

Middle East war

Israeli strike flattens Beirut building as Lebanon bombardment intensifies

Military has been striking deeper inside the country amid fierce fighting with Hizbollah militants

Raya Jalabi, Middle East correspondent YESTERDAY

REPLAY

The moment a missile hit a building in Beirut's Tayouneh neighbourhood on Friday © Hassan Ammar/AP

An Israeli air strike flattened a large residential building near one of Beirut's busiest junctions on Friday morning, rocking the Lebanese capital after weeks of intense fighting between Israel and Hizbollah.

The building was in Beirut's Tayouneh neighbourhood, an area where the capital's southern suburbs meet central Beirut.

Residents heard the sound of an incoming missile, which then landed near the base of the 10-storey building, according to Associated Press footage and photographs.

A large fireball erupted before the building collapsed into a mound of debris. Enormous clouds of smoke and dust engulfed the surrounding buildings and Horsh Beirut, the city's main park.

PLAY | 00:25

The building collapses after being hit by the missile © Reuters

The powerful blast came after Israel issued an evacuation warning for several buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs, a prime target of its aerial campaign since late September, over what it said was the presence of Hizbollah facilities nearby.

It followed another bloody week for [Lebanon](#), with fighting continuing along the southern frontier between Israeli troops and Hizbollah militants, and relentless Israeli air strikes to the south and east of the country.

[Israel](#) has been striking deeper inside Lebanon since late September, escalating a conflict that began after Hizbollah started firing rockets into Israel after Hamas's October 7 attack last year.

More than 3,400 people have been killed and more than 14,500 wounded, according to Lebanon's health ministry, the majority of those in the past eight weeks.

The attack on the capital came as an adviser to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei visited Beirut to discuss the hostilities. Ali Larijani’s visit coincides with renewed attempts by US President Joe Biden’s outgoing administration to end the conflict.

A Lebanese official confirmed to the Financial Times that a draft of a proposed deal was given to Lebanese negotiators, but said expectations of a breakthrough were “below zero”.

Lebanon’s parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, a key interlocutor in talks, said that he had received a US ceasefire proposal. Berri told Saudi Arabian newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* that the text did not ask for Israel’s military to have freedom of movement in Lebanon, which would have been a nonstarter for Lebanese officials, or for the deployment of NATO or other international forces.

Last month, US officials presented a draft plan to end the fighting that called for an initial 60-day ceasefire and the withdrawal of Hizbollah fighters and Israeli troops from southern Lebanon.

But Israeli officials have said they will insist on the right to unilaterally “enforce” any agreement that ends the war — a stance that Lebanese government officials have rejected.





Rescuers at the site of another missile strike on a building in Beirut's southern Ghobeiri neighbourhood on Friday © Fadel Itani/AFP/Getty Images

Iran helped to establish Hizbollah 40 years ago and continues to act as its patron. Asked by a reporter whether Iran was seeking to sabotage the US-led initiative, Larijani said Iran wanted “a solution to the problems”.

“We support in all circumstances the Lebanese government. Those who are disrupting are [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu and his people,” Larijani told journalists following a meeting with Lebanon’s powerful Speaker of the parliament Nabih Berri.

Meanwhile, in eastern Lebanon, rescue teams were still digging through rubble for survivors of an overnight Israeli air strike on an emergency services centre in the town of Douris, near Baalbek, which killed at least 13 people.

All of those killed in the strike were employees or volunteers with Lebanon’s civil defence, the state emergency services said in a statement, making it one of the deadliest incidents yet.

Israel has repeatedly targeted Lebanese rescue and medical workers, as well as ambulances and fire trucks over the past eight weeks, with rights groups characterising some of the attacks [as apparent war crimes](#) — something Israel has denied.

Israel has accused Hizbollah of using ambulances and medical facilities to transport and store weapons. The Israeli military has not commented on the strike on the civil defence centre near Baalbek.

Israel also struck the Damascus suburbs on Friday, according to Syrian state news agency Sana, a day after a wave of deadly attacks on what the Israel Defense Forces said were militant targets in the Syrian capital. One attack on Thursday killed 15 people, state media reported. Israel said it struck the headquarters of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Cartography by Steven Bernard

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