

## The Israel/Hezbollah debate



# In support of Lebanon

by Brad Heap

On July 12, the military arm of the so called “terrorist” organisation, Hezbollah, attacked Israel with Katyusha rockets and mortars. In response, the government of Israel launched a full scale war on the independent and innocent state of Lebanon. Only now, with a fragile cease-fire in place, are we beginning to see the devastation caused by Israel waging war on a defenseless country.

Close to 1500 people have been killed, close to 5500 injured and 1,500,000 people displaced on both sides of the conflict. The war, which was started in response to a terrorist attack by a terrorist organisation, has left billions of dollars of damage in a country that did not in any way provoke an attack on it.

What one needs to realise here is that Israel was attacked by a terrorist organisation, not by the government of Lebanon. However the government of Israel responded not by attacking the terrorists who attacked them, but rather the independent country of Lebanon whose government had no part to play in the initial terrorist attack.

One look at the scale of the attack on Lebanon. Hezbollah is a force of only about 2000 militia. Israel sent close to 30,000 ground troops into Lebanon. Not to mention the air strikes and naval blockade. No one can say that is an attempt to remove a terrorist threat. It is instead an attempt

to destroy an innocent country.

There has also been a lot of media talk about propaganda and conspiracy theories around the war. The biggest being that Iran has set up the war as a smokescreen to take the heat off its own nuclear crises. This is completely ludicrous. Israel is the country that started the war, and made it into such a big event. And Israel would be the last ones wanting Iran to vanish from the world’s news media.

Instead the war is more of a smokescreen for Israel taking the media heat off the conflict in Gaza. While they kill hundreds in the hunt for one soldier. They can avoid it all by invading “aggressive” Lebanon. Also one needs to consider the American involvement in the war. While media attention is focused on Israel and Lebanon, there is less coverage of the bloody defeat that is Iraq.

What we need to learn from all of this is when America sets an example of destroying a country through an unprovoked attack all in the name of stopping terrorism, it opens up the floodgates for other countries to copy the example to remove their sworn enemies. The people of the world need to open their eyes and realise that America and Israel are not right all the time, and they need to be held to account by the people and nations of the world for their actions.

### Rebuttal

Firstly, the nation of Lebanon is not being targeted by Israel; the Hezbollah terrorists within Lebanon are the targets. The destruction of the Lebanese infrastructure used by Hezbollah is entirely necessary to disable the organisation. Lebanon certainly isn't stopping Hezbollah trotting around using roads, radar, and other facilities. What's Israel to do? Send flowers with a note begging Hezbollah to stop? Lebanon fostered these militant terrorists, Lebanon is reaping the result.

Secondly the “innocent” nation of Lebanon was a key in causing the current conflict. Did Lebanon think the weapons supplied to Hezbollah from Iran and Syria were going to be used as garden ornaments? Lebanon knew that Hezbollah would attack Israel, smiled benignly on the organisation, and watched munitions flow over their borders destined for use against Israel.

Thirdly, with an army capable of mobilizing approximately 570,000 personnel, Israel hardly launched an invasion with a mere 30,000 troops (excluding support units). This force is fighting Hezbollah and Hezbollah alone. However, Hezbollah are decidedly difficult to eradicate, considering they entrench themselves amongst regular civilians, children, and the elderly, hence the need for a ground forces instead of exclusively ballistic weaponry.

Finally, the U.S. and Iraq cannot be compared to Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah isn't an “innocent” nation, it's not a nation at all. Hezbollah is factually a terrorist organization, directly causing civilian deaths. People certainly weren't wondering if the 3000+ rockets fired into Israel existed or not. Israel responded in self-defense for the lives of its people. Israel shouldn't put up with the slaughter of its people any more than any other nation. The treacherous Lebanese government has shoved this whole mess into Israel's hands, giving them the thankless task of defending themselves while endeavoring to extract the Hezbollah infection from its host, Lebanon.

G.C.

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Firstly, a little, broad background information is in order for those of us who aren't to savvy on the Middle East.

Israel existed as a nation in the land of Palestine until Caesar Hadrian dispersed them after they rebelled against Roman occupation in 135 AD. In 1947 the United Nations re-formed the nation of Israel on roughly the original land, angering the surrounding Arab nations. Egypt, Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Iraq vehemently refused Israel's internationally recognised right to its homeland, attacking the new nation immediately. U.N. personnel left the area. Israel won its fight for existence and has proceeded to win, very forcefully, another two key battles (Six Day War, 1967; and Yom Kippur War, 1973) for existence against seemingly insurmountable odds, recapturing their original capital of Jerusalem.

