Lebanese sources: Biden, Macron set to announce Israel-Hezbollah truce

Reuters – U.S. President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron are expected to announce a ceasefire in Lebanon between armed group Hezbollah and Israel imminently, four senior Lebanese sources said on Monday.

In Washington, White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said, “We’re close” but “nothing is done until everything is done”.

The French presidency said discussions on a ceasefire had made significant progress. In Jerusalem, a senior Israeli official said Israel’s cabinet would meet on Tuesday to approve a truce deal with Hezbollah.



Members of the media and public record the moment of an Israeli strike on a building, amid the ongoing hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, in the Chiyah district

of Beirut’s southern suburbs, Lebanon, November 25, 2024. REUTERS/Adnan Abidi TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

Signs of a diplomatic breakthrough were accompanied by heavy Israeli airstrikes on Beirut’s Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs, as Israel pressed on with the offensive it launched in September after almost a year of cross-border hostilities.
Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office declined to comment on reports that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to the text of a deal. But the senior Israeli official told Reuters that Tuesday’s cabinet meeting was intended to approve the text.
Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, said Israel would maintain an ability to strike southern Lebanon under any agreement. Lebanon has previously objected to wording that would grant Israel such a right.
U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said gaps between the two parties have narrowed significantly but there are still steps they need to take to reach an agreement.



Smoke rises following an Israeli strike on a building, amid the ongoing hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, in the Chiyah district of Beirut’s southern suburbs, Lebanon, November 25, 2024. REUTERS/Adnan Abidi

“Oftentimes the very last stages of an agreement are the most difficult because the hardest issues are left to the end,” he said. “We are pushing as hard as we can.”
Diplomacy is aimed at getting Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel to end fighting that erupted in October 2023 in parallel with Israel’s war against Palestinian Islamist group Hamas in Gaza. The conflict in Lebanon has drastically escalated over the last two months.
In Beirut, Elias Bou Saab, Lebanon’s deputy parliament speaker, told Reuters there were “no serious obstacles” left to start implementing a U.S.-proposed ceasefire with Israel, “unless Netanyahu changes his mind”.
He said the proposal would entail an Israeli military withdrawal from south Lebanon and regular Lebanese army troops deploying in the border region, long a Hezbollah stronghold, within 60 days.
A sticking point over who would monitor compliance with the ceasefire was resolved in the last 24 hours with an agreement to set up a five-country committee, including France and chaired by the United States, he said.

STRIKES ON BEIRUT

Despite diplomatic progress, hostilities have intensified. Over the weekend, Israel carried out powerful airstrikes, one of which killed at least 29 people in central Beirut, while Hezbollah unleashed one of its biggest rocket salvoes yet on Sunday, firing 250 missiles into Israel.
In Beirut, Israeli airstrikes levelled more of the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs on Monday, sending clouds of debris billowing over the Lebanese capital.
Lebanon’s health ministry said Israeli attacks killed 31 people and wounded 62 across the country on Monday. Over the past year, more than 3,750 people have been killed and over one million have been forced from their homes, according to the ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures.
Israel has dealt major blows to Hezbollah, killing its leader Hassan Nasrallah and other top commanders, and inflicting massive destruction in Lebanon areas where the group holds sway.

Israel says its military offensive is aimed at enabling tens of thousands of Israelis to return to homes they evacuated when Hezbollah began firing across the Lebanese border into Israel more than a year ago. Hezbollah's campaign followed the Hamas-led Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on Israel that precipitated the Gaza war.



A view shows the moment of an Israeli strike on a building in the Chiyah district of Beirut's southern suburbs, Lebanon. REUTERS/Adnan Abidi

Hezbollah strikes have killed 45 civilians in northern Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. At least 73 Israeli soldiers have been killed in northern Israel, the Golan Heights and in combat in southern Lebanon, according to Israeli authorities.

MISTRUST OVER DEAL

Biden's administration, which leaves office in January, has emphasised diplomacy to end the Lebanon conflict, even as all negotiations to halt the parallel war in Gaza are frozen.
U.S. Middle East envoy Brett McGurk will be in Saudi Arabia on

Tuesday to discuss using a potential Lebanon ceasefire as a catalyst for a deal ending hostilities in Gaza, the White House said.

Diplomacy over Lebanon has focused on restoring a ceasefire based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the last major war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006.

It requires Hezbollah to pull its fighters back around 30 km (20 miles) from the Israeli border, behind the Litani River, and the regular Lebanese army to enter the frontier region.

Israel and Hezbollah have accused each other of failing to implement it in the past; Israel says a new ceasefire must allow it to strike any Hezbollah fighters or weapons that remain south of the river.

An agreement could reveal rifts in Netanyahu's right-leaning government. The far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, said Israel must press on with the war until "absolute victory". Addressing Netanyahu on X, he said, "It is not too late to stop this agreement!"

Reports: Reuters