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Sectarian war flares in northern Lebanon little by little

Shiite-Sunni clashes in northern Lebanese city of Tripoli kill three people and wound at least 10 others.

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Three people were killed and at least 10 wounded on Saturday in sectarian clashes in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, a security source said.

Clashes regularly erupt between Alawite residents of the Jabal Mohsen neighbourhood, who support their co-religionist Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and Sunnis from the Bab al-Tebbaneh district, who back Sunni-led Syrian rebels.

Two of the fatalities were named as 15-year-old Omar al-Haswani, who was killed inside a nearby school, and a man in his thirties called Jihad Merab. They were both Sunnis from Bab al-Tebbaneh.

A third resident had been killed in the Sunni district, but there were no immediate details on his name or age.

The source said at least seven residents had been wounded in the clashes.

Soldiers helped evacuate the remaining students from the school where the teenager was

killed, and other schools in the city closed for the day.

The army said troops were on the ground responding to sources of fire, and that two soldiers had been wounded.

It added that another man from Jabal Mohsen had been injured earlier in the day by gunfire in a different Sunni neighbourhood.

Tensions have been running high in Tripoli since Thursday, when residents of Jabal Mohsen began flying Syrian flags to demonstrate their support for the Assad regime.

In response, residents of neighbouring Bab el-Tebbaneh raised the flag favoured by rebels seeking the ouster of Assad.

The same day, gunmen shot and wounded four Alawite workers in the city, prompting condemnation and demonstrations by Alawite residents of Tripoli.

Tripoli's population is 80 percent Sunni and 11 percent Alawite -- an offshoot of Shiite Islam -- and violence between the two communities dates back to Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

But the tensions have been aggravated by the conflict in Syria, and the city was struck by a deadly double car bombing in August that killed 45 people.