordinated air strikes concentrating on southern Lebanon but extending into the Bekaa Valley, the IDF said.

[Hizbollah](#) has responded by firing projectiles into northern Israel and as far south as Haifa, a commercial and cultural hub. A handful of rockets were also launched towards Tel Aviv this week.

The IDF said it had tracked 180 "projectiles" crossing from Lebanon into Israeli territory through late Tuesday night, including a major barrage at Haifa during a defiant video address by Hizbollah deputy leader Naim Qassem, who said the group's military capabilities remained intact despite Israel's escalating offensive in recent weeks.

As Israel continues its campaign in Lebanon, it is also conducting regular air strikes in Syria, where Hizbollah and Iranian forces have a presence.

On Tuesday, Syria's defence ministry accused Israel of launching three missiles that struck a residential and commercial building in the Mezzeh neighbourhood of Damascus, which it said killed seven civilians, including women and children. Mezzeh is home to many foreign embassies, including Iran's, as well as offices linked to Syrian state security.

Israeli bombardment of Lebanon has decimated the command structure of the group, including [killing Hassan Nasrallah](#), its top leader.

The air strikes on Tuesday were the second-largest wave of attacks since Israel dramatically intensified its air campaign against Hizbollah in Lebanon late last month, two Israeli officials said, as it focused on a large bank of targets identified by military intelligence.

That wave of bombings, which began around September 20, eventually included nearly 5,000 air strikes over several days, according to a Financial Times tally.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 2,100 people over the past year and forced about 1.2mn from their homes, mostly in the past two weeks, according to Lebanese authorities.

Tuesday's bombings were aimed at more than 125 "significant targets", the IDF said. Dozens of underground structures for at least three Hizbollah military units were destroyed — killing at least 50 Hizbollah operatives — as were 30 different locations involving Hizbollah rockets, the IDF said.

Israel has said its Lebanon offensive is aimed at securing its northern border area to allow about 60,000 Israelis to return to their homes, after a year of exchanging cross-border fire with Hizbollah. The Lebanese group had started firing rockets towards Israel in support of Gaza a day after the October 7 2023 Hamas-led attacks on southern Israel.

IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said late on Tuesday after the air strikes that the Hizbollah fighters killed had been trained to infiltrate the border to "murder and abduct Israeli civilians".

