

**POSITION PAPER: ISRAELI-HEZBOLLAH
CROSS-BORDER VIOLENCE**



“War is the terrorism of the rich and powerful; terrorism is the war of the poor and powerless.”

- Peter Ustinov

“What constitutes terrorism?.. Terrorism is what our leaders declare it to be. Period.”

- Noam Chomsky

Core CJPME Values

1. All death is tragic. CJPME mourns the death of all individuals – civilian and militant – killed in the violence in Lebanon and northern Israel.
2. International humanitarian law must be respected by all. In war, all parties presume to hold the moral high ground. International humanitarian law makes no judgement on which side is right or wrong. Rather, it simply sets limits to the brutality and civilian collateral damage tolerated in war.

Policy Recommendations for Canada

1. Canada must call for an immediate ceasefire. With every additional day of violence between Israel and Hezbollah and Israel, the combatants and the region become increasingly polarized around the conflict. As recommended by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Canada must call for an immediate ceasefire to halt civilian death and destruction, and to allow more moderate voices to prevail.
2. Canada should call for a suspension of all military supplies to Israel and Hezbollah. The US is known to be rushing missiles to Israel for use in the conflict, and Iran and Syria have been accused of sending military supplies to Hezbollah. Canada must insist that such supplies be halted.
3. Canada should ask the UN to strengthen its peacekeeping presence in Lebanon. CJPME echoes the call by Amnesty International to protect civilians by either strengthening the existing UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), or by deploying a different international peace keeping force. Either force must be deployed with a mandate consistent with international law.
4. Canada should demand a fact-finding mission to investigate attacks against civilians. Canada should help the UN to organize a fact-finding mission to Lebanon and Israel, to investigate and document breaches of international law that have occurred during the conflict.

Key Points: Dynamics of the Israeli-Hezbollah Conflict

1. Israel’s use of force is highly disproportionate. Israel claims that it is because of the capture of two Israeli soldiers – themselves combatants – that it has bombarded Lebanon, killing almost 400 Lebanese civilians, and destroying the civilian infrastructure of the country. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International and many others all agree that such violence is grossly disproportionate, and in many instances constitute war crimes.
2. Israel is NOT facing a threat to its existence. Israel is the fifth strongest military power in the world, and has the full military and material backing of the US – the world’s number one power. Hezbollah is a non-state militia with short range, inaccurate rockets, and no capability for any ground invasion.
3. Respect for international law is not conditional. Under international humanitarian law (e.g. the Fourth Geneva Convention), there is no justification for the reckless killing of civilians, collective punishment, or the destruction of civilian infrastructure. This applies regardless of accusations of “who started it,” or “who’s wrong,” and similar arguments being advanced by the Israelis.

4. In destroying Lebanon, Israel has practiced a form of “state terrorism.” Had Tel Aviv been devastated by militants as has South Beirut and other sites in Lebanon, it would have been labelled a “terrorist strike.” Terrorism has been defined as the deliberate killing of civilians and the destruction of property to further political ends. Indeed, Israel *has* deliberately struck hundreds of civilian targets in Lebanon, with aims to destabilize Hezbollah and Lebanon itself.

Key Points: Paradoxes of Israel's Aggression in Lebanon

1. Israel *has* targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure. Israel destroyed Lebanon's airport and highways barely a day into the violence. More recently Israel has even struck at convoys of fleeing Lebanese civilians. As of July 21, Israel had killed 294 non-combatants, and 23 soldiers/militants. Hezbollah had killed 15 non-combatants and 16 soldiers.
2. Israel forced Lebanese civilians into a vice of violence. Israel suggested that Lebanese civilians caught in the crossfire of its war had only themselves to blame, as they did not heed warnings to flee. Nevertheless, Israeli warnings to leave were issued long after Israel had blockaded the ports, and destroyed most major transportation infrastructure. Of course, there are several news reports about Lebanese who fled and were actually targeted as they fled. And finally, under international law, Israel must make every effort to avoid any civilian casualties – there should be no need to flee.
3. Israel chose to fight a militia, yet blames it for being a militia. Hezbollah's military wing functions as a militia – an organization of civilians trained as soldiers, not part of a regular army. Israel knew before it started its rampage that Hezbollah fighters were not going to stand in an open field to face off against Apache helicopters. Israel knew before it began its war that it would be targeting civilians.
4. Israel planned the assault on Lebanon long prior to Hezbollah taking hostages. The San Francisco Chronicle reported on July 21 that Israeli military planners had planned the campaign for over a year, and were waiting for the right time to unleash it. This fact further highlights Israel's disproportionate response, and the need to understand Israel's violence as a form of “state terrorism.”

Key Points: Stability in the Middle East

1. Violence gives the extremists on both sides the upper hand. Negotiations, ceasefires, respect for peace accords, and respect for international law are the tools of the moderates on each side, which lead to resolution of the conflict. Canada and the international community must insist on such things. Violence inflames and radicalizes, and is self-perpetuating.
2. “Security” requires peaceful and just relations among neighbours. “Security” imposed through military force is only temporary. Even if Israel succeeds in damaging Hezbollah's military capability, its brutal campaign simply encourages additional Hezbollah recruits for some future conflict – indeed Hezbollah was established in 1982 to resist the Israeli occupation that began that year. Israel will have security when it agrees to a just resolution with the Palestinians, and its other neighbours.
3. “Peace is not the absence of violence, but the presence of justice.” – Martin Luther King, Jr. The peace and quiet that reigned in Lebanon on July 11th was just an illusion. The current chapter of violence that began on July 12th, is the continuation of a long story of unresolved injustices. Peace will “stick” in the Middle East when injustices like the occupation of Palestine and the Golan Heights are brought to an end, just as it did when Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt.

For more Information...

For more information and background on the violence in Lebanon/Israel, Canada's foreign policy posture with respect to Lebanon, Hezbollah and Israel, and the other topics discussed above, please call CJPME at 514/745-8491.