

Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren ends a two-day visit to Lebanon

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Vice Admiral Ahlgren reiterated the UK's continued diplomatic efforts to prevent a widening of the conflict in Lebanon.

The UK Defence Senior Advisor to the Middle East and North Africa (DSAME), Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren, concluded a two-day visit to Lebanon from 23-24 March.

During the visit, Vice Admiral Ahlgren held meetings with President Joseph Aoun, Speaker Nabih Berri, Prime minister Nawaf Salam, Defence Minister Michel Manassa, and Commander of the Lebanese Army General Rodolph Haykal. He was accompanied by British Ambassador to Lebanon Hamish Cowell and Defence Attaché Lt. Colonel Charles Smith.

Throughout the visit, Vice Admiral Ahlgren reiterated the UK's continued diplomatic efforts to prevent a widening of the conflict in Lebanon, which is already causing mass displacement and significant civilian casualties.

He welcomed recent commitments made by the Government of Lebanon, including for direct negotiations with Israel and banning of all military activity by Hizballah.

He underscored the UK's condemnation of Hizballah, for drawing the people of Lebanon into a conflict they do not want and that is against their interests. Vice Admiral Ahlgren also emphasised the UK's continued support to the Lebanese Armed Forces as the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon.

At the end of the visit, British Ambassador Hamish Cowell said:

The situation in Lebanon is very concerning as the country is once again dragged into conflict and suffering against the will of the Government and the vast majority of Lebanese people. The UK stands ready to support all initiatives which work towards de-escalation.

Vice Admiral Edward Ahlgren said:

The people of Lebanon are once again being drawn into a conflict they do not want, and which is not in their interests. We will continue to support the Lebanese Armed Forces as the sole legitimate defender of Lebanon and the Lebanese Government to assume full responsibility for security.

Since 2009, the UK has contributed over £180m to support Lebanon's security - over £69m to the Internal Security Forces and over £120m to the Lebanese Armed Forces in kit, training, and equipment. Lebanon's future stability and security are crucial to regional stability.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vice-admiral-edward-ahlgren-ends-a-two-day-visit-to-lebanon>