

Israeli war minister threatens to turn Lebanon into another Gaza



Tel Aviv, January 9 (RHC)-- Israeli minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant has threatened to expand the brutal aggression against the Gaza Strip to Lebanon as tensions continue to escalate with Hezbollah across the border.

"They see what's happening in Gaza, they know we can copy and paste to Beirut," Gallant said in an interview with the Wall Street Journal on Sunday as he commented on rising tensions between Israel and Hezbollah over the past weeks.

Gallant, however, rephrased Israel's rising fear of the Lebanese resistance movement's deterrence power, saying: "The priority isn't to get into a war" with Hezbollah.

Gallant pointed to the challenges facing Israel after the retaliatory attacks by Gaza-based Palestinian resistance groups in early October, as well as a planned shift from an "intense maneuvering phase of the war" to "different types of special operations."

The Israeli minister described the October 7 Hamas-led attack on the occupied territories as the "bloodiest day" for the illegal entity. He also accused Iran of "building up military power" across the West Asia region.

"My basic view: We are fighting an axis, not a single enemy. Iran is building up military power around Israel in order to use it," Gallant claimed in the interview with the American daily newspaper. Gallant also said the next stage of war on the Gaza Strip "will last for a long time," and underlined that Israel will not abandon its goal of "destroying" Hamas.

The Israeli regime waged the war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas carried out the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in response to the Israeli regime's atrocities against Palestinians. The relentless military campaign has so far killed at least 23,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured nearly 59,000 others.

Since the beginning of the Israeli onslaught against Gaza, the frontier between Lebanon and the occupied territories has seen deadly exchanges of fire, mainly between the Israeli military and Hezbollah.

Three months of cross-border fire have killed 175 people in Lebanon, including three journalists, with reports saying Israel has repeatedly used U.S.-supplied internationally-banned white phosphorus munitions in its attacks on Lebanon's territory.

In northern occupied territories, at least 13 Israelis, including nine soldiers, have been killed, according to Israeli authorities.

The assassination of Hamas Deputy Chief Saleh al-Arouri by the Israeli regime in southern Beirut on January 2 has escalated tensions between the two sides.

Hezbollah said on Saturday that it had hit an Israeli aerial surveillance base with 62 missiles in its first response to Tel Aviv's assassination of the deputy political leader of Hamas. Wissam Hassan al-Tawil, another senior commander of Hezbollah, was killed on Monday when an Israeli strike hit the vehicle transporting him in the village of Khirbet Selm in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah has already warned the regime of the consequences of further escalation in the region.

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