

WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

ISRAELI STRIKES THREATEN IRAN TRUCE



EMILIE MADI, REUTERS

Khadija, who was wounded in an Israeli strike that killed her father, is escorted by family Thursday as they prepare for the burial of Khadija's father at Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut, Lebanon.

More than 300 killed in Lebanon; US-Iran talks planned

PARISA HAFEZI, MAYA GEBEILY AND ARIBA SHAHID
Reuters

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday he wants direct talks with Beirut, a day after the worst bombardment of the war killed more than 300 people in Lebanon and placed Donald Trump's U.S.-Iran ceasefire in jeopardy.

Trump announced a ceasefire in the six-week-old Iran conflict late Tuesday on social media, just hours before a deadline after which he threatened to destroy Iran's "entire civilization."

In Pakistan, authorities prepared for the first round of U.S.-Iran talks, locking down parts of the capital Islamabad.

But there was no sign Iran lifted its near-total blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which caused the worst disruption to global energy supplies in history, with Israel's ongoing attacks on Lebanon cited as a key sticking point.

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said Thursday that Iran doesn't seek war but won't forfeit its rights.

The statement attributed to Khamenei

was read on state TV. He has not been seen in public since he took over from his father, who was killed on the first day of the war.

Khamenei said Iran will seek retribution for attacks against it and "will take management of the Straits of Hormuz into a new phase." He also vowed to avenge the deaths of his father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iran's "martyrs."

Little traffic

In the first 24 hours of the ceasefire, just a single oil products tanker and five dry bulk carriers sailed through a strait that typically accommodated 140 ships a day before the war, accounting for about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flows.

Trump claimed in a social media post Thursday that oil would start flowing again, though he gave no indication of what actions the U.S. might take.

"Because of me, IRAN WILL NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON and, very quickly, you'll see Oil start flowing, with or without the help of Iran and, to me, it makes no difference, either way," he said.

In a separate post, Trump said Iran should not charge fees to tankers going through the strait.

"They better not be and, if they are, they better stop now," he said.

Netanyahu, whose government rebuffed a historic offer for direct talks with Lebanon last month, said in a statement that he gave instructions to start peace talks as soon as possible, which would also include disarming Iran-aligned militant group Hezbollah.

"In light of Lebanon's repeated requests to open direct negotiations with Israel, I instructed the cabinet yesterday to start direct negotiations with Lebanon as soon as possible," he said. "The negotiations will focus on disarming Hezbollah and establishing peaceful relations between Israel and Lebanon."

An hour before Netanyahu's statement, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said he was working on a diplomatic track on this matter that was starting to be seen "positively" by international actors.

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Travelers face higher costs as jet fuel prices swing

Airlines trim schedules, clouding customers' plans

RIO YAMAT
Associated Press

A new reality is setting in for travelers worldwide: rising fees, fewer flight options and difficult decisions about whether a trip is worth the cost.

The culprit is volatile oil and jet fuel prices, which spiked sharply since the war in the Middle East began and fighting near the narrow Strait of Hormuz created a chokepoint for global oil supplies.

"Volatility is the real story here," said Shye Gilad, a former airline captain who

now teaches at Georgetown University's business school. "Right now, the airlines are trying to make bets on what they think will happen in the future."

Airlines are trimming schedules and adjusting prices in ways that experts say will ripple unevenly across the market but ultimately affect almost every type of traveler.

Budget airlines and the price-conscious customers who rely on them are likely to feel the pinch first and most acutely, experts say, but even travelers in premium cabins won't escape the higher prices and less convenient schedules.



SETH WENIG, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stained-glass windows cast colorful shadows March 30 as travelers walk through LaGuardia Airport in New York.

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