

Geneva, 26 July 2006

Your Excellency,

We are writing to you in relation to the ongoing military offensive of the Israeli army against Lebanon, which started on 12 July 2006. Lebanese civilians are once again caught in the middle of a merciless conflict. The bombardments have killed more than 374 people and wounded nearly 1500<sup>1</sup>. Yet, this appalling toll is met with a deadly silence of the international community.

Israel is destroying Lebanon and its economic viability that it has been struggling to build over 2 decades. Lebanon is suffering, and will continue to suffer in the form of grave losses of lives and property. Israel is killing children, women, journalists, media workers and innocent civilians. Israel has been displacing over 600,000 families from their homes in villages all over Lebanon, i.e., nearly 20 percent of the Lebanese population. Displaced persons are living in schools where food stocks are running low and sanitation conditions have shown signs of alert. Israel also destructed people's homes and infrastructure: roads, fuel depots, overpasses, bridges, airports, sea ports, highways, energy plants, food industries, telecommunication installations and communication networks.

Civilian targets are indiscriminately bombarded every day. Whole families have been burned alive in their cars or buried under the rubble of their own homes, which were nowhere near Hizbullah military positions. Israeli officials announce that they warn people to leave before they start bombing their towns and villages, while their fighter jets also drop bombs on the routes civilians are using to flee.

Israel has imposed a tight sea and air blockage on Lebanon thereby preventing the arrival of food and humanitarian aid to the forcibly displaced persons. A convoy of ambulances from the United Arab Emirates was bombed on its way to Beirut and two humanitarian volunteers were killed.

During a visit to Lebanon on 23 July 2006, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Jan Egeland said that "a disproportionate response by Israel is a violation of international humanitarian law." He also denounced the Israeli air strikes that have devastated Beirut and southern Lebanon, saying "civilians were paying a disproportionate price in the attacks targeting Hezbollah strongholds". The World Food Program officials in Lebanon expressed concern about getting food to the displaced, saying "damage to roads and bridges has almost completely disrupted the food supply chain, hurting large numbers of the displaced."

Moreover, according to different information sources (Lebanese health professionals, NGOs, press agencies), Israeli forces would use weapons prohibited by the international community as depleted uranium weapons, clusters bombs, phosphoric bombs and implosion bombs.

Israel as an occupying State has never been in line with the international norms of peace and security. It has neither respected resolutions nor decisions that were stipulated over decades by the international community. Not even one single UN resolution among hundreds has been respected by Israel.

It is a well-known fact that the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949 (articles 16, 17, 21 and 22), the first additional protocol to the Geneva

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<sup>1</sup> On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Conventions, relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts of 1977 (articles 35, 48, 51, 54 and 56), The La Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land of 1907 (articles 22, 25 and 27), the La Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954, and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, forbid attacks against innocent civilians in times of war. Israel demonstrably has been violating the international humanitarian law while committing crimes against humanity and war crimes. Massacres of peoples in villages such as Marouhin, Aitaroun, Tyr, Nabi Chit, Baalbek, are a case in point.

**Based on our concern for security and peace, we write to you today requesting the following:**

**Mobilize all diplomatic efforts to:**

- 1. Stop the ongoing military offensive of the Israeli army against Lebanon, which constitutes an unacceptable assault on the international rule of law.**
- 2. Pressure the United Nations Security Council to meet immediately and issue a Chapter 7 Resolution condemning the Israeli attacks and imposing sanctions on Israel in an attempt to prevent it from repeating these attacks in the future. The international community's failure to treat Israel like any other belligerent state has led to its recurrent resorting to violence. No nation should enjoy the privilege over others to kill and the UN should be able to implement the first article of its Charter of which is "to Maintain Peace and Security."**
- 3. Pressure the United Nations General Assembly to meet immediately to tackle this issue, especially if the Security Council cannot reach an agreement, due to a veto (see articles 11.2, 34 and 35 of the UN Charter)**
- 4. Pressure the United Nations Human Rights Council to hold a special session to consider the human rights and humanitarian violations committed by Israel in Lebanon.**
- 5. Pressure Israel to respect all UN resolutions and end the occupation in the Arab territories.**
- 6. Pressure Israel to release all Arab detainees in the Israeli prisons.**
- 7. Pressure Israel through the United Nations or any other effective means to pay compensation for all the destruction it has caused at least since July 12, 2006.**
- 8. Ask the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC) to investigate the air strikes to determine serious violations of the international humanitarian law committed by Israel.**

We count on you to take this request into consideration and forward to action. Together officials and civil society can make this a better world for all.

Please receive, Your Excellency, the expression of our deepest consideration.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES:

**NGO with Consultative statut to the U.N. :**

Agence des cites pour la cooperation nord-sud

American Association of Jurists (AAJ)

Internationl Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)

Europe-Third World Centre (CETIM)

FIMARC

Rencontre pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

World YWCA

International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples (LIDLIP)

**Other NGO :**

CEDAL

Centre d'études et d'initiatives de solidarité internationale (CEDETIM-IPAM)

DROIT-SOLIDARITE

Forum des Alternatives Maroc

Mouvement pour la Coopération Internationale (MCI)

Organisation des Droits de l'Enfant (ODE)

Universal Human Rights Network