

Panic in Lebanon as Israel carries out **most violent strikes on capital**

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military had carried out a surprise attack yesterday on Hezbollah members

● It came despite a deal for a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Hezbollah's backer Iran

● Israel renewed an evacuation order for an area more than 40 kilometres (25 miles) inside Lebanon, saying "the battle in Lebanon is ongoing"

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanon's government said yesterday Israeli strikes killed dozens and wounded hundreds across the country, with the capital Beirut hit by the most violent bombardment since the start of the war with militant group Hezbollah.

AFP TV's live broadcast showed plumes of smoke rising over Beirut and the suburbs, while AFP journalists saw panic in the streets before the Lebanese health ministry issued an emergency call for the capital's roads to be cleared for ambulances.

"In a very serious escalation, Israeli warplanes launched a wave of simultaneous airstrikes on several Lebanese areas, resulting in, in an initial count, dozens of martyrs and hundreds of wounded," the ministry said



Firefighters attempt to extinguish a fire following an Israeli strike at the Corniche al-Mazraa neighbourhood of Beirut

Lebanon president says wants to include country in 'regional peace'

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun welcomed on Wednesday the two-week ceasefire agreed by the United States and Iran, saying he hoped his country would be

included in the regional truce. Aoun said Beirut "continued efforts to ensure that the regional peace includes Lebanon in a stable and lasting manner", according to a statement from the presidency.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had said earlier that the truce excluded his country's fight with Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, with Israeli strikes continuing to hit the country.

in a statement.

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military had carried out a surprise attack on Wednesday targeting hundreds

of Hezbollah members across Lebanon, calling it the largest blow against the group since a 2024 operation involving pager bombs.

It came despite a deal for a two-week ceasefire between the United States and Hezbollah's backer Iran.

Simultaneous strikes on Beirut

came without warning, prompting people on the street to start running and motorists to honk their horns in an effort to clear the way, according to AFP journalists.

"I saw the blast, it was very strong, and there were children killed, some with their hands cut off," Yasser Abdallah, who works in an appliance store in central Beirut, told AFP. One of the strikes hit Corniche al-Mazraa, one of the main roads in the capital.

Displaced warning

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had said earlier that the truce excluded his country's fight with Hezbollah.

Israel renewed an evacuation order for an area more than 40 kilometres (25 miles) inside Lebanon, saying "the battle in Lebanon is ongoing", before also reiterating its call for residents of Beirut's southern suburbs to leave.

It also issued a warning for a building in the coastal city of Tyre, after striking another one near it.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported several strikes across the south.

On Wednesday an AFP correspondent in southern Lebanon saw small numbers of people heading south, some in cars and others carrying their children on motorcycles.

But Lebanon's military warned displaced people against

returning south "since they may be exposing themselves to the ongoing Israeli attacks".

Hezbollah meanwhile said displaced people must "not head to the targeted villages, towns, and areas in the south, the Bekaa, and the southern suburbs of Beirut before the official and final ceasefire declaration in Lebanon is issued".

'Regional peace'

In a statement, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun welcomed the two-week truce between Tehran and Washington, and said his government "continued efforts to ensure that the regional peace includes Lebanon in a stable and lasting manner".

Aoun noted that "the decision regarding war and peace ... rests solely with the Lebanese state".



Netanyahu said Lebanon was excluded, and a Lebanese official told AFP that authorities "have not been informed" of Lebanon being included in the truce.

A fragile pause: World voices **hope**

Paris, France

The United States and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire, with both sides claiming victory.

Here are reactions from across the globe:

Pakistan

"I am pleased to announce that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America, along with their allies, have agreed to an immediate ceasefire everywhere including Lebanon and elsewhere, **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY**," Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on X.

Israel said later, however, that the two-week ceasefire "does not include Lebanon."

United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the ceasefire, his spokesperson said in a statement, adding that the UN chief "calls on all the parties to the current conflict in the Middle East to comply with their obligations under international law and to abide by the terms of the ceasefire in order to pave the way toward a lasting and comprehensive peace in the

region."

Pope

"I welcome with satisfaction, and as a sign of real hope, the announcement of an immediate two-week truce. Only by returning to negotiations can we reach the end of the war," the Catholic leader said at the end of his weekly audience at the Vatican.

Lebanon

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun welcomed the truce, adding that Beirut "continued efforts to ensure that the regional peace includes Lebanon in a stable and lasting manner."

Qatar, UAE, Oman

Qatar's foreign ministry said the truce was "an initial step toward de-escalation" and urged Iran "to immediately cease all hostile acts and practices that undermine regional stability."

United Arab Emirates presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said in a post on X that "The UAE emerged victorious from a war we sincerely sought to avoid."

Oman's foreign ministry underlined "the importance of intensifying efforts at this

juncture to identify solutions capable of resolving the crisis at its roots and achieving a permanent cessation of the state of war."

Saudi Arabia

The Saudi foreign ministry said it hoped the truce "will represent an opportunity to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation, enhancing the security of the region, and that any attacks or policies that undermine the sovereignty, security and stability of the countries in the region will cease."

Iraq

Iraq's foreign ministry said on X it welcomed the ceasefire and "calls for building upon this positive step by launching serious and sustainable dialogue tracks that address the root causes of the disputes and strengthen mutual trust."

The president of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region said "I hope all parties will uphold this commitment in good faith and work towards a lasting peace that promotes stability, security, and prosperity throughout the entire region."

Turkey

"We insist on the fact that the temporary ceasefire be fully implemented on the ground and hope that all sides abide by the agreement," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Egypt

In an overnight call with US envoy Steve Witkoff, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty "expressed his deep appreciation for this important American step to give diplomacy a chance and start a serious process of American-Iranian negotiations."

Israel opposition

Israel's main opposition leader Yair Lapid sharply criticised the ceasefire with Iran, accusing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of failing to achieve the war's objectives.

"There has never been a political disaster like this in our entire history. Israel was not even close to the table when decisions were made concerning the core of our national security," Lapid wrote on X.

The head of the left-wing Democrats party, Yair Golan, called the truce a "strategic

failure" by Netanyahu, a "total failure that endangers Israel's security for years to come."

European Union

The truce "creates a much-needed chance to tone down threats, stop missiles, restart shipping, and create space for diplomacy towards a lasting agreement," EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas wrote on X.

Britain, France, Germany

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the truce "will bring a moment of relief to the region and the world" as he headed to the region.

French President Emmanuel Macron called the ceasefire "a very good thing" and that Paris hoped it "will be fully respected throughout the region" and that it "fully includes Lebanon."

Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz urged a "durable end to the war in the next days," adding "this can only be achieved by diplomacy."

Spain

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez welcomed the US-Iran ceasefire as "good news" on X but said Spain would not "applaud those who set fire to the

world because they show up with a bucket".

Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told public radio RNE that: "All fronts must cease, and all fronts also means Lebanon."

Ukraine

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday that Ukrainian military teams helping Middle East countries counter Iranian drone attacks would stay in the region.

Ukraine's foreign minister wrote on social media that "American decisiveness works. We believe it is time for sufficient decisiveness to force Moscow to cease fire and end its war against Ukraine."

Japan

"The most important thing is that concrete steps will be taken to de-escalate the situation, including ensuring the safety of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz," Japanese government spokesman Minoru Kihara said.

The world's fourth-largest economy is the fifth biggest importer of oil, with around 70 percent coming through the vital waterway before the war.