

## Morning Roundup: Israeli Offensive Continues for 7th Day With no Signs of Abating



Israeli warplanes on Tuesday continued for the 7th day their airstrikes on Lebanon by launching early morning raids on a Lebanese army base and on a coastal road north of Beirut Tuesday.

Overnight, fighter jets continued pounding Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hizbullah stronghold and home for many Shiite families who have fled the devastated area seeking refuge with relatives as well as in schools and public parks.

The warplanes also struck a military base in Kfarshima, a town just south of the capital, local television stations reported. There was no immediate confirmation from the Lebanese army.

Shortly before daybreak, Israeli jets hit two trucks, one of them carrying concrete, on the coastal road in the port town of Byblos north of Beirut, local TV stations said. No casualties were reported.

Apparently, the trucks were being targeted by the Israelis for fear they might be carrying arms or missiles for Hizbullah.

The Byblos raid came after Israeli military officials said an airstrike Monday had destroyed at least one long-range Iranian "Zalzal" missile capable of hitting Tel Aviv.

In eastern Lebanon, Israeli warplanes fired four missiles on residential areas in the city of Baalbek, witnesses said. There was no word on casualties in the town which is also a Hizbullah stronghold.

In the early hours of Tuesday, a woman, her two daughters and Sri Lankan maid were killed and four others wounded in an air strike on their villa in the coastal city of Tyre.

The corpses of six other civilians were pulled out from a house belonging to two couples from the same family after an Israeli night raid on the border village of Aitaroun. Three children remained buried in the rubble, said village mayor Salim Murad.

By nightfall Monday, 210 Lebanese had been reported killed in the fighting including 12 soldiers. At least 24 Israelis have been killed so far.

In spite of the diplomatic activity in order to obtain a ceasefire, Israel showed no sign of abating.

Israel's deputy chief of staff Major General Moshe Kaplinsky told AFP that the international pressure will "allow" the offensive to last "at least" another week.

The United States, Israel's main ally, has backed the Jewish state's "right to defend itself," and calls by the European Union and United Nations for an end to hostilities have shown no effect on the Israeli offensive.

"What... everybody wants to see is a cessation of violence," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack. "But nobody wants to see a cessation of violence done in such a way that you end up back where we are today at some point in the future."

Meanwhile, thousands of foreign residents of Lebanon are still seeking a way out of the country and in the first mass evacuation by sea to neighboring Cyprus, an Italian vessel carrying more than 300 people docked in the port of Larnaca.

A Greek cruise ship carrying about 700 French citizens and other Europeans also arrived in Cyprus on Tuesday after leaving Beirut.

British Foreign Office minister Kim Howells told parliament in London that the Royal Navy could be faced with "the biggest evacuation since Dunkirk" -- when some 330,000 soldiers were evacuated by sea from France in 1940 -- while the United States was preparing to help potentially thousands of nationals flee. *(AP-AFP-Naharnet) (Outside AP photo shows a Lebanese woman mourning over the body of her dead uncle at a hospital and inside AP photo shows Civil defense rescuers carry the body of a woman away from a civilian car that was struck by an Israeli warplane missile, as it was driving past a bridge in the southern coastal town of Rmeileh)*

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