



Situation Report

# Middle East conflict

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# Developments

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The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Home Front Command eased some restrictions for towns in the Golan Heights on 12<sup>th</sup> October. The IDF announced that educational activities can resume in southern and northern Golan Heights, as well as increased gathering sizes in Mount Carmel.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an Iranian-backed militant group, claimed two drone attacks targeting the Golan Heights overnight from 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> October. No casualties were reported.

US officials reported on 12<sup>th</sup> October that Israel has narrowed down its potential targets for the retaliatory attack against Iran. Reports indicate that Iranian military and energy infrastructure will be targeted rather than nuclear facilities. However, they added that Israel has not finalised when the retaliation will take place.

The IDF created a fifth closed military zone along the Israel-Lebanon border on 12<sup>th</sup> October. This included the towns of Zarit, Shtula, and Shomera (see spot map for exact location).

IDF troops entered a UNIFIL site in Ramyeh, southern Lebanon, on 13<sup>th</sup> October. According to IDF sources, this was prompted by Hezbollah anti-tank missiles targeting the troops. The operation resulted in over 25 IDF deaths in southern Lebanon on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

A Hezbollah drone attack targeting a military base in Binyamina, central Israel, on 13<sup>th</sup> October killed four IDF soldiers and wounded 61 others. This marks the deadliest Hezbollah attack on Israeli soil since the Israeli ground incursion into southern Lebanon began on 1<sup>st</sup> October. Hezbollah announced that the attack was in retaliation for the airstrikes on Beirut on 10<sup>th</sup> October that killed 22 individuals. Hezbollah vowed to continue its targeted attacks if Israel's ground incursion continued.

The US announced on 14<sup>th</sup> October that it would deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defence system to Israel. The same day it was announced that the US would deploy a maximum number of 100 troops to Israel to operate the THAAD system. The system is a ground-based interceptor for long-range ballistic missiles. Components of the system arrived in Israel on 15<sup>th</sup> October, although it will be fully operational in the near future.

The UK announced on 14<sup>th</sup> October, that new sanctions would be imposed against Iranian individuals linked to the army, air force and defence system management, as well as organisations.

Israel continued its offensive in the Gaza Strip through 15<sup>th</sup> October. The IDF carried out airstrikes targeting tents outside the al-Aqsa Hospital in the central Gaza Strip overnight on 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> October. According to reports, the large-scale fire that broke out as a result caused widespread injuries in Deir al-Balah. The strike killed at least four people.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) began the second phase of polio vaccinations on 14<sup>th</sup> October. This follows the first round of the polio vaccination campaign that took place across Gaza from 1<sup>st</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September.

An Israeli airstrike hit a building in the northern Lebanese village Aitou in the Zgharta District on 14<sup>th</sup> October. Aitou is a predominately Christian village and away from the Hezbollah strong holds in central and southern Lebanon, making it difficult to identify the potential target. 22 individuals were killed in the airstrike, including twelve women and two children.

A terror attack took place along Road 4 near Ashdod, Israel, on 15<sup>th</sup> October. One policeman was critically wounded and later died at the scene, while a civilian was wounded from the glass shrapnel during the attack. Local police quickly attended the scene and killed the assailant.

According to reports on 15<sup>th</sup> October, Israel's arsenal of rocket and missile interceptors is depleting. The report further states that a coordinated Iranian and Hezbollah attack would see Israeli defence systems incredibly stretched.

Wizz Air announced on 15<sup>th</sup> October that it will be suspending all flights to and from Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV) until at least 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The airline cited the 'ongoing situation in the region' as the justification.

Reports suggest that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Joe Biden that Israel would not target Iranian oil or nuclear sites in a phone call made last week. The reporting that Israel is not looking to target oil facilities prompted the US oil contract West Texas Intermediate to lower oil prices by 5% on 15<sup>th</sup> October.

Israel Defence Minister Yoav Gallant stated on 15<sup>th</sup> October that Israel will 'soon respond' to Iran's retaliation on 1<sup>st</sup> October. He further asserted that the attack 'will be a precise and deadly response.'

Hezbollah's deputy chief, Naim Qassem, warned Israel on 15<sup>th</sup> October that the only end to the ongoing Israel-Hezbollah war is a ceasefire. In his speech, Qassem affirmed that Hezbollah has adopted a new method to make Israel feel 'pain.'

