

**PUBLIC**

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**UA 212/06**

**Fear for safety/ forcible displacement**

**ISRAEL/LEBANON**

**Civilians in Israel and Lebanon**

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Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hizbullah since the outbreak of hostilities on 12 July.

More than 800 civilians in Lebanon have been killed, many of them children, and hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee their homes following Israeli air strikes and threats of strikes. Tens of thousands have had their homes destroyed by the Israeli army and massive destruction is feared in the villages from which inhabitants have been forced out. Repeated Israeli air strikes have destroyed bridges, roads, electricity networks and other vital civilian infrastructure, paralyzing life in Lebanon. Vehicles carrying families fleeing their homes in south Lebanon and trucks carrying food supplies have also been targeted by Israeli forces, as have ambulances, rescue crews and UN observers.

Killings continue unabated as Israeli bombardments persist in southern and eastern Lebanon and southern Beirut. Since 4 August, about 100 civilians have been killed. More than 23 Syrian agricultural workers were killed in an Israeli air strike on 4 August on the village of al-Qaa, north of Ba'albak, eastern Lebanon. Dozens are reported to have been killed and an unknown number injured on 7 August, following Israeli air attacks which destroyed several houses in southern Lebanon including in Ghazieh, outside Sidon, where many people were buried under the rubble.

Scores of bodies were been recovered from the rubble of destroyed homes in south Lebanon after Israel suspended air-strikes for 48 hours on 31 July. However, other bodies of civilians killed in the past two-and-a-half weeks remain trapped under the rubble as rescue workers cannot obtain guarantees from Israeli forces that they will not attack.

Since the beginning of the hostilities, Israel has ordered around half a million residents of Lebanon to leave their towns and villages. Israel's Justice Minister Haim Ramon has claimed: "All those now in south Lebanon are terrorists who are related in some way to Hizbullah."

Hizbullah, for its part, continues to launch rocket attacks into Israeli towns including Kiryat Shmona, Nahariya, Safed, Ma'alot and Acre. According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, about 1,600 rockets have been fired into Israel so far. On 3 August eight civilians in Israel were killed in two such rocket attacks and three were killed on 6 August in Haifa. Ongoing Hizbullah attacks in the area have caused substantial damage to Israeli homes and other civilian property in towns and villages in northern Israel.

Hizbullah has shown disregard for civilian life and its Secretary-General, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, threatened on 30 July that, "Many cities in the centre [of Israel] will be targeted...if the savage aggression continues on our country, people and villages." To date, 37 Israeli civilians have been killed and hundreds of others injured as a result of cross-border rocket attacks by Hizbullah. These rockets, mostly Katyusha rockets, have been used to launch indiscriminate attacks in violation of international humanitarian law, killing civilians.

Despite advances being made on a draft UN Security Council resolution calling for a cessation of attacks on both sides, civilians continue to be at risk of military attacks and increasing numbers of civilians in Lebanon and Israel are being displaced from their homes. Amnesty International is concerned that the draft resolution appears not to include any reference to the need to uphold requirements under international humanitarian

law, including the necessity to establish accountability for violations. The resolution needs to ensure the establishment of an impartial and independent enquiry to investigate conduct on each side, both of which are alleged to have committed serious violations, amounting to war crimes. The organization is urging the Security Council to call for an immediate, full and effective ceasefire to protect civilians in Lebanon and Israel. The Council should also demand that the parties to the conflict immediately take all measures necessary to allow delivery of humanitarian aid to those affected by the hostilities.

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

**To the Israeli government**

- urging the Israeli authorities to stop the indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilian areas and targets which have killed at least 800 Lebanese civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands;
- reminding the Israeli authorities that intentionally launching a disproportionate or indiscriminate attack is a war crime under the terms of the Geneva Conventions;
- expressing deep concern at official Israeli statements and the apparent military policy that fails to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and reminding them that international law forbids attacks against the civilian population even when responding to such attacks against Israeli civilians.

**To Hizbullah**

- urging the Hizbullah leadership to stop the indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilian areas and targets which have killed 37 civilians;
- reminding the Hizbullah leadership that under international law, attacks against the civilian population are never permissible, even as a measure of responding to such attacks against civilians in Lebanon;
- expressing grave concern at reports of statements by the Hizbullah leadership that show a disregard for the protection of civilian lives.

**APPEALS TO:**

Israeli authorities

Ehud Olmert

Prime Minister and Minister for Social Welfare and Science and Technology

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**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Amir Peretz

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence

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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Haim Ramon

Minister of Justice

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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Lieutenant-General Dan Halutz

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**Salutation: Lieutenant-General Dan Halutz**

Hizbullah

Secretary General  
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**Salutation: Dear Sheikh Nasrallah**

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

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**