

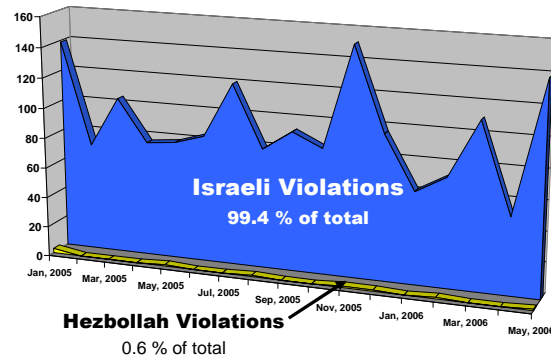


How did the Destruction of Lebanon begin?

Israel began its Destruction of Lebanon following the capture of two Israeli soldiers on a border post by Hezbollah, a Lebanese militant group. While violations of the Blue Line, especially by Israel, were very common (see below), Israel used this particular violation to unleash a pre-planned assault on all of Lebanon – especially civilians. Within four hours of the capture of its soldiers, Israel had already¹ 1) ruled out negotiations, 2) declared Hezbollah's act an "act of war" by Lebanon, 3) stated that Lebanon would pay a "heavy price," 4) called up 30,000 soldiers, and 5) attacked civilian targets in Lebanon.

Why was Israel's escalation of the violence so aggressive?

American media – led by respected investigative journalist Seymour Hersh – revealed in July and August that Israel had pre-planned its assault on Lebanon, and obtained prior "clearance" from US leaders.² Since Israel was simply waiting for a pretext to unleash its plan, its assault should be understood as an act of aggression in and of itself. As demonstrated in the chart to the right, violations of the Blue Line – especially by Israel – were extremely common. During the 17 month period prior to the Destruction of Lebanon, Israel violated the Blue Line 1606 times – more than three times per day, on average – via air, sea and land operations. During this same period, Hezbollah violated the Blue Line a total of 9 times.³ Captures, killings and assassinations across the Blue Line were also common: Israel committed five such acts, and Hezbollah committed 8 such acts during the period following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May, 2000, through July, 2006.⁴ Thus, far from being a response to the capture of two of its soldiers, Israel's assault was executed according to a pre-existing plan, and entirely unjustified in context.



Source: Reports submitted by both Lebanon and Israel to the UN Security Council. See footnote 3 below.

How expansive was the Destruction of Lebanon?

The table to the right lays out the extent of the devastation wrought through the Destruction of Lebanon.⁵ (For purposes of comparison, the damage inflicted on Israel is also shown.) Thus, despite Israel's superior targeting technology, civilian deaths in Lebanon were more than 25 times greater than those in Israel. Amnesty International summarized its field research with the following statement: "The widespread destruction of apartments, houses, electricity and water services, roads, bridges, factories and ports, in addition to several statements by Israeli officials, suggests a policy of punishing both the Lebanese government and the civilian population in an effort to get them to turn against Hizbullah. Israeli attacks did not diminish, nor did their pattern appear to change, even when it became clear that the victims of the bombardment were predominantly civilians, which was the case from the first days of the conflict."⁶

| Damage in Israel | Damage in Lebanon |
|---|---|
| 43 civilians killed | 1,109 civilians killed |
| 690 civilians injured | 3,697 civilians injured |
| ~500,000 civilians displaced (~8 percent of population) | ~920,000 civilians displaced (~25 percent of population) |
| ~300 structures damaged (houses and commercial) | ~15,000 houses/apartments ~900 factories/commercial 32 public works sites 25 fuel stations 78 bridges |
| ~\$1.1 B "direct and indirect" damage | ~\$4 B direct damage |

