

Lebanon says one killed near Beirut, as Israel says struck Iran Guards member

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● **The Israeli military also renewed its call for residents of Beirut’s southern suburbs, where Hezbollah holds sway, to evacuate**

AFP | Hazmih, Lebanon

An Israeli strike on Hazmih, near Beirut, killed at least one person, Lebanon’s health ministry said, while the Israeli military said it had targeted an Iranian Revolutionary Guards member.

The Israeli military also renewed its call for residents of Beirut’s southern suburbs, where Hezbollah holds sway, to evacuate. The area has not been hit since Friday night.

The Lebanese health ministry reported in a preliminary toll that “the Israeli enemy’s raid on an apartment in Hazmih resulted in the martyrdom of one person”.



Lebanese soldiers secure the site of an Israeli strike that targeted an apartment in Hazmih, on the eastern outskirts of Beirut

The Israeli military said it had “struck an IRGC Quds Force terrorist in Beirut”, referring to the foreign operations arm of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards.

The upscale Hazmih area, overlooking Beirut and adjacent

to the presidential palace, includes diplomatic missions, government offices and luxurious residential buildings.

Mayor Jean Asmar told journalists at the scene, including an AFP photographer, that the

strike targeted a room inside an apartment rented by a displaced family.

“What happened today is a sample of what can happen. The rental agreement is in one person’s name, but the target is

someone else,” Asmar said.

Asmar said the attack forces the municipality to take new measures in regards to hosting people displaced from the war, “so that this incident is not repeated”.

There has been considerable unease in Lebanon about hosting displaced southerners, who are often Shia Muslims, for fear that they might be linked to Hezbollah and targeted by Israel.

Israel struck a hotel in the area on March 5, though it was not clear who the target was.

It hit a hotel room in central Beirut’s coastal Raouche area days later, claiming to have killed five people including three Quds Force members.

Iran accused Israel of killing four of its diplomats in the attack.

Lebanon was pulled into the Middle East war when Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an Israeli-US strike.

Israel has since launched strikes across Lebanon, killing at least 1,039 people, and sent ground troops into the country’s south.

One of its strikes on Monday targeted a bridge linking areas in southern Lebanon to the Bekaa Valley in the east of the country, a day after a major bridge in the Tyre region was targeted.



Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Sunday he and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had instructed the military “to immediately destroy all the bridges over the Litani River that are used for terrorist activity, in order to prevent Hezbollah terrorists and weapons from moving south”.

Blow to Italy’s Meloni as she suffers referendum defeat

AFP | Rome, Italy

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni conceded defeat on Monday in a referendum on justice reform, but despite the major blow to her far-right leadership, she insisted she was going nowhere.

With almost all ballots counted from the Sunday-Monday vote, the “No” camp was at almost 54 percent, compared to just over 46 percent for “Yes”, according to official figures.

During the campaign, Meloni had insisted the referendum, which concerned the role and oversight of judges and prosecutors, was not about her own leadership of the government.

And she repeated this Monday, saying “the Italians have decided”, but adding that “this does not change our commitment to continue”.

Yet she had forcefully campaigned for the proposals, alongside her coalition partners in the hard-right government, while the opposition parties had fought for a “No”.

Daniele Albertazzi, a professor of politics at the UK’s University of Surrey told AFP it was a “bad, bad result” for Meloni.

“It means she has lost the Italian electorate on a major issue in her manifesto, and one of the key proposals of the right... for the past 30 years,” he said.

It is the first such setback for Meloni, who has led an uncharacteristically stable coalition government since October 2022 and faces parliamentary elections next year.

“If the centre-left gets its act together, this is going to help them. Because it means that her



People prepare to cast their ballot in a polling station on the first day to vote for the Italian constitutional referendum on justice reform, in Milan

image as unbeatable is not there any more,” Albertazzi said.

Turnout was relatively high for a referendum, at almost 59 percent.

‘Eviction notice’

The referendum, voted Sunday and Monday, sought to separate the role of judges and prosecutors and change their oversight body in what the government cast as necessary measures to ensure impartiality in the courts.

But critics said it was an attempt to exert more control over independent judges, whose decisions Meloni’s ministers have often attacked in public.

They also argued the reform failed to address the real challenges facing Italy’s dysfunctional justice system, from

years-long trials and huge case backlogs to prison overcrowding.

Political analysts said the reform’s complexity, not easily understood by many Italians, and the rhetoric surrounding it meant the vote ultimately became a referendum on the Italian leader herself.

“Meloni is certainly weakened,” Lorenzo Castellani, professor of politics at Rome’s Luiss university, told AFP.

Former prime minister Giuseppe Conte, the leader of the Five Star Movement, who had campaigned against the referendum, said it was time for a new government.

“It’s an eviction notice for this government after four years,” he told a press conference.

Colombia military says transport plane crashes on takeoff

AFP | Bogotá, Colombia

Colombia’s defense minister said a large transport plane crashed on takeoff Monday, with many feared dead.

Minister Pedro Sanchez said with “deep sorrow” that an Air Force Hercules had crashed on

takeoff from Puerto Leguizamo, near the southern border with Ecuador. State broadcaster RCN broadcast images of a badly damaged fuselage aflame in a forest clearing.

The aircraft can typically carry about 100 troops.

“Military units are already at

the scene. However, the number of victims and the causes of the crash have not yet been confirmed,” Sanchez posted on social media.

“It is a deeply painful event for the country. May our prayers bring some measure of comfort,” said Sanchez.

London police probe attack on Jewish ambulances as hate crime

AFP | London, United Kingdom

London’s police said they are investigating an “arson attack” as an antisemitic hate crime after volunteer ambulances run by a Jewish organisation were set on fire yesterday.

The London Fire Brigade said it was alerted to vehicles on fire at Highfield Court in Golders Green at 1:40 am.

Firefighters called to the scene found that multiple cylinders on the vehicles had exploded, breaking windows in an adjacent block.

London’s Metropolitan Police said the burnt vehicles were four Hatzalah ambulances belonging to the Jewish Community Ambulance service.

“Officers remain on scene and the arson attack is being treated as an antisemitic hate crime,” police said in a statement.

No injuries have been reported and all the fires have been put out, police added.

“We are in the process of examining CCTV and are aware of online footage. We believe we



Police forensic officers stand by as a police photographer works in a street near to the scene of an antisemitic arson attack in the Golders Green neighbourhood of north London

are looking for three suspects at this early stage,” superintendent Sarah Jackson said, adding that no arrest has been made.

Nearby houses were evacuated as a precaution and road closures remained in place.

London Fire Brigade said the cause of the fire is under investigation.

Shomrim North West London, a charity and volunteer neighbourhood watch group,

condemned the arson branding it a “targeted and deeply concerning incident affecting a vital emergency service serving the local Jewish community”.

“An attack on these ambulances is an attack on the safety, wellbeing, and resilience of our community... There is no place for antisemitism or hate in our society,” the group wrote on Facebook.