

## Israeli restrictions at Al-Aqsa Mosque cut number of worshipers at Friday prayers in half

RAMALLAH: Friday prayer took place at Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem amid strict Israeli security measures and police obstacles that limited the number of worshippers able to reach the mosque.

And as tensions remained high and violence continued, two Israeli women were shot dead when their car was attacked in the occupied West Bank.

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## Italian defense minister pledges support for Lebanon

ROME: Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto on Friday pledged his country's support for Lebanon, which he described as "a key hub for stability in the Mediterranean area."

During a meeting in Beirut with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Crosetto said: "In this difficult time, we need even greater commitment to peace and regional security from everybody so that the situation does not escalate."

Crosetto also visited the nearly 1,000 Italian soldiers deployed as part of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon.

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## Calm returns to southern Lebanon after Israeli bombing

BEIRUT: Caution prevailed on both sides of the border between southern Lebanon and Israel on Friday after Israeli airstrikes at dawn, which caused material damage but no reported casualties.

Lebanon announced that it has decided to file a complaint with the UN Security Council, protesting Israel's "flagrant violation of its sovereignty," and claiming that Israel had contravened Resolution 1701 and threatened the stability of southern Lebanon.

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## **Rockets fired at Israel from Lebanon raise risk of conflict**

BEIRUT: Militants in Lebanon launched a rocket barrage at villages across Israel's northern frontier on Thursday, wounding two people and forcing hundreds to flee to bomb shelters, the Israeli military said.

The attack, one of the heaviest in years, ratcheted up regional tensions a day after Israeli police raided Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site, Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Israel's military later said that 34 rockets had been fired from Lebanon in the 15-minute strike, with 25 intercepted, and at least four landing in Israel.

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## **Egypt to host critical World Urban Forum in Cairo in 2024**

CAIRO: Egypt will host the 12th World Urban Forum, or WUF, in November next year, which brings together leading experts to discuss the globe's housing crisis.

The hosting venue was announced during the first session this year of the executive board of the UN Human Settlements Program, known as UN-Habitat, in Nairobi, Kenya, which took place on March 28 and 29.

Wael Nasr El-Din Attia, Egypt's ambassador to Kenya and permanent representative to UN-Habitat, affirmed his nation's support for the efforts of the program under the leadership of the current executive director.