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## ***Fire with fire: Escalation meets retaliation as Israel holds out on a ceasefire***

Israel's recent military rampage across Beirut was meant to give Tel Aviv a strong negotiating hand in ceasefire talks. But Hezbollah's unprecedented retaliation on Tel Aviv showed that there will be no military solution for the occupation state, only punishment in kind.

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Successive developments are unfolding in the ongoing confrontation between the Israeli occupation forces and the Lebanese resistance. In the last week, the situation has escalated, with mutual targeting by both sides.

The intensification in the battlefield, instigated by the Israeli army in early October following the launch of their “limited” [ground invasion](#) into south Lebanon, was expected. It came in advance of a sensitive stage in negotiations after Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri's receipt of a draft ceasefire agreement from US Ambassador to Beirut [Lisa Johnson](#), who envisages a “post-Hezbollah” phase for the Levantine state.

Israel, confident in its US-supported military superiority, has opted to negotiate under fire, continuing its campaign of systematic destruction and civilian targeting. To understand the current dynamics, it is essential to examine the most prominent points of confrontation on the ground and link them to the ongoing talks between the various affiliated parties.

### **Negotiating under fire**

The significance of last week's targeting of Israel's [military headquarters and Ministry of Defense](#) in Tel Aviv may have escaped the notice of many observers, given the Hebrew media's efforts to downplay the event as part of Israel's [broader blackout strategy](#).

However, this event was notable, both morally and strategically. It marks the first time in Israel's short history that the headquarters of its military command – where strategic decisions are made and war is managed – has been directly targeted.

Such an action delivers a severe blow to the occupation army's reputation and challenges its supposed invulnerability. In terms of field implications, this targeting sends a powerful message that political and military leaders are equally vulnerable, as conveyed by the Hezbollah drone strike on Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu's residence](#). These strikes demonstrate the resistance's capability to hit critical locations whenever it chooses, despite the major shake-up following the loss of secretary-general [Hassan Nasrallah](#) and other senior leaders.

The Netanyahu government has made it clear, through both rhetoric and action, that it wants negotiations to proceed under the ongoing threat of military escalation. Believing in its overwhelming advantage on the battlefield, it aims to force Beirut into agreeing to terms that would [compromise Lebanon's national sovereignty](#). Yet, the reality on the ground tells a different story.

### **Retaliation and ongoing resistance**

Far from being weakened, the Lebanese resistance continues to retaliate effectively. In addition to striking Tel Aviv, it has launched [sustained attacks](#) on Haifa, the third largest city in Israel, as well as multiple cities and settlements across an area exceeding 5,000 square kilometers.

This has forced millions of Israeli settlers to live under the constant blare of sirens, with their dreams of resettling in northern occupied Palestine becoming increasingly elusive. Hezbollah's actions not only seek to thwart the key Israeli war goal of returning its populations to the north, but are a clear indication that the resistance is very much capable of inflicting and sustaining significant damage to the enemy, its cities, infrastructure, and military centers.

Moreover, the Lebanese resistance and its community have repeatedly shown their unwillingness to compromise on their goal of supporting Palestine and its liberation, a cause for which they have paid a heavy price in blood and lives throughout decades of conflict.

### **Tel Aviv for Beirut**

The occupation state's military escalation on Beirut occurred just as the Lebanese were preparing an appropriate response to the draft agreement presented to Berri. Having apparently run out of Hezbollah military targets, Israel decided to assassinate a civilian figure – Hezbollah's media relations officer [Mohammed Afif](#) – who was not directly involved in military activities.

That operation did not represent a significant military achievement but rather a dangerous shift in the pattern of Israel's targeted killings, now extending to civilian political figures in the movement.

Following the assassination, Beirut continued to be targeted for the next 48 hours, with Israel attacking two other locations in the heart of Beirut – [Mar Elias Street](#), a bustling area far removed from any military significance, and Zoukaq al-Balat. According to the Lebanese Health Ministry, the Israeli airstrikes claimed the lives of nine civilians and injured 45 others.

This spate of attacks prompted Hezbollah to execute an immediate and [decisive response against Tel Aviv](#). Eluding Israel's vaunted defense systems, a ballistic missile hit the city, followed the next day by another major retaliation targeting deep within Israeli territory.

These qualitative military responses came after Lebanon submitted what it described as positive answers to the draft agreement, conveying a powerful message on three fronts: First, any Israeli targeting of Beirut will inevitably lead to a retaliatory strike on Tel Aviv. The resistance has established a clear parallel between the two capitals, ensuring that any escalation against Beirut will be met with a similar response.

Second, the resistance's willingness to engage with the draft agreement is not a sign of weakness, but rather a desire to end a war that Lebanon did not initiate. Tellingly, multiple operations were launched as White House envoy [Amos Hochstein](#) arrived in Beirut for ceasefire talks with Lebanese officials. The strategy guiding the resistance remains defensive, aiming to keep the pressure on the enemy without capitulation. Third, Tel Aviv's claims late last month – that [80 percent](#) of Hezbollah's missile capabilities had been destroyed – were answered directly through this fierce retaliation. As Israeli activist Uri Feltman [conceded](#), “Netanyahu's claim of wiping out 80 percent of Hezbollah's missiles was pure fantasy.” The resistance made clear that these claims were baseless, delivering a harsh response that demonstrated their continued operational strength.

**Failure to re-settle North Palestine and to advance in South Lebanon**

As Israel entered the second phase of its ground operations, it quickly became evident that this stage was not proceeding as planned. Despite sustained efforts over four days, occupation forces struggled to make meaningful advances.

Attempts to move through [key areas](#) such as Shamaa, Bayada, Tallusa, Ainata, and the legendary Bint Jbeil were repeatedly thwarted, with Israeli forces facing numerous resistance ambushes and indirect strikes. These clashes have resulted in more than 18 Israeli fatalities, 32 wounded soldiers, and the destruction of several Merkava tanks.

The continued presence of Hezbollah forces in these areas exposes the inability of the Israeli army to secure a decisive victory. Despite its advanced military capabilities, Israel has not managed to occupy a single village, facing stiff resistance at every turn and absorbing punishing, deadly hits.

The ongoing confrontation has proven that a military solution is unattainable for Israel, regardless of how long the conflict persists. The only viable path to secure a return to stability for its northern settlers is through a political agreement in accordance with the principles of [Resolution 1701](#).

In his last speech before his assassination, the late Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah confidently [taunted](#): “Can Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu return the settlers to the north? We are taking this on as a challenge, knowing full well they can't, regardless of the course of action they take.” That was Nasrallah's promise, and this is now the Lebanese resistance's mission.

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