

POSITION PAPER: A CANADIAN RE-ASSESSMENT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF LEBANON



Policy Recommendations for Canada

- A. Canada must provide humanitarian aid to Lebanon. Lebanon has sustained billions of dollars worth of damage to its civilian infrastructure, partly as a result of Canada's (and the West's) inability and unwillingness to insist on an immediate ceasefire early in the Destruction of Lebanon. While little, and late, now is the time for Canada to offer meaningful assistance.
- B. Canada must support and respect Lebanon's "National Dialog." In a process which began in 1990 with the Taif Accord, Lebanon began a process known as the "National Dialog" where Lebanon's diverse constituencies are negotiating their differences and disarmament. This process is a sensitive one, based on a gradual process of dialog, and an avoidance of confrontations which could trigger another civil war. Canada must provide support for this process, e.g. through assistance programs, and must avoid policies which undermine the long-term viability of this process.
- C. Canada should call on both Israel and Hezbollah militants to respect international humanitarian law. Targeting of civilians by any warring party is strictly forbidden under international law. Hostage taking by Hezbollah and Israel (e.g. Hezbollah POWs) is a war crime. Aggression against a neighbour's sovereignty violates the UN Charter. Canada must insist on respect of the Blue Line under Resolution 425, and other important conciliatory measures, e.g. resolutions 1559, 1496, etc.
- D. Canada must lead in the call to eliminate unexploded Israeli munitions in Lebanon. From its previous occupation of Lebanon (1978-2000), Israel left behind hundreds of minefields. In the final three days of the Destruction of Lebanon, Israel dropped 90 percent of the cluster bombs used in its assault, leaving thousands of unexploded bomblets. With its moral authority against land mines, Canada must insist that Israel provide maps of old minefields, that it provide all info on cluster bombs dropped on Lebanon, and that it provide support for the removal of this threat to the Lebanese civilian population.
- E. Canada must insist on Israel's cooperation with independent investigations of the incidents leading to the death of Canadian citizens in Lebanon. Eight Canadian citizens were killed on July 16th in Aitaroun, Lebanon. Human Rights Watch determined that there was no evidence of Hezbollah activity anywhere nearby to warrant the strike. In a second incident, a Canadian soldier serving the UN was killed at his post on July 25th. Despite the UN request for a UN-led investigation, Israel prevailed with its insistence on an Israel-only investigation. Israel's report was never made public.

A: Canada must provide humanitarian aid to Lebanon

1. Canada must give far more than the \$25 million suggested by Harper. Canada's PM Stephen Harper suggested that Canada could provide \$25 million towards Lebanon's reconstruction. Given that the Lebanon's total infrastructure bill is estimated at \$4 billion US, this would represent about half of one percent of the cost of Lebanon's reconstruction. This is not meaningful.
2. Canada should also consider symbolic goodwill gestures to Lebanon. If, as part of its reconstruction gift, Canada were to offer to rebuild the village of Aitaroun – where 8 Canadians were killed – this could serve as an important gesture of solidarity and sympathy. Canada should also consider other creative forms of aid, e.g. support for Canadian cease fire observers and adjudicators.

B: Canada must support and respect Lebanon's "National Dialogue."

1. The "National Dialogue" was commended for its progress. Lebanon's "National Dialogue" entered a final stage on March 2, 2006, with Lebanon's diverse constituencies settling their differences, and agreeing on disarmament and the united future of the country. In January 2006, the Security Council lauded the progress made since the adoption of resolution 1559. In February 2006, Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy for Resolution 1559, conveyed the UN Secretary General's support for Lebanon's National Dialogue as a way of disbanding of foreign and domestic militias in the country.

2. Canada must support the successful, negotiated process of Lebanon's National Dialogue. Through its foreign policy, its statements and its voting at the UN, Canada must avert policies and positions which endanger this credible and productive diplomatic process. CJPME encourages Canada, through its relationships with all parties in the region, to intervene diplomatically to defend Lebanon's domestic dialogue from outside interference.

C: Canada should call on both Israel and Hezbollah militants to respect international humanitarian law.

1. Blue Line violations. In the period since its ground withdrawal from Lebanon, Israel has been committing repeated violations of the Blue Line, numbering 70-140 violations per month, as documented by the UN observer force. The semi-annual reports of the UNIFIL document a systematic disregard for Lebanese sovereignty by Israel, and disrespect of applicable resolutions (e.g. UNSC 425, 1391, 1496.) In the month prior to Hezbollah's crossing the Blue Line on July 12th, there were 139 Blue Line violations by Israel.
2. Canada must condemn Israel for premeditated attacks of civilians. In its campaign against Lebanon, fatalities due to Israeli strikes were 90 percent civilian, and the targets attacked were primarily civilian in nature. In its report of August 23rd 2006, Amnesty International concluded: "*The evidence strongly suggests that the extensive destruction of power works, public systems, civilian homes and industry was deliberate and an integral part of the military strategy, rather than 'collateral damage'.*"

D: Canada must help remove unexploded Israeli munitions in Lebanon

1. Canada must call for Israel to provide mine field maps left by Israel from earlier occupations. As specified in multiple UNSC resolutions (e.g. 1391, 1496, 1701), Israel must provide maps of mine fields that it left in southern Lebanon from its 1978-2000 occupation. Prior to this past summer, the UNDP made a conservative estimate that there were 100,000 uncleared mines in Lebanon.
2. Canada must call for Israel to provide maps of cluster bomb strikes during the Destruction of Lebanon. It is estimated that Israel's cluster bomb attacks during the Destruction of Lebanon left behind 350,000 unexploded bomblets – *de facto* mine fields. Three Lebanese civilians are killed or maimed each day from these bomblets, children being the most vulnerable.

E: Canada must ask for independent investigations of Canadian deaths

1. No reasonable explanation of Canadian deaths at Aitaroun has been provided. Through on-site investigations, Human Rights Watch found no evidence of militant activity in the vicinity of the air strike in Aitaroun that led to the death of eight Canadians. Canada must call for an independent investigation of this incident, demanding Israeli and Lebanese cooperation, and must act upon the findings of the investigation, especially if there has been violation of international law.
2. No transparency in the death of the Canadian soldier. To CJPME's knowledge, Israel has not provided the Canadian government with a copy of the report conducted by Israel following its deadly strike on a UN post on July 25th. Apparently, the Canadian government received only a summary brief of Israel's investigation, and was not given access to the report itself. Also, there is no indication that Israel consulted Lebanese witnesses to the attack. Again, Canada must call for an independent investigation of this incident, demanding Israeli and Lebanese cooperation, and must act upon the findings of the investigation, especially if there has been violation of international law.

For more Information...

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