

**Middle East war**

## Israeli strikes on Lebanon must be 'investigated as war crimes', says Amnesty

Human rights group criticises attacks on civilians where no evidence was found of any potential military targets



Israel struck the municipal headquarters in the town of Nabatieh in October, killing 11 civilians including the mayor © Middle East Images/AFP/Getty Images

**Malaika Kanaaneh Tapper** in Beirut YESTERDAY

Israeli air strikes in Lebanon that killed at least 49 civilians, including entire families and a local mayor, in September and October were “unlawful” and should be investigated as war crimes, Amnesty International concluded on Thursday.

The human rights group documented four separate attacks during Israel’s offensive against Hizbollah in Lebanon, all of which occurred without warning. Amnesty interviewed dozens of survivors and witnesses, visited the sites of three of the attacks and analysed video and satellite imagery.

One of the attacks documented was an air strike that destroyed a house in a village in Lebanon’s northeastern Baalbek district at dawn on September 29, killing all nine members of the family inside. All were civilians, and residents and local officials said there was no known military target in the house, according to the report.

“These four attacks are emblematic of Israel’s shocking disregard for civilian lives in Lebanon and their willingness to flout international law,” said Erika Guevara Rosas, Amnesty International’s senior director for research, advocacy, policy and campaigns. “These attacks must be investigated as war crimes,” Rosas added.

Another was an Israeli strike on the municipal headquarters in the town of Nabatieh

that killed 11 civilians, including the mayor. The strike occurred as the municipality's crisis team was meeting to co-ordinate deliveries of aid to those displaced by the fighting, the report said.

Three of the air strikes were likely direct attacks on civilians, with no evidence found of any potential military targets at the time of the attacks, Amnesty said. It said a fourth attack that killed 23 civilians also killed one person who may have been a Hizbollah operative, but even so was unlawful.

The report adds to a growing list of allegations about Israel's conduct during its offensive in Lebanon, which has devastated large swaths of the country. Human Rights Watch has said that Israel's attacks on journalists, medical personnel, and Hizbollah-affiliated financial institutions amounted to or involved apparent war crimes.

Israel said it only targeted Hizbollah militants and infrastructure, accusing the group of embedding itself in civilian areas.

In response to the allegations in the report, the Israeli military told the Financial Times that it "operates in accordance with international law and invests significant efforts to minimise harm to civilians during operational activities". The Israeli military also said that it had issued early warnings for residents of "specific villages".

What began as a simmering tit-for-tat battle of attrition, with near-daily cross-border shelling after Hizbollah began firing into Israel following Hamas's October 7 2023 attack, erupted into full-blown [war](#) nearly three months ago.

Israel ramped up its offensive against the Lebanon-based militant group in September, battering Lebanon with air strikes and launching a ground invasion. More than 4,000 people were killed, according to Lebanon's health ministry, and more than 1mn displaced. Over 140 Israelis have also been killed and more than 60,000 displaced since the start of the war.

Israel and Hizbollah agreed to a ceasefire which took hold on November 27, although Israel has continued to strike southern Lebanon and deploy drones over Beirut.

At least 26 people have been killed by Israeli attacks in Lebanon since the ceasefire came into effect, according to the Lebanese health ministry and civil defence.

On Thursday, an Israeli drone strike killed one person in the village of Khiam, where the first transition from Israeli to Lebanese military presence had begun a day earlier, according to state news.

“The latest evidence of unlawful air strikes during Israel’s most recent offensive in Lebanon underscores the urgent need for all countries — especially the United States — to suspend arms transfers to Israel due to the risk they will be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law,” Rosas said.

*Additional reporting by James Shotter in Jerusalem*

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