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Israel unleashes major strikes near Beirut as Lebanon campaign escalates

In Lebanon, Israeli attacks hit medics, Lebanese soldiers and caused massive explosions in Beirut's southern suburbs.

By Miriam Berger, Bryan Pietsch, Leo Sands and Mohamad El Chamaa / October 3, 2024

TEL AVIV — Israel's military offensive in Lebanon escalated Thursday with strikes hitting soldiers and medics and pummeling the southern suburbs of Beirut, as Lebanese authorities said 1.2 million people had been displaced by the fighting and Israeli forces ordered more villages to evacuate in the south.

[...]

"It's a full-scale operation on the ground," said **Sima Shine, an expert on Iran and its proxies at the Institute for National Security Studies** in Tel Aviv. "There are many soldiers" now in Lebanon, she said, raising the risk of more military casualties.

For nearly a year, Israel and Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran, had traded near-daily fire across the border, exchanges that started when the militants began lobbing rockets in solidarity with Hamas fighters in Gaza. The tit-for-tat strikes displaced tens of thousands on both sides, but in recent weeks Israel escalated its campaign, ramping up airstrikes, targeting Hezbollah's communications devices and killing the group's longtime leader, Hasan Nasrallah.

[...]

"There was an understanding of what was on the other side of the border," Shine said. "But the big number of tunnels, I think, was underestimated and also the amount of weapons."

The battles in Lebanon were also unfolding against the backdrop of wider tensions in the region, where countries were bracing for an Israeli response to Iran's ballistic missile attack on Israel on Tuesday.

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/03/israel-beirut-lebanese-army-hezbollah/>