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Israel/Lebanon: Evidence indicates deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure

Amnesty International today published findings that point to an Israeli policy of deliberate destruction of Lebanese civilian infrastructure, which included war crimes, during the recent conflict.

The organization's latest publication shows how Israel's destruction of thousands of homes, and strikes on numerous bridges and roads as well as water and fuel storage plants, was an integral part of Israel's military strategy in Lebanon, rather than "collateral damage" resulting from the lawful targeting of military objectives.

The report reinforces the case for an urgent, comprehensive and independent UN inquiry into grave violations of international humanitarian law committed by both Hizbullah and Israel during their month-long conflict.

"Israel's assertion that the attacks on the infrastructure were lawful is manifestly wrong. Many of the violations identified in our report are war crimes, including indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. The evidence strongly suggests that the extensive destruction of power and water plants, as well as the transport infrastructure vital for food and other humanitarian relief, was deliberate and an integral part of a military strategy," said Kate Gilmore, Executive Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International.

The Israeli government has argued that they were targeting Hizbullah positions and support facilities and that other damage done to civilian infrastructure was a result of Hizbullah using the civilian population as a "human shield".

"The pattern, scope and scale of the attacks makes Israel's claim that this was 'collateral damage', simply not credible," said Kate Gilmore, Executive Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"Civilian victims on both sides of this conflict deserve justice. The serious nature of violations committed makes an investigation into the conduct of both parties urgent. There must be accountability for the perpetrators of war crimes and reparation for the victims."

The report, *Deliberate destruction or 'collateral damage'? Israeli attacks against civilian infrastructure*, is based on first-hand information gathered by recent Amnesty International research missions to Lebanon and Israel, including interviews with dozens of victims, officials from the UN, Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and Lebanese government, as well as official statements and press reports.

The report includes evidence of the following:

- Massive destruction by Israeli forces of whole civilian neighbourhoods and villages;
- Attacks on bridges in areas of no apparent strategic importance;
- Attacks on water pumping stations, water treatment plants and supermarkets despite the prohibition against targeting objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population;
- Statements by Israeli military officials indicating that the destruction of civilian infrastructure was indeed a goal of Israel's military campaign designed to press the Lebanese government and the civilian population to turn against Hizbullah.

The report exposes a pattern of indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, which resulted in the displacement of twenty-five percent of the civilian population. This pattern, taken together with official statements, indicates that the attacks on infrastructure were deliberate, and not simply incidental to lawful military objectives.

Amnesty International is calling for a comprehensive, independent and impartial inquiry to be urgently established by the UN into violations of international humanitarian law by both sides in the conflict. It should examine in particular the impact of this conflict on the civilian population, and should be undertaken with a view to holding individuals responsible for crimes under international law and ensuring that full reparation is provided to the victims.

To see the report: *Deliberate destruction or 'collateral damage'? Israeli attacks against civilian infrastructure*, please go to: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde180072006>

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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