Israel has actively endeavoured to promote peace in the region. Recently (2005) Israel went through the painful process of extracting its citizens settled in the Gaza Strip (area captured by Israel from invading forces during the Six Day War). Furthermore, in compliance with U.N. resolutions 425 & 426 (2000) Israel withdrew from an area of southern Lebanon that was captured as a buffer zone against aggressive terrorist activity. Lebanon was then 'free' to comply with the U.N. which, in turn, issued resolution 1559. Resolution 1559 required complete disarmament of terrorist organisations within Lebanon's borders. The Lebanese government informed the U.N. of their approval, but scornfully did nothing, resulting in the current conflict.

A terrorist group in Lebanon by the name

of Hezbollah, and led by a man called Nasrallah, has been hell-bent on Israel's eradication for some time. Sponsored by the neighbouring countries of Syria and Iran, Hezbollah continually fired rockets over the border and plagued Israel with suicide bombers despite Israel's attempts at fulfilling its ends of peace negotiations. In the face of being continually provoked and goaded by the death and terrorisation of its civilians, Israel refrained from launching an offensive against Hezbollah. Most infuriatingly, the nation of Lebanon recognized that Hezbollah were acting in their midst but did nothing to stop the group, indifferently exposing Israel's northern border to terrorists. Furthermore, some Lebanese citizens have succeeded in electing members of Hezbollah into government, gifting them a 10 per cent holding.

The straw that broke the camel's back was Hezbollah's act of kidnapping two Israeli soldiers. Israel proceeded to launch an offensive against Hezbollah that has resulted in numerous strikes at Hezbollah targets in Lebanese territory. However, a severe headache for the Israelis is Hezbollah's use of the Lebanese people as a meat shield against reprisals, maximising civilian casualties in an effort to gather international condemnation on Israel's efforts. Hezbollah achieve this end with hateful tactics ranging from the firing from apartment buildings to dressing as civilians themselves. Needless to say the Lebanese civilian death toll is subject due to the difficulty of determining a civilian from Hezbollah fanatic.

The less well informed among us take this Lebanese civilian casualty toll and bemoan Israel's 'disproportionate' use of force. I'm disappointed at this naïve view of the situation. Should Israel sit idly by and watch well over 3000 rockets (fired by Hezbollah as of 11/8) fly over and land amongst its citizens? You'd be a fool to suggest yes. The only force to use against such savages is lethal force. The Lebanese people are unfortunately paying the price for cultivating Hezbollah in their midst, electing Hezbollah members into government, and allowing them to fight from densely populated areas. Unfortunately, through Hezbollah's coercion Israel has been given the dirty, but absolutely necessary job of removing this Hezbollah infection from Lebanon, which should have been the job of the Lebanese army in the first place.

To those that demanded an immediate ceasefire and resolution through diplomatic means (before the current U.N. brokered deal); you are utterly out of touch with reality. Firstly, Israel has bent over backwards trying to follow through diplomatic channels. Secondly, the only 'diplomacy' a terrorist understands is a bullet through the head. Thirdly, Israel followed U.N. resolutions in the face of the treacherous, laughing Lebanese government, withdrawing from southern Lebanon and exposing its northern border to terrorist attack, and hello, it has arrived.

If you want to discuss this article and vote on whether or not you support Israel, visit the Albany Students' Association website: [www.asa.ac.nz/forum](http://www.asa.ac.nz/forum)

## Rebuttal

If anyone is out of touch with reality then it is the author of this propaganda filled pro Israel article. I would like to propose a question. How can an independent democratically elected government stop the actions of its own people? They can't. If there is enough support for a group, even if that support is a minority they cannot stop them. And that is a reality.

Firstly trying to stop them would result in mass controversy and that government would never be reelected. But before even elections could be held there would be rioting and protests from both sides of the political divide. You do not even need to look at the Middle East to see what has happened when governments have tried to remove opposition groups in democratic countries in the past.

Right here in New Zealand we have had the issue. I realise many of us would not be old enough to remember the 1980 Springbok tour of New Zealand. Never before in the history has there been such protests and riots against our own government. What about Waco? The controversy about that even continues to today. Or consider this hypothetical situation. The Labour led government trying to remove the Act party just because they completely disagree with them. It would never happen, and it never could happen. In the same way the government of Lebanon cannot disband one of its own political parties.

One of the benefits of a democracy is getting everyone's points of views. And yes even those views that you may not agree with. You need to realise that Hezbollah have been democratically elected into the government by the people of Lebanon. Obviously some of the people of Lebanon agree with Hezbollah and support them. You cannot stop them being in government because that would interfere with democracy and interfering with democracy is not democracy it is a dictatorship.

Finally I will reinforce the point I made in my original article. Israel was attacked by a minority terrorist organisation in a small scale terrorist attack. They responded by leaving a democratic and innocent country in ruins. Look at the scale of the two attacks. Look at the targets of the two attacks. In no way was Israel trying to take out a terrorist organisation. Israel was trying to wipe out one of its sworn enemies. Simple as that.