



LEBANON UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2024

PREAMBLE

Historical Context

Lebanon, situated at the crossroads of the Middle East, has a history marked by internal and external conflicts, particularly with Israel. The conflict between Lebanon and Israel dates back primarily to Israel's 1982 invasion during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). The invasion aimed to dismantle the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was using southern Lebanon as a base for operations against Israel. After years of fighting, Israel's occupation of South Lebanon ended in 2000. Still, the border has remained a hotspot of tension, primarily due to the presence of Hezbollah, an armed group backed by Iran that regularly clashes with Israel.

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah escalated in 2006 during a 34-day war that caused widespread destruction in both Lebanon and Israel. Although a ceasefire was achieved, the peace remains fragile. Since then, southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah operates, has remained a highly volatile region, with sporadic clashes and the constant risk of a full-scale war.

Economy

Since 2019, Lebanon has been experiencing one of the worst economic crises in its history. The national currency has lost over 90% of its value, leading to hyperinflation and pushing more than 80% of the population into poverty. The collapse of the banking sector, compounded by poor public financial management and the devastating Beirut port explosion in 2020, has worsened the crisis. The government's inability to implement structural reforms has led to near-total economic paralysis, exacerbating the hardship of its citizens and creating a pervasive sense of despair.

PREAMBLE

Politics

Politically, Lebanon is mired in a prolonged institutional deadlock. The sectarian political system, designed to balance power among the country's religious communities, has become dysfunctional. Since the end of President Michel Aoun's term in 2022, the country has been unable to elect a new president, leaving a critical power vacuum. The political factions, supported by regional actors such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, remain locked in a power struggle, hindering any chance of stabilizing the government.

Security

On the security front, Lebanon remains highly vulnerable. Hezbollah, which holds significant political and military influence, is viewed by Israel and parts of the international community as a direct threat. Frequent skirmishes between Israel and Hezbollah occur along the southern border, and the situation could quickly spiral into a more significant conflict. Additionally, the country faces rising domestic insecurity due to a spike in crime, primarily driven by the economic collapse.



MAJOR KEY EVENTS

September 17, 2024: Explosions from Hezbollah members' pagers killed nine people and injured thousands. Hezbollah accuses Israel of orchestrating the attacks.

September 18, 2024: Hezbollah retaliates, launching rockets into northern Israel, escalating tensions further.

