

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **UN: Security Council must adopt urgent measures to protect civilians in Israel-Lebanon conflict**

Amnesty International today called on the UN Security Council to meet urgently in order to adopt measures to protect civilians caught up in the deepening Israel-Lebanon conflict. The organization deplored the failure of G8 member states to put the protection of civilians above politics in their discussions of the conflict and condemned continuing attacks on civilian by both Israel and Hizbullah.

"The past few days has seen a horrendous escalation in attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. Yet the G8 leaders have failed conspicuously to uphold their moral and legal obligation to address such blatant breaches of international humanitarian law, which in some cases have amounted to war crimes." said Malcolm Smart, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East Programme.

"Beyond the blame game exercise, what is needed are concrete proposals for urgent action to stop the killings of civilians in both Lebanon and Israel."

Specifically, Amnesty International called on the UN Security Council to authorise and deploy an immediate United Nations fact-finding mission to Lebanon and Israel to investigate attacks against civilians and civilian objects and other breaches of international humanitarian law. The UN mission should make concrete recommendations for measures to be taken by the concerned parties to spare civilian lives, including considering whether to strengthen the existing UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) or deploy a different international peace keeping force - in order to ensure the effective protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. The organization also called on the Council to order the suspension of all military supplies to Israel and Hizbullah until each party institutes the appropriate measures to ensure that civilians and civilian objects are not attacked.

A UN fact-finding investigation should be adequately resourced. It should be conducted by impartial investigators with the necessary expertise in the conduct of criminal and forensic investigations. It should include experts in the field of forensics, ballistics, human rights and humanitarian law. All parties -- Israeli and Lebanese -- should agree to cooperate fully and grant the experts unimpeded access to people, places and documents.

In Lebanon, it is civilians who are paying the heaviest price of the Israeli bombing campaign. At least 200 civilians, including dozens of children, are reported to be among some 215 Lebanese killed by Israeli air strikes in Lebanon since 12 July. In the same period, Hizbullah's armed wing has killed 12 Israeli civilians, including one child, in rocket attacks into Northern Israel, as well as 12 soldiers. Hundreds of others, including many civilians, have been injured on both sides.

Israeli forces have carried out large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure throughout Lebanon, deliberately targeting and destroying dozens of bridges, roads, power stations, the international airport and ports, grain silos and other facilities. Tens of thousands of civilians have been forced to flee their homes, notably in South Lebanon and in the suburbs of the capital, Beirut.

Hizbullah has also shown disregard for civilian lives by deliberately firing hundreds of katyusha and other rockets into towns and villages in Northern Israel, killing several Israeli civilians and injuring many more, and causing substantial damage to homes and other civilian properties.

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