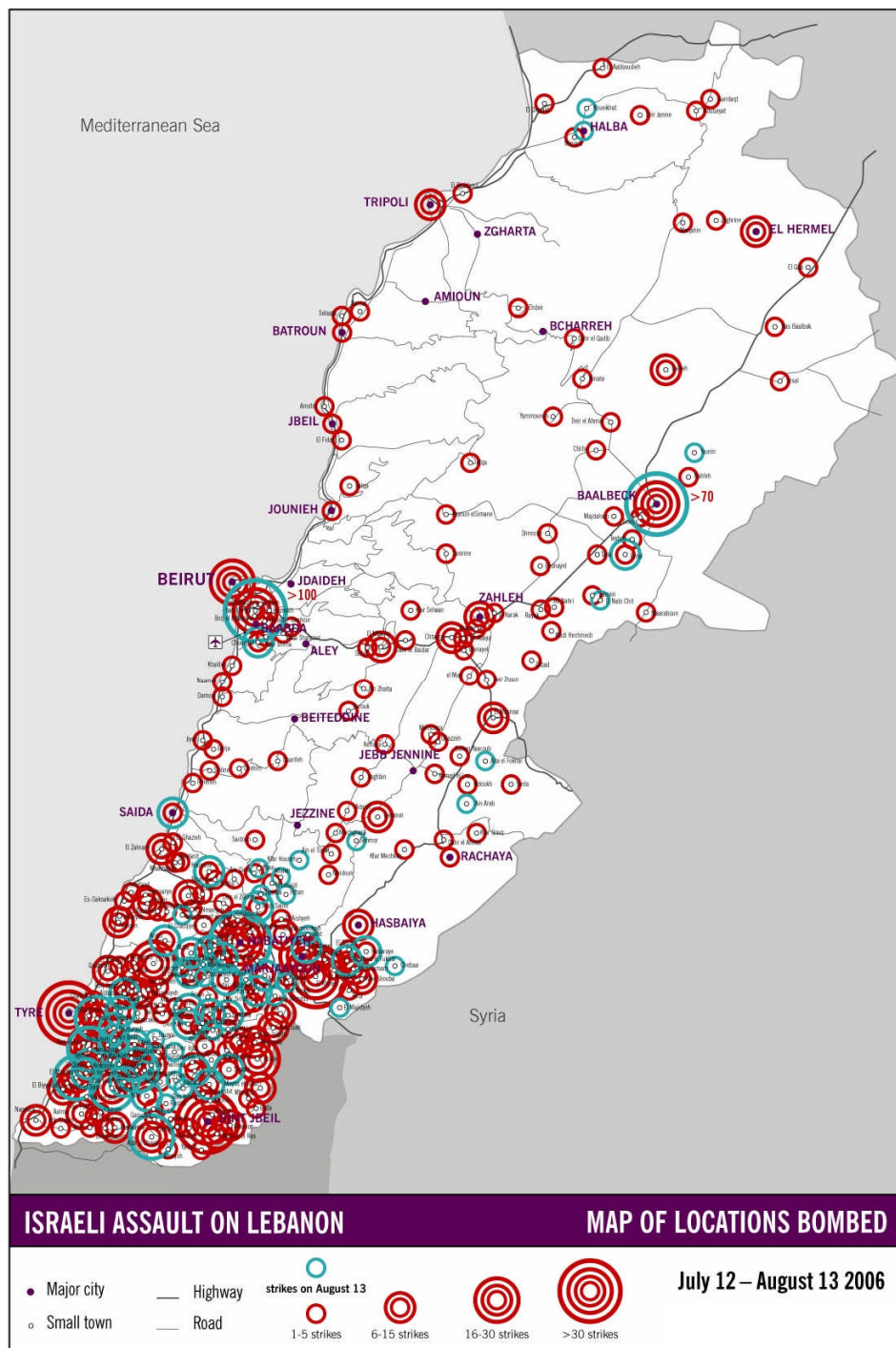
Source: "Middle East crisis: Facts and figures," BBC, August 31, 2006

The map to the right shows how literally all of Lebanon was attacked by Israel. Note how the grey circles indicate Israeli attacks on Lebanon which took place during the last 24 hours of the conflict. Given that the cease fire of August 14th was already a given, Israel's attacks appear entirely gratuitous.

Amnesty International reported that the Israeli Air Force carried out about 7,000 air attacks on about 7,000 targets in Lebanon; and the Israeli Navy carried out about 2,500 bombardments.⁷

About one third of all Lebanese casualties were children.⁸

Human Rights Watch found no use of "human shields" by Hezbollah: "Human Rights Watch found no cases in which Hezbollah deliberately used civilians as shields to protect them from retaliatory IDF attack."⁹



Source: Sanayeh Relief Center (Lebanon), based on news updates by www.tayyar.org (Lebanon)

¹ See: "Timeline of Recent Events," CBC, Last Update, August 14, 2006; "Day-by-day: Lebanon crisis – week one," BBC, Last Update, July 19, 2006; and the series of reports entitled "Summary of IDF operations against Hizbullah in Lebanon" from the Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry Website.

² See: "Watching Lebanon, Washington's interests in Israel's war," The New Yorker, Hersh, Seymour M., August 14, 2006; "Israel set war plan more than a year ago: Strategy was put in motion as Hezbollah began gaining military strength in Lebanon," San Francisco Chronicle, Kallman, Matthew, July 21, 2006; also interesting is "Strikes Are Called Part of Broad Strategy," Washington Post, Wright, Robin, July 16, 2006

³ Data based on monthly reports submitted by both Lebanon and Israel to the UN Security Council, documenting violations of the Blue Line. Lebanon's reports are also corroborated by UNIFIL reports covering the same periods. E.g. For the Lebanon reports on Israeli violations, for May, 2006: "Letter dated 5 June 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General," UN Security Council, A/60/873, S/2006/363, 6 June, 2006

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Middle East crisis: Facts and figures," BBC, August 31, 2006

⁶ "Deliberate destruction or 'collateral damage?': Israeli attacks on civilians infrastructure," Amnesty International, August 23, 2006

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Fatal Strikes: Israel's Indiscriminate Attacks Against Civilians in Lebanon," Human Rights Watch, August 4th, 2006, p. 3