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## Hezbollah Signals Escalation Amid Rising Israel Tensions



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BEIRUT, March 3 — A senior Hezbollah official has warned that further escalation with Israel could lead to a broader confrontation, amid renewed cross-border tensions despite an existing ceasefire.

Mahmoud Qomati, deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, said the group had shown restraint for months, expressing hope that Lebanese diplomatic efforts would help end hostilities, secure an Israeli withdrawal, and halt what he described as repeated violations.

"We said patience has limits," Qomati stated, adding that Hezbollah had adhered to the ceasefire arrangement and transferred its weapons from areas south of the Litani River. He claimed that Israeli strikes had continued while Lebanon had yet to achieve progress on territorial issues, detainees, or reconstruction.

"If the enemy wants it to be an open war, then let it be an open war," he said, signaling that Hezbollah's recent responses may intensify if tensions persist.

On the same day, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on members of the Quintet Committee to step up pressure on Israel to stop its attacks, reiterating that decisions of war and peace rest solely with the Lebanese state.

The remarks come as tensions rise along the Lebanese-Israeli border, despite a U.S.- and French-brokered ceasefire that took effect in November 2024.

Recent Israeli airstrikes have hit locations in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and Beirut's southern suburbs. Israeli authorities say the operations target Hezbollah infrastructure, while Lebanese officials accuse Israel of breaching the ceasefire and striking civilian areas.

