



**STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY
AND
THE ZIONIST FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA
ON BEHALF OF
THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY
18 JULY 2006**

The outbreak of hostilities in Israel, Lebanon and Gaza is of deep concern to all Australians of goodwill. Our prayers are particularly with our fellow Australians in the region and those who have families there. We applaud the principled stand taken both by the Australian Government and Opposition in condemning the unprovoked attacks on Israel. We support all efforts by the Australian Government to secure the safe return of all Australians wishing to leave the region.

The Australian Jewish community regards the loss of any human life as tragic, whether it be Israeli, Palestinian or Lebanese.

The path towards peace requires recognition of the following realities:

1. Israel withdrew from Lebanon six years ago. Subsequently UN Security Council Resolution 1559 required the disbandment of all militias in Lebanon. It further required the Lebanese government to assume control over the whole of its territory. Neither of those requirements has been met. Instead, with the support of Iran and Syria, and the acquiescence of the Lebanese Government, (which includes two cabinet members from Hezbollah), Hezbollah has imported from Iran an arsenal of thousands of rockets into southern Lebanon to attack Israel. Since Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza last year more than a thousand Quassam rockets have been fired with support from Hamas into Israeli territory from Gaza.
2. Israel has shown restraint. Until recently, Israel made limited responses when rockets were fired at Israel's civilian population from Gaza and Lebanon. However the latest Hezbollah attacks on sovereign Israeli territory and the killing and kidnapping of Israeli soldiers on Israeli soil have escalated the conflict to a new and unprecedented level. We commend the G8 for its

recent statement unanimously attributing responsibility for the current crisis to Hezbollah and Hamas.

3. The measures taken by Israel in self defense are not excessive. Israel has targeted Hezbollah centres and infrastructure. It has also of necessity targeted the air, road and port facilities used to channel arms and supplies to Hezbollah and to cut off the means by which the hostages might be removed from Gaza and Lebanon. In times of war these are all conventional targets of military necessity. And this is not a war of Israel's making.
4. Hamas and Hezbollah do not recognise Israel's right to exist and oppose a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They declare openly, on their websites, and in statements by their leaders, that their goal is the complete destruction of Israel and its replacement with an Islamic state.
5. In their objective of destroying Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah are supported by Iran and Syria, who supply them with finance, weapons training and technical and other support.
6. Over 1500 of Hezbollah's rockets have struck population centres in northern Israel. The rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza and Lebanon are unarguably directed at civilians. Israel does not deliberately target civilians. Israeli responses have resulted in civilian casualties, which are deeply regrettable, but unavoidable when the attackers operate from amongst civilians.
7. The current Israeli operations are a response to well-planned and unprovoked aggression. Israel has more than 50 years' experience of defending its citizens from those planning to kill and injure them and the most recent and significant escalation means that the military threat to Israel can no longer be ignored.
8. We pray that the Israeli soldiers Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, will be released unharmed and look forward to the establishment of a just and lasting peace for all people in the region.

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