

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

ISRAEL/LEBANON

Civilians in Lebanon, particularly children

Hundreds of thousands of civilians, particularly children, in south Lebanon are at risk from unexploded cluster bombs fired by Israeli forces during the 34-day conflict between Israel and Hizbullah prior to the ceasefire which took effect on 14 August. Israel has so far failed to respond adequately to UN requests to hand over maps detailing the areas it targeted with cluster bombs, which are needed to assist bomb clearance and so reduce the potential for further civilian casualties.

To date, according to the UN Mine Action Coordination Center, which is organizing the clearance of unexploded ordnance in Lebanon, Israel has provided some maps but these are inadequate as they refer to areas "likely to contain unexploded ordnance" without indicating whether these are cluster bombs or other unexploded munitions. Israel has said that other areas, for which no maps at all have been provided, are also likely to contain unexploded ordnance fired by its forces.

Cluster munitions spread bomblets over a wide area, many of which do not explode on impact but remain lethal to the civilian population. On 30 August, a senior UN official revealed that 90 per cent of Israeli cluster bomb strikes occurred in the last 72 hours of the conflict, when a ceasefire was in sight. The UN Mine Action Coordination Center has so far identified more than 400 bomb strike areas that are contaminated with as many as 100,000 unexploded bomblets.

Amnesty International delegates in Lebanon have found numerous unexploded cluster bombs in villages and even, in some cases, inside homes. The organization's delegates have spoken to victims of unexploded cluster bombs and their families, including six-year-old 'Abbas Yusef Shibli, who described how a cluster bomb exploded as he tried to pick it up in the village of Blida on 26 August. Abbas Yusef Shibli said he was playing with three friends when he tried to pick up what looked like a "perfume bottle". He suffered a ruptured colon, ruptured gall bladder, perforated lung and torn medial nerve and has so far undergone two blood transfusions. His three playmates were also injured, but discharged from hospital after two days.

Nineteen-year-old Hussein Qaduh, a student in accounting at the Beirut Islamic Technical Institute, was severely injured by a cluster bomb on 28 August in the southern Lebanese village of Sultaniye as he walked along a path in the village next to a football field. When Amnesty International delegates visited the area the next day, they found it was littered with unexploded cluster munitions, some of them a few inches from the path, where the blood was still visible on the ground. Surgeons operated on Hussein Qaduh to stop haemorrhaging in his intestines and liver, but bleeding continued in his brain. His prognosis has been described as extremely critical.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Israeli Air Force launched more than 7,000 air attacks on targets in Lebanon between 12 July and 14 August, while the Navy conducted an additional 2,500 bombardments. The attacks, though widespread, particularly concentrated on certain areas, notably in south Lebanon, the Bekaa valley and parts of the capital, Beirut. An estimated 1,183 people died, about one third of whom were children, 4,054 people were injured and some 970,000 civilians were displaced from their homes. In the same period, Hizbullah forces in Lebanon fired more than 3,600 rockets into northern Israel, killing 40 civilians, injuring some 700 others and displacing civilians from their homes.

Amnesty International is calling on the UN Security Council to request the UN Secretary-General to establish immediately a comprehensive, independent and impartial inquiry into violations of international humanitarian law by both sides of the conflict, including violations which may amount to war crimes. The inquiry should be conducted by experts who should receive all necessary assistance and resources. The outcome of the inquiry should be made public and include recommendations aimed at ending and preventing further violations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Hebrew or your own language:

- expressing concern that civilians in Lebanon, particularly children, are at risk of death or injury from cluster bombs fired by Israeli forces during the recent conflict;
- calling on the Israeli authorities to take immediate action to hand over to the UN maps and other information detailing comprehensively and specifically the locations in Lebanon where cluster bombs and other unexploded ordnance were dropped, to enable the UN to coordinate the clearance of these devices.

APPEALS TO:

Amir Peretz

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence

Ministry of Defence

37 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel

Fax: + 972 3 691 6940 / 3 696 2757 / 3 691 7915

Email: sar@mod.gov.il OR pniot@mod.gov.il OR aperetz@knesset.gov.il

Salutation: Dear Minister

Lieutenant-General Dan Halutz

IDF Chief of General Staff

c/o Ministry of Defence

7 A' Street, Hakiryia, Tel Aviv, Israel

Fax: + 972 3 691 6940 / 3 608 0343

Email: info@mail.idf.il

Salutation: Dear Lieutenant-General

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Israel accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 October 2006.