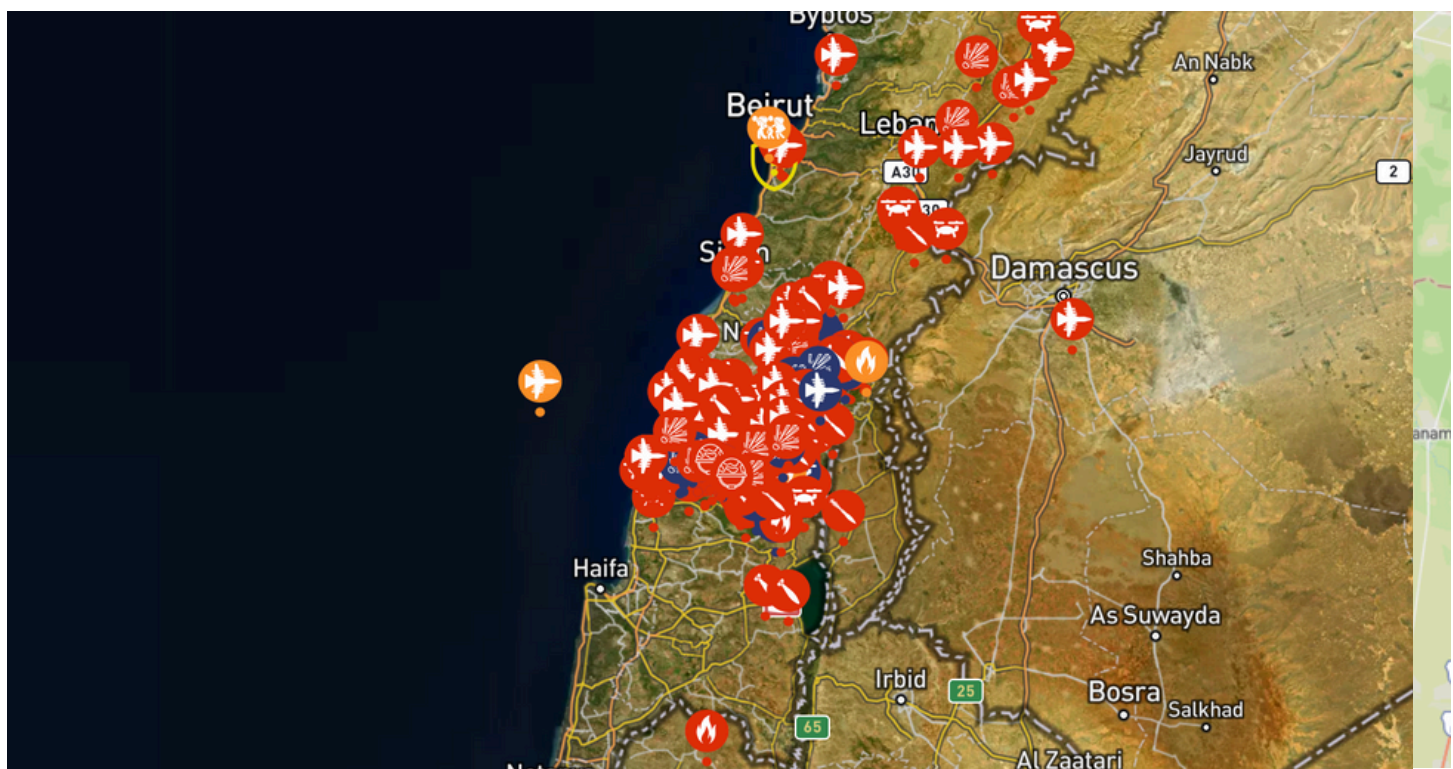
September 20, 2024: Israeli airstrikes in Beirut kill senior Hezbollah commanders, including military leaders. Over 500 Hezbollah fighters and civilians die amid ongoing skirmishes.

September 21, 2024: Israel strikes over 400 Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, deepening the conflict.

September 23, 2024: The fighting intensifies, with Hezbollah launching additional barrages into Israel. Casualties mount on both sides.

September 24, 2024: Hezbollah increases rocket attacks on Israeli cities, targeting civilian areas. Israeli forces respond with heavy artillery and airstrikes, destroying multiple Hezbollah missile launchers in southern Lebanon—the Israeli government orders evacuations in northern regions as a precaution.

September 25, 2024: Intense clashes continue along the Lebanon-Israel border. Israeli officials report that 22 military personnel were killed in the fighting. Hezbollah reports further losses, with casualties surpassing 500 fighters. The conflict escalates as both sides accuse each other of targeting civilians.





INTERNATIONAL REACTION

The international reactions to Israel's airstrikes on Lebanon reflect a diverse range of perspectives shaped by global and regional alliances.

United States: The U.S. supports Israel's right to defend itself against Hezbollah, condemning the group's rocket fire. While backing Israel, Washington has called for restraint to avoid further escalation.

European Union: The EU has taken a more neutral stance, recognizing Israel's right to self-defense but stressing the importance of proportionality. Calls for de-escalation and humanitarian aid have been prominent in the EU's messaging. The EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell urged both sides to engage diplomatically and cease hostilities to prevent a regional crisis.

Arab States: Lebanon strongly condemned the Israeli airstrikes, citing a violation of its sovereignty and calling for international intervention. Iran sharply criticized Israel, characterizing the attacks as part of a broader agenda of "Zionist aggression" while reaffirming its support for Hezbollah. Syria and Iraq also condemned the strikes, accusing Israel of destabilizing the region.

