

Friday, 22 March 2013

Syria-linked clashes kill five in Lebanon's Tripoli



Clashes killed five people overnight in the flashpoint Lebanese city of Tripoli, a security official told AFP on Friday, with the army reporting a soldier was among the dead.

Thursday's incident is the latest spate of violence fuelled by the civil war in neighboring Syria.

The first death came in an exchange of fire in the Qubbeh neighborhood of the city, security sources said, identifying the man as 26-year-old Moatassem al-Shamra. Two other people were wounded in the same exchange of fire.

The military had stepped up deployments in the northern city after one person was killed on Wednesday night, carrying out raids and seizing weapons.

"During their operations the forces were fired upon, which led to the martyrdom of one soldier and the wounding of several others," the military said in a statement.

It was unclear where the soldier was killed, but the security official said the four others killed overnight in shootouts and sniper fire were killed in the Sunni neighborhoods of Bab el-Tebbaneh and Qubbeh.

The source said 26 others were wounded overnight, including six soldiers, adding that civilian residents of the area were fleeing sporadic gun battles throughout the night.

The Syrian conflict has also spilled over into the Lebanese capital Beirut and other areas. There have also been frequent clashes in border regions.

On Wednesday night, a sniper and killed one person in Bab el-Tebbaneh, according to a security source.

Troops had deployed in the area earlier this week in efforts to maintain security. Tensions over the two-year civil war in Syria have frequently led to street fighting in Tripoli.

Tripoli has been rocked by deadly clashes between supporters and opponents of the Damascus regime, where a two-year conflict has killed at least 70,000 people according to U.N. estimates.