

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: MDE 02/014/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 212
11 August 2006

Lebanon/Israel: Human Rights Council members put politics before lives

Published

Members of the UN Human Rights Council today failed sadly in their responsibility to address the full range of abuses being committed by both Israel and Hizbullah and put politics before lives, Amnesty International said today, as the Council adopted by vote a resolution on the grave situation of human rights in Lebanon caused by Israeli military operations.

"The Council had an opportunity to address forcefully the appalling crisis in Lebanon and Israel with a united voice," said Peter Splinter, Amnesty International's Representative at the United Nations in Geneva. "Instead, members' focus on their narrow political objectives resulted in a highly-politicised resolution that muted the Council's voice by ignoring the violations of one party to the conflict."

Amnesty International welcomed the Council's call for a high-level commission of inquiry into serious violations committed by Israel, but noted that the Council completely failed to address serious abuses being committed by Hizbullah.

"It is deeply regrettable that the resolution failed to meet the principles of impartiality and objectivity expected of the Human Rights Council," said Peter Splinter. "Worse still, the resolution is unlikely to have any practical effect, when a response is required that improves the dire situation being faced by civilians on both sides of the border, including the horrific abuses being carried out against them and the catastrophic disruption to their lives."

In Lebanon, Israeli forces have killed 900 civilians, injured thousands and forced a quarter of the Lebanese population to flee their homes.

"Israel's claim that attacks by its forces are directed exclusively against legitimate targets is not borne out by the evidence," said Peter Splinter. "Israel has targeted civilian objects, failed to respect the principles of proportionality and ignored the distinction between civilian objects and military objectives. Attacking civilian objects and carrying out disproportionate attacks are war crimes."

Hizbullah has fired rockets into northern Israel and many attacks appear to have been deliberately targeted at residential areas resulting in civilians being killed, injured and displaced. Direct attacks on civilians and

indiscriminate attacks are also war crimes.

"Both Israel and Hizbullah have shown a blatant and persistent disregard for fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, and both sides should be censured," said Peter Splinter. "A comprehensive, independent and impartial inquiry into violations of international law -- including alleged war crimes -- is urgently needed."

"Such an inquiry must investigate abuses committed by both Israel and Hizbullah and propose effective measures to hold those responsible accountable."

Background

The resolution, introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, was adopted by a vote of 27 in favour, 11 against and 8 abstentions. In the discussion of the draft resolution many delegations expressed their disappointment that there had been no opportunity to negotiate the content of the resolution before its adoption. This Special Session demonstrated again the counter-productive role of attempting to protect human rights on the basis of group positions that allow the Human Rights Council little flexibility in addressing complex situations.

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>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>