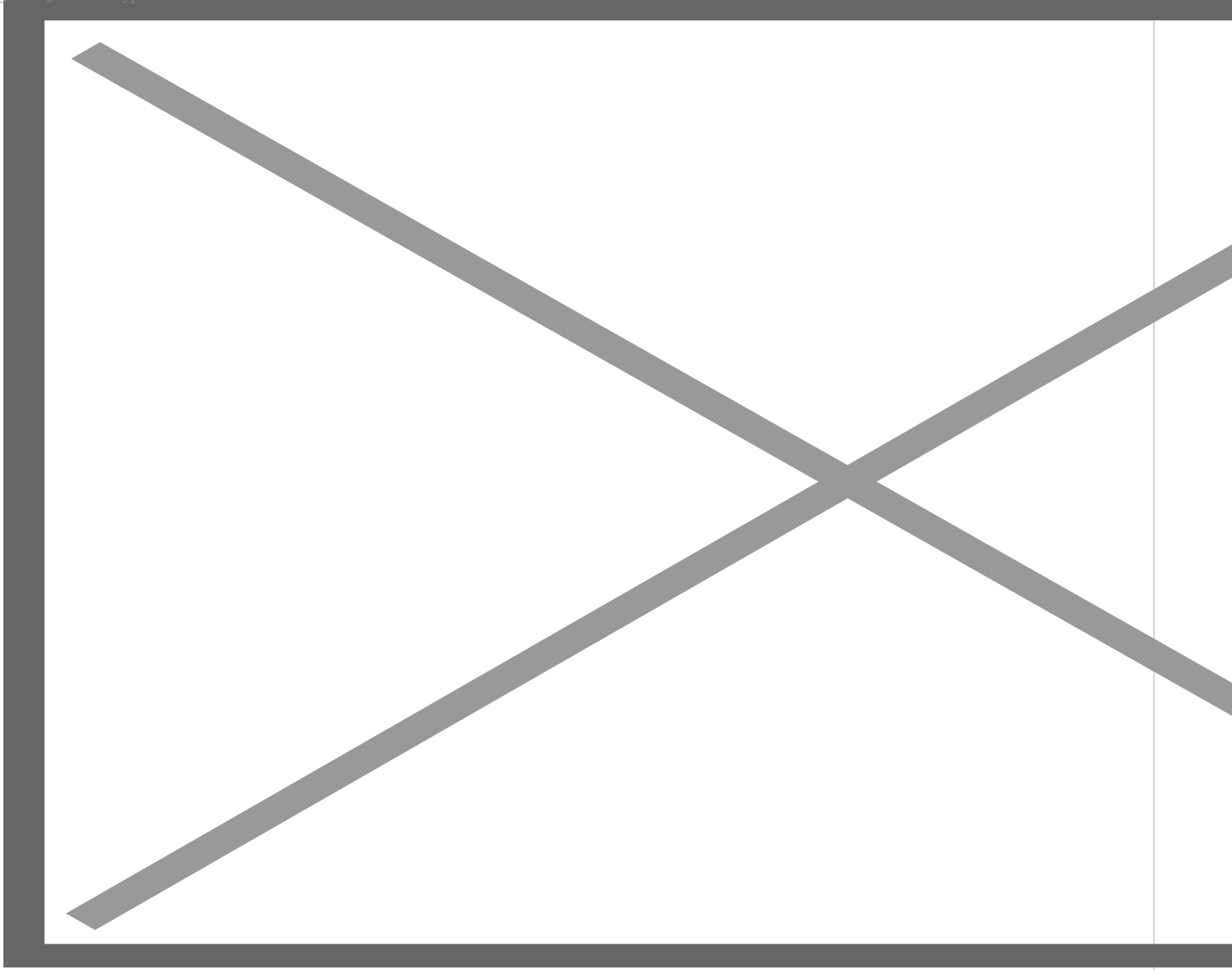


U.S. out of step as world reacts to Israel's ground offensive into Lebanon

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Washington, October 1 (RHC)-- The United States appeared out of step with the rest of the globe as it pledged its support for Israel's ground incursion into Lebanon.

One observer noted that while Washington is out of step with the international community, it is in "lock-step" with the genocidal regime in Tel Aviv.

Voices from across the world urged on Tuesday a ceasefire and a step back from the brink of all-out war. Meanwhile, Washington declared the "limited" ground offensive into southern Lebanon as "Israel's right to defend itself."

Israeli troops advanced into Lebanon overnight on Tuesday, in a widely anticipated move. The military said in a statement that the raids were "limited, localised and targeted" against Hezbollah.

However, the advance further raises the risk of a wider escalation in the fight with the Iran-backed armed group or even across the region, and the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Japan have all been quick to express deep concern.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said that he had told Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant that Washington agrees on the need for a ground offensive to rid Lebanon's southern border area of Hezbollah weapons and other means it can use to carry out attacks across the border.

"I made it clear that the United States supports Israel's right to defend itself," Austin said. The White House National Security Council made a similar statement on Tuesday, justifying Israel's so-called "limited operations."

It also added that it remains against the expansion of the ground assault and that a diplomatic solution is the only way to achieve lasting stability along Israel's border with Lebanon.

Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati warned that his country is facing "one of the most dangerous phases of its history" and urged the United Nations to provide aid for one million people displaced by Israel's attacks over recent weeks.

"We urgently call for more aid to reinforce our ongoing efforts to provide basic support to displaced civilians," Mikati said in a meeting with UN representatives.

The UN's humanitarian coordinator for Lebanon, Imran Riza, announced the launch of a \$426m flash appeal for urgent humanitarian aid for civilians caught up in the conflict.

"Without sufficient resources, humanitarians risk leaving the population of an entire country without the support they urgently require," Riza warned.

However, he added that no amount of aid can fully address the crisis if civilians continue to be targeted.

Liz Throssell, spokeswoman for the UN rights office, warned against "a large-scale ground invasion," that would only result in "greater suffering".

UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed "deep concern" over the escalation in fighting and "reaffirmed its unwavering position towards the unity of Lebanon, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity."

The statement called for international support to prevent further escalation and stressed the importance of providing full protection to civilians.

President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has "directed the delivery of an urgent \$100 million relief package to the people of Lebanon," the ministry added.

Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi warned on X that "aggression on Lebanon will inflict the worst." "Now more than ever, it needs our unwavering support to safeguard the country's integrity and security. Standing with the brotherly people of Lebanon is not just a moral duty, but an imperative necessity," he said.

Further afield, the response was unified in calling for a halt in hostiles and warning of the dangers of a regional conflagration.

Japan's government urged an immediate ceasefire and maximum restraint to prevent a further escalation of the conflict.

The Kremlin warned that "the geography of hostilities is expanding, which is further destabilising the region and increasing tensions".

Spain's foreign minister demanded that Israel cease its ground raids to avoid the conflict enveloping the region.

Italy, current president of the Group of Seven (G7) wealthy democracies, said it will continue working towards de-escalation.

NATO's new chief Mark Rutte said he is "following closely what is happening in Lebanon" and expressed hope that "hostilities will end as soon as possible."

Israel launched the incursion dubbed "Northern Arrows" – its first ground offensive into Lebanon since the 2006 war – on Monday night, after more than a week of intense air strikes on the capital, Beirut, and southern Lebanon. Those raids killed hundreds of people, including senior Hezbollah commanders and the armed group's chief Hassan Nasrallah.

The Israeli army claims its ground invasion aims to push Hezbollah north of the Litany River, about 30km (18 miles) from the Israeli-Lebanese border, making the group comply with the UN Resolution 1701.

On Tuesday, UNFIL, the UN peacekeeping force, warned that "any crossing into Lebanon is in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a violation of resolution 1701".

(SOURCE: Al Jazeera)

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