



The War Has Come To Beirut: My Experience Of The City So Far

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Dimitri Lascaris: Good morning. This is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Beirut, Lebanon, on October 12th 2024. I arrived in Beirut yesterday for the fifth time since the beginning of 2023 and the fourth time since the beginning of Israel's genocide in Gaza, which began in October of last year. And my purpose in coming here is to continue my reporting on the impacts of the Israeli war on Lebanon, on the civilian population, and also to try to get a better sense of the state of the battlefield in the south of the country. That latter task is going to be challenging, more challenging on this trip than on prior trips, because I very much doubt, given the ground combat that's now happening in south Lebanon, that I'll be able to get into the area south of the Litani River. And I may probably at this stage be confined to the capital for the duration of my stay here. But I do plan to focus on two other very important stories. The first is Israel's systematic attacks on medical workers and the health care system here in Lebanon, and also the plight of the hundreds of thousands of Lebanese and others who have been displaced by this war, particularly in the south of the country and in the Bekaa Valley. I hope to interview some of the displaced and also persons who have volunteered to assist them or who have been tasked by the government with ensuring that they have adequate accommodation. In fact, you may be able to see here behind me, this is an area that I walked through numerous times in my prior visits, and on those visits I didn't notice people sleeping on the sidewalks and having erected tents or sleeping out of their cars. They are now all over the city, the central city, based upon what I've seen within the last 24 hours. In terms of the health care system, two days ago, a United Nations commission of inquiry issued a report based upon an extensive investigation it had conducted that Israel had systematically destroyed the health care system in Gaza. And the UN Commission of Inquiry accused Israel in that regard of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the crime of extermination. And it noted, amongst other things, that there was evidence that the Israeli military had tortured and murdered Palestinian doctors in Gaza and other medical workers. Now, it shouldn't be a surprise to anybody that given that Israel has been able to destroy systematically the health care system of Gaza with complete impunity, that it has now transferred those barbaric tactics to the war here on Lebanon. And if Israel continues to enjoy

total impunity for these crimes, the likely outcome for the Lebanese people is going to be quite dire because Israel certainly does have the capacity thanks to the United States and other Western backers to inflict massive damage on the health care system of Lebanon. The UN also reported yesterday, the day of my arrival here in Beirut, that according to its evidence, Israel has already killed in Lebanon alone over 100 medics and civil defence workers. And in fact, on a prior trip to the south of the country, I reported from the entrance of a hospital in Bint Jbeil after a drone strike there that killed three people, civilians who were exiting the hospital. I also interviewed on a prior trip the Director of Civil Defence in south Lebanon, who at that time and this would have been months ago reported that just in that area of the country, in the south of the country, somewhere in the range of 20 medical workers had been killed by Israeli attacks. In many of those instances, it seemed as though these people had been intentionally targeted. Interestingly, on our way into Beirut, on my flight from Athens, the aircraft flew directly over Cyprus, and we had a clear view of the British Akrotiri military base on the southern coast of the island. The base, as I've reported previously, has been used to transfer to Israel massive amounts of Western supplied military equipment. The base has also been used by British and American warplanes to attack Yemen. It has been used to conduct spy flights by the British military over Gaza, purportedly for the purpose of trying to locate the hostages there. Although there are likely to be deep underground and beyond the view of any drones flying over Gaza. They've also been used for flights by US military aircraft that are known to be employed to transfer or transport special forces. So why those flights are taking place from Akrotiri to Israel during the past year is an open question that nobody in the US or British government seems to want to answer. In any case, here is some brief footage of what I saw as we were flying over Cyprus yesterday.

Now, when the plane was beyond Cyprus and began to descend into the airport in Beirut, I shot further footage and managed to capture for a few moments the southern part of the city known as Dahiya, where the most devastating bombardments have occurred over the last several weeks. And this footage, which I'm going to show you now, appears to show the aftermath of an airstrike because there's smoke rising up from a building in the central part of the city. Here's what I saw.

Now, once I cleared customs, I was picked up by my guide and we drove from the airport into central Beirut. It didn't take long for us to see some of the devastating effects of Israel's bombardments. Here is some footage of a structure or what remains of a civilian structure, not far from the airport. And when you look at the wreckage, notice how many of the surrounding buildings have been damaged; almost an entire block was rendered uninhabitable or largely uninhabitable by this one strike alone.

So I had checked into my hotel last night, Friday, October 11th, in central Beirut, my guide Hadi took me to the remains of an apartment building that had been destroyed on the prior night, Thursday, October 10th, by an Israeli strike, apparently in an attempt to kill another senior Hezbollah official. Apparently he survived, but 22 people who were in the building at the time didn't, nor did many others escape injury; over 100 were injured, according to the local authorities. And they're still digging through the rubble, as you'll see from the footage

that I shot when I was there. Again, notice that this building is clearly situated in a densely populated residential area. And in fact, according to locals, there were more people in the area than normal because of the fact that so many people have been displaced from south and eastern Lebanon and are seeking refuge in the capital. So here's what I saw last night when I visited this destroyed structure.

This morning, I learned of a report in The Guardian that their reporter who went to the site over the last 48 hours of this destroyed building discovered evidence, clear evidence that the building had been destroyed by a US manufactured munition. The munition in question is known as a JDAM. It's a joint direct attack munition. It's basically a guidance kit manufactured by Boeing in the United States that is attached to bombs that would otherwise be dumb in order to make them precise. So it's increasingly clear, and this should surprise no one, that the vast death and destruction now being visited upon Lebanon by the Israeli military is being enabled yet again by Western manufactured munitions and particularly the boundless support that Israel receives from the United States military. In any case that is my report from central Beirut today. I do intend to publish one or more reports every day while I'm here. If you know of persons who are interested in on the ground reporting from Lebanon at this time, please do share with them the fact that I am now in Lebanon and will be publishing reports on a variety of subjects during my time here. For now, I'm signing off from Beirut, Lebanon, on October 12th, 2024.

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