

34 Youths Among 56 Dead in Israeli Strike

[Email this Story](#)

Jul 30, 10:29 AM (ET)

By KATHY GANNON

QANA, Lebanon (AP) - Israeli missiles hit several buildings in a southern Lebanon village as people slept Sunday, killing at least 56, most of them children, in the deadliest attack in 19 days of fighting. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert expressed "great sorrow" for the airstrikes but blamed Hezbollah guerrillas for using the area to launch rockets at Israel, and said he would not halt the army's operation.

The Lebanese Red Cross said the airstrike in Qana, in which at least 34 children were killed, pushed the overall Lebanese death toll to more than 500. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice postponed a visit to Lebanon in a setback for diplomatic efforts to end hostilities. She was to return to the U.S. Monday morning, abruptly breaking off her diplomatic mission in the Mideast.

Before the airstrike, Olmert told Rice he needed 10-14 days to finish the offensive in Lebanon, according to a senior Israeli government official. The two said they would meet again Sunday evening.

"We will not stop this battle, despite the difficult incidents this morning," Olmert said during Israel's weekly Cabinet meeting, according to a participant in the meeting. "We will continue the activity and if necessary it will be broadened without hesitation."



(AP) A man looks at the bodies of Lebanese victims, recovered from the rubble of a demolished building...

[Full Image](#)



(AP) Smoke continues to billow from a fuel dump at Beirut International airport in Lebanon at sunset...

[Full Image](#)

Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora asked U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to hold an emergency Security Council meeting to arrange for an immediate cease-fire after the Qana strike.

Rice said she had called Saniora to postpone; angry Lebanese officials said it was their government that called off the meeting.

Israeli said it targeted Qana because it was a base for hundreds of rockets launched at Israeli, including 40 that injured five Israelis on Sunday. Israel said it had warned civilians several days before to leave the village.

"One must understand the Hezbollah is using their own civilian population as human shields," said Israeli Foreign Ministry official Gideon Meir. "The Israeli defense forces dropped leaflets and warned the civilian population to leave the place because the Hezbollah turned it into a war zone."

Rescuers aided by villagers dug through the rubble by hand. At least 20 bodies wrapped in white sheets were taken away, including 10 children. A row of houses lay in ruins, and an old woman was carried away on a plastic chair.

Villagers said many of the dead were from four families who had taken refuge in on the ground floor of a three-story building, believing they would be safe from bombings.

"We want this to stop!" shouted Mohammed Ismail, a middle-aged man pulling away at the rubble in search for bodies, his

brown pants covered in dust. "May God have mercy on the children. They came here to escape the fighting."

"They are hitting children to bring the fighters to their knees," he said.

Rice said she was "deeply saddened by the terrible loss of innocent life" in Israel's attack. But she did not call for an immediate cease-fire in the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah militias.

"We all recognize this kind of warfare is extremely difficult," Rice said, noting it comes in areas where civilians live. "It unfortunately has awful consequences sometimes."



(AP) Lebanese youths gather on a hilltop overlooking the city of Beirut in Lebanon at sunset Friday,...

[Full Image](#)



(AP) Three men cross a large bomb crater on foot, towards a nearby checkpoint, after leaving their...

[Full Image](#)

"We want a cease-fire as soon as possible," she added.

The United States and Israel are pressing for a settlement that addresses enduring issues between Lebanon and Israel and disables Hezbollah - not the quick truce favored by most world leaders.

Saniora said Lebanon would be open only to an immediate cease-fire.

"There is no place at this sad moment for any discussions other than an immediate and unconditional cease-fire as well as international investigation of the Israeli massacres in Lebanon

now," he told reporters Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel would not rush into a cease-fire until it achieved its goal of decimating Hezbollah, whose July 12 capture of two Israel soldiers provoked the fighting.

More than 5,000 people protested in central Beirut, denouncing Israel and the United States, some chanting, "Destroy Tel Aviv, destroy Tel Aviv." A few broke car windows and tried briefly to break into the main U.N. building until political leaders called for a halt to damage.

Lebanese Defense Minister Elias Murr questioned Israel's claim that Hezbollah fired rockets from the village. "What do you expect Israel to say? Will it say that it killed 40 children and women?" he told Al-Jazeera television.

