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Israel/Lebanon: Amnesty International condemns attacks on civilians

Amnesty International today condemned the direct attacks on civilians and civilian targets carried out by the Israel Air Force (IAF) during the past 48 hours and called on the Israeli Government to immediately cease further attacks.

"Civilians all over Lebanon have been punished for attacks in south Lebanon on the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and its militia ally the South Lebanon Army (SLA) by Hizbullah," Amnesty International said today.

"Israel's direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects violate fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. These require parties to an armed conflict to distinguish at all times between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives, and to direct their operations only against military objectives," the organization added.

Amnesty International is also urging Hizbullah to refrain from reprisal attacks on the civilian population in northern Israel.

"Reprisals which involve attacks on civilians are unlawful. We call on all parties to the armed conflict in south Lebanon to act with the utmost restraint and with full respect for the principles of human rights and humanitarian law," Amnesty International said.

Background

On the night of 7 February the IAF bombed three power stations in Baalbek, Deir Nbouh, near Tripoli and Jamhur, near Beirut. According to media reports 18 civilians were injured near Baalbek during these raids. Yesterday the IAF carried out further raids, including an attack in which Apache helicopters damaged a flat in the city of Tyre reportedly used by Hizbullah as a religious school, injuring four civilians. Tyre has a population of about 70,000.

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