



A man walks near destroyed buildings in the aftermath of an overnight Israeli airstrike that targeted Baalbek's al-Charawneh neighbourhood in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa valley yesterday. Lebanon's health ministry said that 52 people were killed and 72 wounded in Israeli strikes on Friday, in the country's eastern Baalbek-Hermel region, attacks for which the Israeli army had not issued evacuation warnings.

PHOTO: AFP

US to deploy B-52 bombers, warships to Middle East

REUTERS, Washington

The United States said on Friday it would deploy B-52 bombers, fighter jets, refuelling aircraft and Navy destroyers to the Middle East, in a readjustment of military assets as the Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group prepares to leave the region.

The Pentagon said in a statement that deployments would take place in the coming months and demonstrated the flexibility of the U.S. military movements around the world.

"Should Iran, its partners, or its proxies use this moment to target American personnel or interests in the region, the United States will take every measure necessary to defend our people," Pentagon spokesperson Air Force Major General Patrick Ryder said in a statement.

The latest adjustment in U.S. forces in the region follows direct exchanges of fire in October between Israel and Iran. Israel is also fighting Iran-backed Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and has carried out strikes in Yemen after coming under attack from Iran-aligned Houthi fighters.

'Israel to face tooth-breaking response'

AGENCIES

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said yesterday that the United States and Israel will "undoubtedly receive a crushing response" for what they do against his country, state media reported.

"Enemies, including America and the Zionist regime, should know that they will undoubtedly receive a crushing response for what they do against Iran and the resistance front," Khamenei said.

He made the comments to students ahead of the anniversary of the 1979 seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran by hardline students shortly after the Islamic revolution that ousted the U.S.-backed Shah.

Yesterday a pro-Iran coalition in Iraq claimed a drone strike on Israel's resort of Eilat. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq is among pro-Iran groups drawn into more than a year of war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Days before the presidential election in Israel's main military supplier, the United States, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned Iran's response would cover attacks on both the Islamic republic and its allies.

Israel's military said it intercepted three drones over the Red Sea, after late Friday reporting seven drones launched from "several fronts". The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for four drone strikes on Eilat.

Since late September Israel has been engaged in full-scale war against Iran-backed Hezbollah in

Lebanon while fighting continues against the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, which triggered the Gaza war by attacking Israel on October 7 last year.

Yesterday, Israel again carried out deadly air strikes on north Gaza, where the UN calls conditions "apocalyptic", and Hezbollah intensified rocket fire near Israel's commercial hub of Tel Aviv.

"The enemies, both the USA and the Zionist regime, should know that they will definitely receive a tooth-breaking response,"

rebels, who have repeatedly attacked commercial shipping in the Red Sea, are transforming themselves into a "powerful military organisation" due to "unprecedented" military support from outside sources, particularly Iran and Hezbollah, said a newly published UN report.

Ahead of the US election on Tuesday, officials in the United States have been pushing for a resolution of the Lebanon war.

On Friday the Pentagon announced deployment of ballistic



"The enemies, both the USA and the Zionist regime, should know that they will definitely receive a tooth-breaking response."

ALI KHAMENEI, Supreme Leader of Iran

Khamenei said, referring to Iran-aligned groups including those in Yemen and Syria.

On October 26, Israel bombed military sites in Iran, killing four servicemen, in response to an October 1 barrage of about 200 missiles that Tehran called a reprisal. Israel has warned Iran against responding to the October 26 attack.

B-52 BOMBERS

Analysts say Israel inflicted severe damage on Iranian air defences and missile capacities and could yet launch more wide-scale action against the Islamic republic.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi

missile defence destroyers, long-range B-52 bombers and other resources to the Middle East, serving as a warning to Iran.

The capabilities would begin arriving "in coming months", a Pentagon spokesman said.

US naval forces and heavy B-2 bombers have struck Houthi rebel targets in Yemen in response to the attacks by the rebels, who say they act in support of Palestinians.

Since October 6 Israeli forces have carried out a major air and ground assault on north Gaza, centred on the Jabalia area, vowing to stop attempts by Hamas from regrouping.

'Where to go?'

Israeli strikes displace thousands in east Lebanon

AFP, Deir Al-Ahmar

In the Christian town of Deir al-Ahmar, Hassan Noun has pitched his tent in a church courtyard after fleeing Israeli air strikes in the eastern Lebanese region of Baalbek.

"We need shelter -- soon there will be snow and rain. Where will these children find refuge?" said the grey-bearded father of five.

Uprooted from Baalbek, he is one of around 30,000 people seeking safety in and around Deir al-Ahmar, one of the Christian towns so far spared from the Israeli bombing of Hezbollah strongholds, which are predominantly in traditionally Shiite Muslim areas.

"We gather in front of churches and schools, which no longer have the capacity to accommodate us," Noun said, referring to schools now serving as shelters.

Behind him on an old church bench, his family placed their teapot and kitchen utensils. A plastic mat was spread on the stone floor.

Everywhere, the thin foam mattresses used by the displaced were set aside, some propped up against the door of the church perched atop a hill overlooking Bekaa Valley farms.

Towels and sweatshirts dried alongside other laundry, draped over a wall or hung from ropes strung between the church columns.