IDF soldiers have reportedly begun demining the occupied Golan Heights. According to reports, IDF soldiers are moving the fence delineating the demilitarised zone (DMZ) towards the Syrian border, while also digging new tunnels. This suggests that Israel is searching for a new front against Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

## Assessment

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While Hezbollah appears keen for a ceasefire, Israel has not expressed a similar interest. Israel reckons it can neutralise the threat that Hezbollah poses militarily and sees the current operation in southern Lebanon as a way to permanently secure areas along the border from which Israeli citizens evacuated following 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Israel is highly likely to retaliate for the Iranian missile attack on 1<sup>st</sup> October. While it was forecasted to take place within the short-term period of one-week, Israeli retaliation will likely take place after the US's THAAD anti-missile system has been deployed to Israel.

The US is likely to assist Israel on the condition that the Israeli retaliation remains contained. We assess that Israel's retaliation will target Iranian military infrastructure rather than oil, energy or nuclear infrastructure. Israel will not receive US support to target Iran's oil refineries or nuclear infrastructure as this would affect the upcoming US presidential election, thereby reducing the odds that it conducts strikes on such facilities.

Israel's depleting arsenal of rocket and missile interceptors is likely why Israel has prolonged the wait for retaliation against Iran. However, once the THAAD missile defence system is deployed to Israel and Israel can fortify its defence systems, a retaliation is highly likely to take place within a period of one to two weeks. This ensures that Israel would be able to defend itself in the event of another large-scale retaliation from Iran or its regional allies.

IDF troops clearing landmines along the occupied Golan Heights signal that Israel is looking for a new front in the incursion into southern Lebanon. Previously, the addition of infantry and armoured troops into southern Lebanon, along with the multiple evacuation warning issued since 3<sup>rd</sup> October that are above the 2006 'buffer zone' had signalled a broadening of Israel's incursion into southern Lebanon, which had initially been confined to areas close to the border.

While Israel aimed for the ground invasion to be a short-term operation, there is an even chance that the operation in southern Lebanon will be extended into the medium-term. This is due to the resistance the IDF has faced from Hezbollah. The IDF is unlikely to retreat from southern Lebanon until its intended goal of eliminating Hezbollah military infrastructure is accomplished. The addition of a fifth closed military zone on 12<sup>th</sup> October signals the IDF's determination to secure its northern border.

The end of 'unilateral self-restraint' from Iran suggests that if Israel retaliates against Iran, this could be an escalation into an even larger-scale Iranian retaliation. President Netanyahu's determination to retaliate against Iran, regardless of international rhetoric, makes an escalation between Iran and Israel very possible. It is still unlikely that other regional countries will enter the conflict which has so far remained contained between Iran and its axis and Israel.

It is highly likely that Israel will continue the airstrikes targeting militant infrastructure and individuals in the Hezbollah leadership.

Increasingly targeted aerial strikes from both Hezbollah and the IDF are likely to exacerbate cross-border tensions. The increasingly targeted Hezbollah drone attacks illustrate Hezbollah's growing capabilities, which will likely prompt increasingly impactful Israeli attacks in Lebanon.

## Advice

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Security managers are encouraged to evacuate from Lebanon owing to the credible risk of a war between Israel and Hezbollah. Healix assess the evacuation watch for Lebanon to be 'Evacuation' (Level 4) due to the Israeli ground invasion and the ongoing cross-border conflict between Hezbollah and the IDF.

