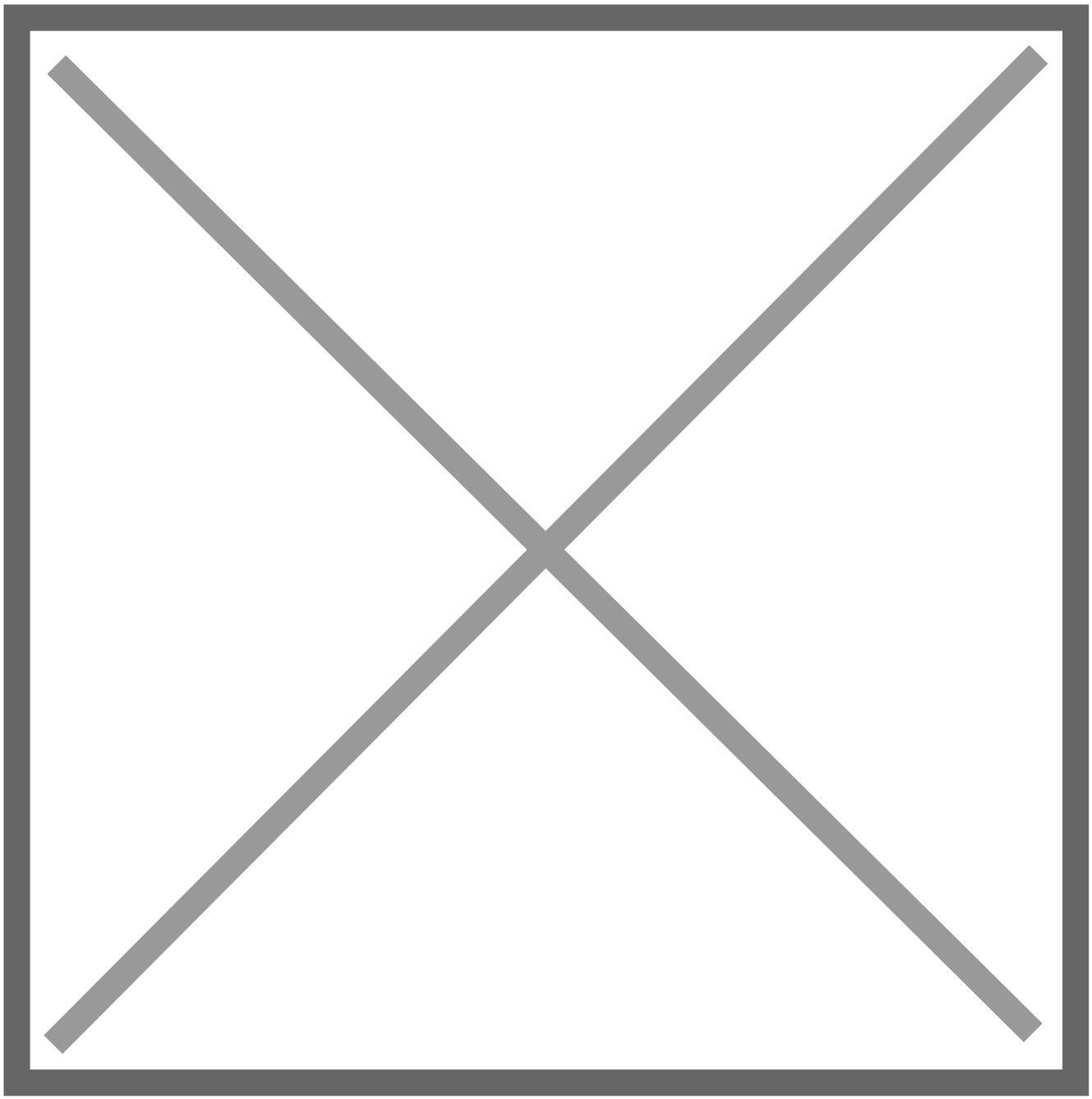
News



Smoke billows March 3, 2026, after an Israeli strike on Beirut's southern suburbs, following an escalation between Hezbollah and Israel amid the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran. (OSV News/Reuters/Mohamed Azakir)

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Beirut, Lebanon — May 4, 2026
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A branch of the Catholic church expressed deep concern Monday over reports that Israel was demolishing civilian and religious buildings in parts of southern Lebanon under its control, following allegations that a convent had been bulldozed.

The Council of Melkite Greek Catholic Bishops in Lebanon urged the Lebanese government and the United Nations to protect the property of civilians and religious institutions in southern Lebanon, citing in particular the village of Yaroun where officials said Israeli troops destroyed a Melkite convent earlier this month among other demolition. The bishops called the destruction of buildings, after residents of the area had evacuated, a "deep wound in the national and human conscience."

Israel took control of border areas in southern Lebanon in its latest war against the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah ahead of a ceasefire on April 17 and has said it aims to root out the militants and their infrastructure in the area. It has asked residents to evacuate villages for their own safety.

The Israeli military said it does not intentionally target religious institutions, but said in a statement on Saturday that while destroying Hezbollah infrastructure in Yaroun, that it had damaged a house without religious signs, and that it had prevented further damage to the building after recognizing it was linked to a church.

The Israeli military said the building in Yaroun was part of a compound that Hezbollah militants had used in the past to fire rockets toward Israel, and it released photographs of an intact building at the site.

Adib Ajaka, a Christian community leader in Yaroun, told The Associated Press that the photos posted in the Israel statement were of another building next to the

convent that housed a clinic and archbishopric, and that the Israeli military had bulldozed the convent. He handed over a photograph showing rubble next to the clinic building that he said were the remains of the convent.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond Monday to questions about the convent.

Adib, as well as a municipal official from Yaroun and Gladys Sabbagh, the superior general of the Basilian Salvatorian Sisters who had used the convent, all told The Associated Press that according to news they received, the convent had been bulldozed while residents were evacuated from the area. The municipal official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The French Catholic charity L'Oeuvre d'Orient condemned what it called the "deliberate act of destruction of a place of worship and the systematic destruction of homes in southern Lebanon aimed at preventing the return of civilian populations."

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Also Monday, the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa told reporters that a potential meeting between President Joseph Aoun and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington should not be seen as a concession or a loss for Lebanon.

Trump said last month that he would host a meeting between Aoun and Netanyahu although a date has not been set yet. There has been no official confirmation from Lebanon that Aoun will attend such a meeting with Netanyahu.

Aoun has been coming under harsh criticism at home by Hezbollah and its allies who are opposed to direct talks with Israel.

The latest war between Israel and Hezbollah began on March 2, when Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel, two days after the United States and Israel launched a war on its main backer, Iran.

Israel has since carried out hundreds of airstrikes and launched a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, capturing dozens of towns and villages along the border.

A 10-day ceasefire declared in Washington went into effect on April 17. The ceasefire was later extended by three weeks.

The Health Ministry in Lebanon said Monday that the latest Israel-Hezbollah war has killed 2,696 and wounded 8,264 .

This story appears in the **War in Iran** feature series. View the full series.