

Israel Launches Ground Offensive in Southern Lebanon, Warns Hezbollah Leadership



Published on March 16, 2026

Document Date: Mon, Mar 16 2026 11:00:26 pm

Category: ,English,International - ,Snippets

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rki.news

Source: Xinhua

Israeli forces have launched targeted ground operations against positions of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, opening a new front in the escalating regional conflict, according to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said the operation aims to eliminate security threats and ensure the safety of residents in northern Israel. He added that many Lebanese civilians who fled areas south of the Litani River would not be allowed to return until Israeli border communities are secure.

Katz said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had ordered the military to dismantle militant infrastructure in border villages, similar to operations previously carried out against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. He also warned that Israel could target Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem. According to security sources, Israeli troops supported by Merkava tanks and armored personnel carriers advanced early Monday toward the towns of Khiam and Aitaroun and nearby villages.

The push was backed by airstrikes, artillery fire, drones and warplanes.

The heaviest clashes were reported in the eastern sector, where Israeli forces moved toward Khiam, while in central areas troops advanced toward Bint Jbeil. Hezbollah said its fighters resisted the advances, claiming to have struck an Israeli Merkava tank and targeted Israeli troops near the Kfar Yuval settlement.

Security sources said Israeli troops established positions at several points along the Blue Line, the UN-demarcated boundary between Israel and Lebanon.

The escalation follows rising tensions after a U.S.-Israeli air campaign targeting Iranian facilities

in late February, raising fears of a broader regional confrontation.