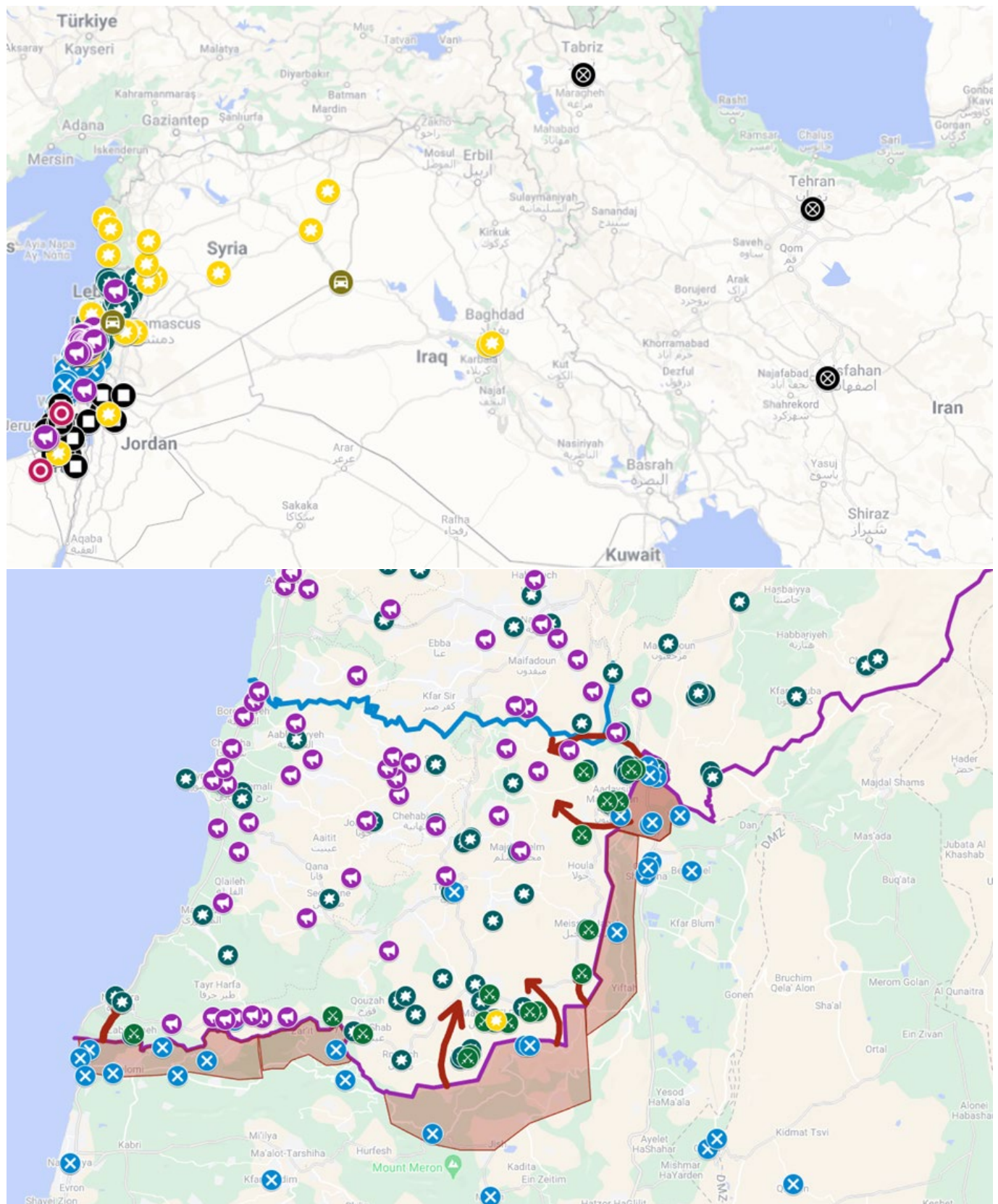
Remain cognisant of the operational status of airports throughout the country. Keep in mind that operations at Beirut–Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY) have the potential to cease at short notice.














Ensure that a loss-of-communications plan is in place prior to travel and that personnel have access to multiple means of communication.

Reconfirm third-party provider capabilities for transportation, security, and other logistical support, including international assistance, medical providers, and hotels/accommodation. Note these are changeable depending on the security situation at the time of request.

Identify triggers for escalation and de-escalation. As part of the evacuation planning process, organisations should identify internal triggers in line with the company's risk tolerance that would signal that the situation is improving or deteriorating enough to warrant a change to their evacuation posture.

# Mapping



-  Iranian missile attacks
-  Developments across MENA
-  Hezbollah-IDF clashes
-  IDF aerial strikes/shelling in Lebanon
-  Military zones
-  Litani River
-  Delineated 'Blue Line' border
-  Hezbollah missile, rocket, and drone strikes in Israel
-  IDF evacuation orders
-  Iranian missile launch sites
-  Border crossing
-  Awali River
-  Iranian-linked militant group attacks

Spot map accessible [here](#)

The conflict in the Middle East is evolving, and Healix is monitoring closely. As such our advice is under regular review.

For up-to-date intelligence or for on-the-ground support, please reach out to [GSOC@healix.com](mailto:GSOC@healix.com).



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