Russia: Moscow, with ties to both Israel and Hezbollah allies like Syria, has urged both sides to de-escalate, advocating for peace talks. Russia's position has been notably cautious, avoiding strong condemnation while pressing for diplomatic solutions.

United Nations: The UN Secretary-General called for an immediate ceasefire and urged both parties to prioritize civilian safety. The UN has also emphasized the necessity of providing humanitarian aid to those affected in Lebanon, highlighting concerns over growing casualties.

Turkey: Critical of Israeli actions, Turkey also called on Hezbollah to stop its rocket attacks. Turkish President Erdoğan emphasized the protection of civilians and stressed the need for regional dialogue.

In summary, international responses to the Israel-Lebanon conflict reflect deep-rooted geopolitical interests. While Western nations generally support Israel's right to defend itself, many regional actors, predominantly Arab and Muslim-majority countries, have condemned the strikes. The broader international community, including the UN and Russia, has pushed for restraint and dialogue, fearing that the conflict could evolve into a more extensive regional war.



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Our Analysis

The latest incident reports indicate a noticeable increase in Israeli airstrikes in southern Lebanon, which may suggest a shift in Israel's military focus toward Hezbollah after months of targeting Hamas. As Hezbollah is seen as a critical strategic force supporting Hamas, Israel's broader military objective appears to be defending itself from these groups, which it considers terrorist organizations.

While Israel's casualties have remained relatively low, Lebanon has suffered significant losses, including civilian deaths. The conflict along the Israel-Lebanon border dates back decades, but the southern Lebanon front has been relatively quiet in recent years. Israel's increased activity in the region, officially aimed at neutralizing Hezbollah's military infrastructure, may also be interpreted as an attempt to exert greater control over southern Lebanon.

The risks are significant, not only from Israeli airstrikes but also from the resulting humanitarian crisis, with large waves of civilian refugees fleeing the conflict zones. This has caused dense traffic on major roads, increasing the risk of accidents and compounding the already severe humanitarian challenges. In addition, areas such as Beirut have been targeted to neutralize key Hezbollah figures, exacerbating the civilian toll.

The attacks also include the use of Biper, which has resulted in civilian casualties, emphasizing the unpredictable and volatile nature of the conflict. Given these dangers, travel to Lebanon today necessitates secure arrangements.

Nigma Security Services in Lebanon:

Nigma offers comprehensive security solutions to reduce risks for those traveling to Lebanon. We provide armored vehicles that significantly mitigate threats during transport and deploy protection agents for travel in sensitive areas. Our deep expertise in the country ensures informed route planning, reducing exposure to potential risks. In addition, Nigma's tracking and mapping services, using platforms like Ariane and SitRoom, offer real-time monitoring of teams and personnel, ensuring their safety throughout operations.

ESCALATION OF THE CONFLICT :

The escalation of the conflict between israel and hezbollah presents significant risks, as highlighted by statements from political and military leaders on both sides. israeli officials have emphasized that their current military operations are aimed at dismantling hezbollah's growing military capabilities, particularly its rocket and drone arsenals, which pose a significant threat to northern israel. recent strikes have targeted hezbollah's infrastructure extensively, with israeli commanders indicating these actions are fundamentally altering the operational landscape in the region.

in contrast, hezbollah's leadership has vowed continued resistance, framing their actions as a defense against israeli aggression. they have claimed responsibility for multiple rocket attacks on israeli military and civilian targets, signaling a commitment to escalate their response if israeli airstrikes continue.

international leaders are voicing concerns over the potential for a broader regional war. un secretary-general antónio guterres warned that lebanon risks becoming another active front, similar to gaza, if the conflict worsens. russia has called for restraint from both parties, while the u.s. continues to affirm israel's right to self-defense, signaling its unwavering support amid growing tensions.

without meaningful diplomatic intervention, the conflict risks spiraling into a prolonged and wider war, with significant humanitarian implications, including mounting civilian casualties and widespread displacement within lebanon. the ongoing situation threatens not only lebanon's stability but also regional security as a whole.