Qana, in the hills east of the southern port city of Tyre, has a bloody history. In 1996, Israeli artillery killed more than 100 civilians who had taken refuge at a U.N. base in the village. That attack sparked an international outcry that helped end an Israeli offensive.

Sunday's attack drew swift condemnation from several world leaders.

French President Jacques Chirac's office said "France condemns this unjustifiable action, which shows more than ever the need to move toward an immediate cease-fire, without which other such dramas can only be repeated."

Jordan's King Abdullah II condemned "the ugly crime perpetrated by Israeli forces in Qana," calling it "a blatant violation of the law and all international conventions."

Lebanese civilians have suffered the most from the fighting. Lebanese officials said most of their citizens slain in the conflict have been civilians. Thirty-three Israeli soldiers have died, and Hezbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel have killed 18 civilians.

Fighting also broke out between guerrillas and Israeli soldiers in a zone called the Taibeh Project area, about 2 miles inside Lebanon. The Israeli army said one soldier was moderately wounded. Hezbollah's al-Manar TV claimed two Israeli soldiers were killed.

Heavy artillery rained down on the villages of Yuhmor and Arnoun, close to Taibeh. In northern Israel, rockets fell on Nahariya, Kiryat Shemona and an area close to Maalot, the army said.

Israel has said it would launch a series of limited ground incursions into Lebanon to push back guerrillas, rather than carry out a full-fledged invasion. Israeli troops pulled back Saturday from the town of Bint Jbail, suggesting the thrust, launched a week ago, had halted.

But Lebanese officials reported a massing of troops and 12 tanks near the Israeli town of Metulla

further to the northeast, on the tip of the Galilee Panhandle near the Golan Heights, suggesting another incursion could begin soon.

France circulated a draft Security Council resolution on Saturday among the other 14 council members. It would call for an immediate halt to fighting between Israel and Hezbollah and seek a wide new buffer zone in south Lebanon monitored by international forces and the Lebanese army.

British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said the strike on Qana was a "tragedy for the people affected," especially so since negotiators had been close to reaching "the basis for a cease-fire."

She stopped short of calling for a cease-fire. "We have repeatedly called on the Israelis to act proportionately," Beckett said.

A peace package Rice brought to the region called for a U.N.-mandated multinational force that can help stabilize in the region, according to a U.S. official speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the discussions.

It also proposes: disarming Hezbollah and integrating the guerrilla force into the Lebanese army; Hezbollah's return of Israeli prisoners; a buffer zone in southern Lebanon to put Hezbollah rockets out of range of Israel; a commitment to resolve the status of a piece of land held by Israel and claimed by Lebanon; and the creation of an international reconstruction plan for Lebanon.

The latter two provisions resembled parts of a proposal by Lebanon's government. But they fell short of Hezbollah's demands, including a prisoner swap to free Lebanese held for years in Israeli prisons and the disputed land, known as Chebaa farms, put under U.N. supervision until its status can be resolved.

Associated Press Writer Katherine Shrader in Jerusalem contributed to this story.

other middle east news

- [U.N. Council: 'Shock' Over Lebanon Deaths](#)
- [U.S.: Israel OKs 48-Hour Air Activity Halt](#)
- [4 Marines Die As Iraq Violence Continues](#)
- [A Look at U.S. Military Deaths in Iraq](#)
- [Bodies Pulled From Wreckage in Lebanon](#)
- [AP Blog: Dispatches From Mideast Conflict](#)
- [Iraqi Cleric Demands Cease-Fire in Lebanon](#)
- [Analysis: Hezbollah May Have the Edge](#)
- [Marines Prop Up Ailing Local Gov't in Iraq](#)
- [Israeli Soldiers Deal With Grief, Trauma](#)



[email this page to a friend](#)

[Make My Way Your Home Page](#) | [Spread the Word](#) | [We're Hiring](#)

My Settings: [Overview](#) | [Search](#) | [Email](#) | [Chat](#) | [Portfolio](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Groups](#) | [Profile](#)

IMPORTANT: We do not present our users with pop-ups or any other non-contextual advertising. Nor do we send email to our users. If you see or receive one of these items, it is coming from an outside source, either as a result of something you have previously downloaded or as an "exit" pop-up from the site you just visited. It is not coming from our site.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [About Us](#) | [Our Mission](#) | [Sign In](#) | [Sign Out](#) | [Help Center](#)

© 2006 IAC Search & Media. All rights reserved.