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Erdogan: Turkey will stand by Lebanon if it is attacked by Israel

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Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed Thursday at the end of his two-day visit to Lebanon, that his country will not remain silent if Israel attacks Lebanon or Gaza.

'Does (Israel) think it can enter Lebanon with the most modern aircraft and tanks to kill women and children, and destroy schools and hospitals, and then expect us to remain silent?' Erdogan said during a conference organised by the Union of Arab Banks.

'We will not be silent and we will support justice by all means available to us,' he stressed.

Turkey's good ties with [Israel](#) started to sour when Ankara criticised Israel's December 2008 to January 2009 offensive against [Gaza](#).

Tension then rose after May 31, 2010 when Israeli naval commandos stormed a Turkish-registered protest ship, the Mavi Marmara, part of a flotilla attempting to break the Israeli blockade of the Palestinian territory.

Nine Turkish activists were killed in the operation.

The Turkish premier said that his country will not begin to restore relations with [Israel](#) until it apologises for its 'savage attack' on the vessel.

For his part, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri said Lebanon's stability is an integral part of the stability of the region and had become, during the last three decades, 'the general political indicator for regional stability.'

Addressing Erdogan, he said: 'Your presence today is a message of reassurance to all the Lebanese that their country will be fine and that the loyal friends like Recep Tayyip Erdogan will not abandon their responsibilities in supporting Lebanon and its stability.'

Erdogan on Thursday toured southern Lebanon and inaugurated a medical center for treating people with burns in the southern port city of Sidon. The previous centre was destroyed by Israeli shelling in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict of 2006.

He also visited his country's troops, who are working with the United Nations Interim Forces in southern Lebanon (UNIFIL).