

UN sponsored ceasefire in Israel-Lebanon begins

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At 5:00 a.m. GMT, a UN sponsored ceasefire between the IDF and Hezbollah took effect. Outside of isolated small arms fire, both sides seem to be abiding by it. Although fighting took place until just minutes before the ceasefire, no air strikes or rocket attacks have been reported since.

Israel has said that it will maintain ground forces in southern Lebanon until they are relieved by the peace-keeping force. Israel also said it will maintain the blockade so that Hezbollah cannot rearm. Hezbollah on the other hand insisted on its right to fight Israeli soldiers on Lebanese soil.

The international peace-keeping force may take 10 days to assemble, says the UN. It is expected to be headed up by French troops, complemented primarily by troops from Italy, which has volunteered up to 3,000 soldiers. Portugal, Finland and Spain will also consider deployments. Australia, Canada, Malaysia and Indonesia have been mentioned by the UN as sources of non-EU forces.

Within an hour of the ceasefire cars started heading south in Lebanon. Within hours thousands of Lebanese sought to return to their homes crowding roads, even as bulldozers were still trying to fill bomb craters. The Lebanese army was working hard to coordinate traffic and make-shift road repair.

"I'm so excited to see my home. I'd heard news it was completely destroyed, but even if there's one room intact, I will stay there with my children," said Sanaa Ayyad, who had with her a baby and two young boys.

The conflict has been going on for 39 days and has cost over 1,200 people their lives. In Lebanon, around 1,100 people have been killed, mostly civilians. 154 Israelis, including 114 soldiers, have been killed in the war.