

ISRAEL/LEBANON Civilians in Lebanon and Israel

Amnesty International fears for the safety of the civilian population in Israel and Lebanon after *Hizbullah* fired Katyusha rockets into the cities of Kiryat Shmona and Nahariya in northern Israel on 25 August 1998, wounding 10 civilians, as well as two soldiers.

Amnesty International is calling on all parties involved to ensure that the conflict in South Lebanon does not escalate further, and to avoid deliberate attacks against civilians and indiscriminate attacks against military targets.

If the situation escalates, more civilians in either country may be killed or wounded by either Israel and its ally, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), or by the Lebanese armed groups, *Hizbullah* and *Amal*.

The rocket attack occurred only hours after an Israeli helicopter fired on a vehicle carrying Hussam al-Amin, a senior member of *Amal*, near the city of Tyre. Hundreds of Lebanese civilians have reportedly left their homes in villages in South Lebanon, fearing attacks by Israel and the SLA.

On 19 August, Israel's Minister of Internal Security, Avigdor Kahalani, called for reprisals against Lebanese civilian targets each time an Israeli soldier was killed in South Lebanon. He reportedly stated: "We should attack bridges, the electricity grid, the water system in Lebanon each time one of our soldiers is killed in the country".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Israel has occupied a self-styled "security zone" in South Lebanon since 1978, which is policed by its proxy militia, the SLA.

Following attacks by *Hizbullah* in April 1996, Israel launched operation "Grapes of Wrath", in which over 150 civilians were killed as a result of deliberate or indiscriminate attacks. The operation ended with an "understanding" which prohibits attacks on civilians, and under which Israel and *Hizbullah* committed themselves "to ensuring that under no circumstances will civilians be the target of attack". A group with members from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States was set up to monitor "the application of the understanding".

International law prohibits attacks against civilians. Article 48 of Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 sets out the "Basic rule" regarding the protection of civilian lives, in particular the principle of "distinction" between the civilian population and combatants. This states 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".

In addition, Article 51(6) of Protocol 1 unequivocally states that "Attacks against the civilian population or civilians by way of reprisals are prohibited".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/ airmail letters in English, Arabic, French or in your own language, in equal numbers and to all parties involved:

- deploring the attacks on northern Israel on 25 August 1998, in which ten Israeli civilians were wounded;
- urging all parties involved to ensure that, in accordance with international law governing armed conflict, all necessary steps are taken to ensure the safety of civilians by observing the principle of distinction at all times, including by refraining from direct attacks on civilians and from indiscriminate attacks on military targets;
- reminding all parties involved that under international law attacks on the civilian population can never be justified;
- noting that you are expressing these concerns to all parties involved in the conflict in the "security zone";
- reminding all parties involved of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notably Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person".

APPEALS TO:

Israel:

Benyamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, 3 Kaplan Street, Hakiryia, Jerusalem 91007, Israel

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Jerusalem, Israel

Faxes: + 972 3 691 7915

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

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

Hizbullah:

Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah, P.O. Box 266-25, Beirut, Lebanon

Telegrams: Shaykh Nasrallah, Beirut, Lebanon

Faxes: +961 1 601 006 (ask to send a fax)

Salutation: Dear Shaykh Nasrallah

Amal:

Nabih Berri, Speaker of the National Assembly, National Assembly, Beirut, Lebanon

Faxes: + 961 1 345 270

Salutation: Dear Mr Berri

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 8 October 1998.

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person".

Article 3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>