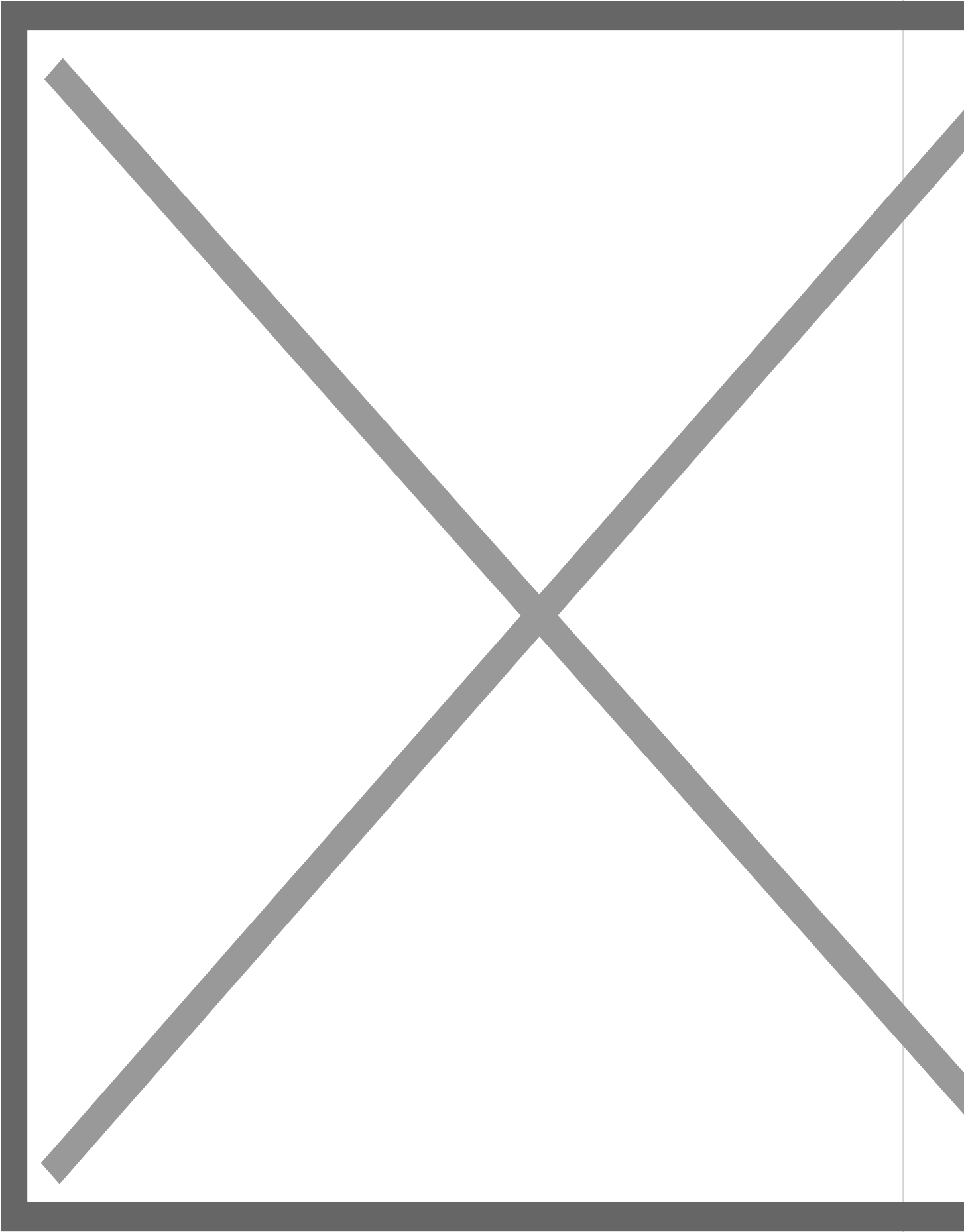


Israel steps up air and ground strikes in Gaza, while fighter jets attack Syria and Lebanon

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Gaza City, October 30 (RHC)-- Israel has stepped up its fierce air and artillery strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip and pressed ahead with a ground assault that prompted more international calls for civilians to be protected and a ceasefire.

Witnesses said Israeli tanks entered the edge of Gaza City and were seen in the Zaytun district on Monday morning, adding that they cut a key road from the north to the south of the besieged strip. "They have cut the Salahedin road and are firing at any vehicle that tries to go along it," a resident said.

Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari told reporters on Monday that Israel was "gradually moving ahead according to plan" in Gaza, but declined to confirm the location of the Israeli forces.

The Israeli military on Monday said it had struck over 600 targets of the Palestinian resistance over the past few days as it continued to expand ground raids in Gaza, killing dozens of fighters "who barricaded themselves in buildings and tunnels, and attempted to attack the troops."

Israeli airstrikes also continued unabated on Monday, targeting areas near Shifa and Al-Quds hospitals in Gaza.

In addition, overnight, Israel carried out strikes against military infrastructure in Syria and Lebanon, its military has said, amid concerns the country's offensive against Hamas could devolve into broader conflict across the Middle East.

Israeli fighter jets struck areas in Syria and Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

Some of the airstrikes targeted army posts in the south-western Syrian city of Daraa, Syria's defence ministry said, leading to "some material losses." The ministry said Israel had struck at around 1:35 am (2335 GMT) "from the direction of the occupied Syrian Golan, targeting two positions of our armed forces in the Daraa countryside."

Israel's military has been engaged in cross-border fighting with the Lebanese armed group Hezbollah and has launched repeated air raids on Syria since launching its war on Hamas.

The United States has also carried out attacks on Syria in response to a sharp rise in rocket and drone attacks on its forces in Syria and Iraq.

In recent days, the Pentagon said it had carried out strikes on two facilities in Syria used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran-backed groups after President Joe Biden earlier pledged to respond to attacks on U.S. personnel.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned of regional escalation if Israel continues its war against Hamas, saying earlier this month that, "Muslims and resistance forces will become impatient, and no one can stop them."

Last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that the conflict could spill "beyond the borders of the Middle East" if Israel did not end its bombardment of Gaza.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday said in an interview with ABC News that there is a "real" risk of the war escalating into a wider regional conflict.

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