Inside a minibus, the few possessions of a family were piled up on worn leather seats -- more mattresses, water bottles and backpacks stuffed with belongings.

'NO HEATING'

Fatima, 17, fled her village of Chaath because of the bombardments.

At school in Bechouat, near Deir al-Ahmar, her family camps under an improvised tent -- several desks pushed together and topped with blankets for a semblance of privacy.

"There's no heating, we don't have warm clothes," said the teen, her face framed by a black headscarf.

"We are losing our school year. We can't study because of the war."

Randa Amhaz expressed gratitude to the school for opening its doors, but she also had her concerns.

"Children need warm clothes, and the elderly need medicine," she said.

Since September 23, Israeli strikes have killed more than 1,900 people in Lebanon, according to an AFP tally based on figures from Lebanon's health ministry.

On Friday alone, 52 people were killed in Israeli strikes on the Baalbek Hermel region of eastern Lebanon, the ministry said.

More than 78,000 people have been displaced from their homes in the district, according to the International Organization for Migration.

India denies Amit Shah plotted anti-Sikh attacks in Canada

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday denied home minister Amit Shah had plotted to target Sikh activists on Canadian soil and said it had officially rebuked Ottawa over the "absurd and baseless" allegation.

Canada is home to the largest Sikh community outside of India, and includes activists for "Khalistan", a fringe separatist movement seeking an independent state for the religious minority carved out of Indian territory.

Ottawa has previously accused India of orchestrating the 2023 killing in Vancouver of 45-year-old naturalised Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistan campaigner.

But this week, Canadian officials said Ottawa had traced a broader campaign targeting Canadian Sikh activists to the highest levels of India's government, implicating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's powerful right-hand man.

"The Government of India protests in the strongest terms to the absurd and baseless references made to the Union Home Minister of India," foreign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal told reporters.



INDIAN KASHMIR

Three 'rebels' killed in clashes

AFP, Mumbai

Indian security forces killed three suspected militants in two separate firefights in disputed Kashmir, the army and a senior police official said yesterday.

Muslim majority Kashmir has been divided between rivals India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947 and is home to a long-running insurgency.

The first firefight broke out after Indian troops moved to check "suspicious movement" near Halkan Gali in Anantnag, resulting in the death of two militants.

The Indian Army's Chinara Corps said on social media platform X that a joint operation had been launched in the area.

"Terrorists opened indiscriminate fire," the corps said in its statement. "Troops effectively retaliated, resulting in elimination of two terrorists."

Another suspected militant was killed after a gunfight with police and army soldiers in Srinagar, a senior police official confirmed to AFP.

The clash started Saturday morning in the Khanyara area of the city after police were searching for armed militants.

Firefights between militants and security forces in the densely populated downtown areas of Srinagar have been rare for many years.

At least 500,000 Indian troops are deployed in Kashmir, battling an insurgency that has killed tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels since 1989.

Must be updated

FROM PAGE 12

December 16, 1972.

Focus on constitutional reform was renewed after Chief Adviser Prof Muhammed Yunus formed an interim government on August 5 after Hasina's ouster, sparking debates over constitutional amendments.

While some called for amendments, others advocated for a completely new one, following which Yunus announced the formation of 10 commissions aimed at reforming the state.

Referring to the events of July and August, Dr Kamal remarked, "The brutal violence and repression inflicted on our students and numerous citizens, the disregard for the rule of law -- these experiences must be enshrined in our Constitution. We are responsible for reforming the Constitution in a way that prevents any recurrence of such injustices in the future."

At the event, constitution researcher Arif Khan presented the keynote speech, while political analyst Dr Zahed Ur Rahman and senior Supreme Court advocate Mustafizur Rahman Khan participated as discussants.

In his keynote speech, Arif Khan described the student-led uprising as a mass-awakening against state oppression.

"This movement has presented us with an opportunity for self-reconstruction by addressing critical historical and structural errors," he noted.

Khan argued for preserving the constitutional ideals that arose from the nation's political struggles and heritage.

"Any attempt to replace the constitutional framework shaped by the Liberation War would lead to ideological conflicts and a void in national life, so our current duty should be a constitutional renaissance, not replacement," he asserted.

Zahed Ur Rahman said the Awami League had eroded the electoral system, leading to the uprising. He called for the reestablishment of a caretaker government system to facilitate credible elections.

Zahed further commented that there is no pressing justification for those advocating for a complete rewriting of the constitution.

"There is no document in the world that can simply be put in place to solve all problems," he said, emphasising that reform, rather than a total rewrite, is preferable.

Regarding the idea of a bicameral parliament, he suggested that the lower house could continue to be elected through the current system, while members of the upper house could be selected proportionally based on the lower house's vote counts.

He noted that this system could help establish a balanced dynamic between the two chambers of parliament.

Mustafizur Rahman Khan advocated for elected governments to hold the authority to amend the Constitution. He urged the government to prioritise private sector development to reduce unemployment among university graduates.

Md Zulfikar Islam, CEO of Reading Club Trust, delivered the welcome address at the event, which was attended by reading associates, faculty and students from various universities, and people from diverse backgrounds.



Volunteers queue to get guidelines on how to get organised to best provide help to those affected by the floods and heavy rain, at the Ciudad de las Arts y las Ciencias in Valencia, Spain, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS