

Executive Summary

A 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, one of the key requirements for Iran to consider a wider deal with the United States, came into force at midnight last night. The ceasefire appears to have suffered some minor breaches, including some shelling by the Israeli military in southern Lebanon, but has otherwise held.

Diplomacy

Yesterday, President Trump announced that a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon would begin from 0001h (local time) today (17 April). He subsequently confirmed to the media that this ceasefire was intended to include Hezbollah.

Hezbollah leadership denounced the Lebanese government's negotiations with Israel as a "grave error", and said that whether or not Hezbollah abides by any ceasefire will depend on Israel halting all hostilities.

The main point of contention is that Israel has demanded that the Lebanese government disarm Hezbollah. The latter has refused to disarm as long as Israeli forces are on the ground in Lebanon.

The announcement prompted some surprise and confusion among the Israelis, particularly those IDF personnel engaged on the ground in southern Lebanon. However, it was welcomed by Tehran as part of a broader agreement with the US.

Pakistan continued to assist with informal negotiations between Iran, the US and Israel. President Trump last night (16 April) stated that Tehran had agreed it will not have a nuclear weapon, and that he expects the next round of negotiations to begin over the weekend. He then stated to the media that he believes a deal with Iran is "very close".

United States

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said in his address to the media yesterday afternoon (16 April) that the US Navy is controlling all traffic through the Strait of Hormuz as Iran no longer has a navy. He said that if Iran does not agree to a deal, then US forces are ready to resume fighting. The secretary added that the US military is using the ceasefire time to “reload” with “more power”.

Regional

Lebanon

The Israeli army destroyed the Qasmiyeh Bridge between Tyre and Sidon yesterday (16 April). The bridge was one of the key crossing points over the Litani River, and has been essential in supporting UN personnel and providing humanitarian aid to civilians in the south.

In the hours before the 10-day ceasefire was announced, the Israeli army launched attacks on Marjayoun, Sajd and Hanaway, while Israeli air strikes yesterday afternoon killed two people in the town of Deir Qanoun Ras al-Ain, one person in Saadiyat, reportedly four people in Tyre and two near Zefta. Hezbollah claimed attacks on Israeli military positions and attacks on northern Israel in the 24 hours leading up to the ceasefire.

Shortly after the start of the ceasefire, Lebanese media reported Israeli shelling on several villages in southern Lebanon, and military operations across the area. Despite the ceasefire, the Israeli military last night warned Lebanese nationals to remain north of the Litani River, implying the intention to continue operations.

However, the ceasefire largely held, allowing thousands of Lebanese nationals to return to their homes in southern Lebanon, although Israeli troops appear to remain in some locations across the area.

Iraq

A Kurdish opposition group in Erbil province was attacked by Iranian drones last night (16 April), according to local media.

Travel

Aviation

The International Energy Agency (IEA) said in an interview yesterday (16 April) that Europe had “maybe six weeks” of jet fuel left, and warned of flight cancellations if oil remains blocked by the conflict.

Maritime

The US has increased its shipping blockade of Iranian ports to include cargo considered to be contraband, including weapons systems, ammunition, nuclear materials, crude / refined oil products, iron, steel and aluminium. According to US Central Command, it is being enforced by more than 10,000 US personnel. US Central Command reported yesterday (16 April) that it has managed to force 14 vessels to turn back so far.

The US Defence Secretary invited other international powers to join the US operation to help in its blockade in the region.

Advice

- Do not travel to Lebanon, especially south of the Litani River, Dahiyeh in Beirut, and in the Beqaa Valley.
- Reconsider travel to the Middle East, especially Israel, Iran and Iraq, but also the wider Gulf region.
- Remain aware of ongoing tensions, given the possibility of a sudden resumption in fighting.
- Monitor instructions from local authorities and any national embassy guidelines.
- Avoid any demonstrations or gatherings in the region.
- Globally, reconsider travel to any locations with links to Israel or Judaism.
- If you need further support, or wish to discuss options for evacuation, call NGS.

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