

UA 30/00

Fea.

**ISRAEL/LEBANON Civilians in Lebanon and northern Israel**

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During the night of 7 February 2000, at least 18 civilians were injured during an attack by the Israel Air Force (IAF) on civilian targets in Lebanon. Amnesty International fears that there may be more indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian objects in Lebanon and northern Israel by both the Lebanese armed opposition group *Hizbullah*, and the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and its militia ally, the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

In the last two weeks *Hizbullah* and other armed groups in Lebanon have carried out an increasing number of attacks against the IDF, which occupies part of south Lebanon, and the SLA. The deputy head of the SLA, Colonel Akel Hashem, and five Israeli soldiers have been killed.

Israel had retaliated by bombing military targets in Lebanon. On the night of 7 February, however, the IAF bombed three power stations in Baalbek, Deir Nbouh, near Tripoli and another in Jamhur, 10 kilometres east of Beirut. According to media reports, the civilian casualties occurred around Baalbek. The IAF also attacked a *Hizbullah* base in the Bekaa Valley.

*Hizbullah* leaders have recently threatened to attack Israeli civilians in reprisal for Israeli attacks on Lebanese civilians and civilian objects. In a radio interview on 3 February, a *Hizbullah* member of the Lebanese parliament said: "We would like to remind the enemy that our Katyushas [rockets] are always ready and capable of terrorising [Israel's] settlers in the same way that the enemy terrorises our people."

At a press conference on 8 February, the head of the Operations Directorate of the IDF, Major-General Giora Eiland, said: "We will consider other actions, more elaborate ones, severe ones ... if there are Katyushas in the next hours, we will probably have to do something more."

In 1996 a five-nation Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group was set up to monitor compliance with the Grapes of Wrath Understanding between the various parties involved in the conflict in south Lebanon. Its terms included a prohibition on attacks on civilians. Israel and *Hizbullah* committed themselves "to ensuring that under no circumstances will civilians be the target of attack". Israel agreed that its forces "will not fire any kind of weapon at civilians or civilian targets in Lebanon", and *Hizbullah* agreed "not [to] carry out attacks by Katyusha rockets or by any kind of weapon into Israel". On 8 February, a member of the Israeli cabinet, Haim Ramon, said that Israel was no longer willing to abide by the terms of the Grapes of Wrath Understandings.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

International humanitarian law prohibits direct and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects. Article 48 of Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which is a principle of customary international law, says that: "In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives."

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language to the following addresses in Israel:**

- urging the Israeli authorities and the SLA to adhere to the requirement in international humanitarian law to take all measures to protect civilians or civilian objects and specifically to refrain from any deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on civilians or civilian objects;
- reminding them of the general prohibition contained in international humanitarian law against attacking hospitals and civilian sites indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

**APPEALS TO:**

Prime Minister

Ehud Barak

Prime Minister

Office of the Prime Minister

3 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia

Jerusalem 91007

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Jerusalem**

**Faxes: + 972 2 566 4838**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Chief of General Staff of the South Lebanon Army

General Antoine Lahad

South Lebanon Army

c/o Lieutenant-General Shaul Mufaz

Chief of General Staff

7 'A' Street, Hakiryia

Tel Aviv, Israel

**Telegrams: General Lahad, c/o Chief General Staff, Tel Aviv, Israel**

**Faxes:+ 972 3 691 6940 (write c/o Lieutenant-General Shaul Mufaz, Chief of General Staff)**

**Salutation:Dear General**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express/airmail letters in English or your own language to Hizbullah:**

- urging *Hizbullah* to adhere to the requirement in international humanitarian law to take all measures to protect civilians or civilian objects and specifically to refrain from any deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on civilians or civilian objects;

Secretary General of Hizbullah

Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah

Secretary General

*Hizbullah*

P.O. Box 266-25

Beirut, Lebanon

**Telegrams:Shaykh Nasrallah, Hizbullah, Beirut, Lebanon**

**Salutation:Dear Shaykh Nasrallah**

**COPIES TO:**

diplomatic representatives of Israel and Lebanon accredited to your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 March 2000.