

## Israeli jets fly low over Beirut

Says Israeli minister as tens of thousands mourn Hezbollah's slain leader in mass funeral

AFP, Jerusalem

Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israeli Air Force jets flying over the funeral of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut yesterday were sending a "clear message" to anyone threatening Israel.

Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut in September.

Tens of thousands of black-clad mourners vowed support for

### Israel's military strikes southern and eastern Lebanon.

Hezbollah at the Beirut funeral of the slain leader, after the group was dealt major blows in its last round of hostilities with Israel.

Women wailed as a truck carrying the coffins of Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine -- Nasrallah's chosen successor killed in another Israeli air strike -- slowly moved through the crowd, topped with two black turbans and draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag.

Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were in attendance, with representatives of Iraq's main pro-Iran factions also expected to come.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed "resistance" against Israel.

"The enemy should know that resistance against usurpation, oppression, and arrogance is never-ending and will continue until the desired goal is achieved," Khamenei said in a statement published on his official website.

As crowds gathered in Beirut, the official National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli strikes in Lebanon's south, including a location about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the border, but also in the east.

Israel's military said it had struck "sites containing rocket launchers and weapons" in those areas.

The Israeli army in a tweet ahead of the start of the funeral said "the world is a better place".



A vehicle transports a mock coffin for former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in Israeli airstrikes in Beirut, during a symbolic funeral in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Gaza ceasefire gravely endangered

Says Hamas after Israel delays release of over 600 Palestinian prisoners

AFP, Jerusalem

Hamas yesterday said Israel has gravely endangered a five-week-old Gaza truce by delaying the release of Palestinian prisoners under the deal because of the manner it has freed Israeli hostages.

The first phase of the truce ends early in March and details of a planned subsequent phase have not been agreed.

With tensions again hanging over the deal -- which halted more than 15 months of offensive



Israel deploying tank division in a West Bank city

40,000 Palestinians displaced from Jenin, other refugee camps

Israel yesterday announced an expansion of military operations in the occupied West Bank.

The military said a tank division will be sent to the West Bank city of Jenin, the first such deployment to the territory in 20 years.

Since the Gaza ceasefire's first phase began on January 19, Hamas has released 25 living Israeli hostages in ceremonies before

crowds at various locations in Gaza.

Armed masked fighters escort the captives onto stages adorned with slogans. The hostages have spoken and waved in what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "humiliating ceremonies".

The Red Cross has previously appealed to "all parties" for the swaps to be carried out in a "dignified and private" manner.

In the seventh such transfer, Hamas released six Israeli captives on Saturday but Israel put off the planned release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners in exchange.

Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said postponing the release exposes "the entire agreement to grave danger".

Naim said the mediators, "especially the Americans", must pressure Israel's government "to

implement the agreement as it is and immediately release our prisoners."

Alongside the Gaza offensive -- which displaced almost the entire population of 2.4 million -- violence has also soared in the West Bank.

Yesterday, Israel's military said "a tank division will operate in Jenin" as part of "expanding" operations in the area, where the military began a major raid against Palestinian militants just after the Gaza truce began.

The United Nations has said the military activities have led to "forced displacement" of 40,000 Palestinians from Jenin and other refugee camps.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said he has told troops "to prepare for a prolonged presence in the cleared camps for the coming year.

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