



# Talking Sense:

## Selected Views on the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict

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# I. Introduction

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad clearly revealed the true nature of Hezbollah's attack on Israel when he said, "We are in the middle of a historical war that has been going on for hundreds of years.... The current war [is nothing more than] the frontline between the Islamic world and the world of arrogance [the West]. We have to recognize the baseness of our enemy so that our holy hatred expands continuously and strikes like a wave."

In understanding Israel's reaction to Hezbollah's violence, it is imperative to keep in mind the nature of the terrorist organization and the true aims of Iran, its principal backer. Then it becomes abundantly clear that Israel's current struggle has profound ramifications for the broader Western world and, indeed, moderate Arab regimes as well.

The following are a sample of comments from world leaders and the international press underscoring the importance of Israel's actions.

## II. Australian Prime Minister John Howard

“The Israelis were attacked by Hezbollah. This started when Hezbollah, without justification, crossed the Israeli border in a very provocative act. Now I want peace, I would like to see the hostilities stop tomorrow, stop now, everybody would like that. But you can’t ignore the history of the Middle East and I don’t think it is realistic for us to ignore what caused this latest outbreak....

“Hezbollah is the cause of this latest outbreak of violence. Hezbollah is an enemy of the Lebanese people.”<sup>1</sup>

“Much as I deplore the violence ... one has to understand Israel’s position, Israel has the right of self-defense....

“This country has been under constant attack for almost 60 years, since it was founded, and there is still an unwillingness on the part of many in the region to accept Israel’s right to exist.”<sup>2</sup>



[1] “Transcript of the Prime Minister Interview with Anis Ghanem, Radio 2ME, Sydney,” July 20, 2006, <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/Interview2029.html>.

[2] Australia Broadcasting Corporation, July 16, 2006.

## II. British Prime Minister Tony Blair



“This situation ... began with acts of extremism by militant groups that were ... without any justification and of course were designed to provoke the very response that followed....

“... Of course we all want all violence to stop and stop immediately. But we recognize that the only realistic way to achieve such a ceasefire is to address the underlying reasons why this violence has broken out....

“... But at root, we need to recognize the fundamental nature of the struggle in the region, which has such far-reaching consequences far beyond the region and even in countries like our own. All over the Middle East, there are those who want to modernize their nations, who believe as we in democracy and liberty and tolerance. But ranged against them are extremists who believe the opposite, who believe in fundamentalist states and war not against Israel’s actions but against its existence. In virtually every country of the region, including on the streets of Baghdad, such a struggle is being played out.”

## II. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper

“[T]here is an immediate crisis because of the actions of ... Hezbollah.

“We are not giving into the the temptation of some to single out Israel, which was the victim of the initial attack.

“The onus remains on the parties that caused the conflict to take steps to end the conflict....

“But obviously we urge Israel and others to minimize civilian damage. It is difficult, though, we recognize it is difficult when you’re fighting a non-governmental organization that’s embedded in a civilian population.”<sup>1</sup>

“Israel has the right to defend itself.... I think Israel’s response under the circumstances has been measured....

“It’s essential that Hezbollah and Hamas release their Israeli prisoners and any countries in that area that have influence on these organizations should encourage an end to violence and recognize – and encourage the recognition of – Israel’s right to exist.”<sup>2</sup>



[1] Jane Tauber, “Harper refuses to budge on support for Israel,” *Globe and Mail*, July 18, 2006.

[2] “Harper sides firmly with Israel,” *Canada.com*, July 14, 2006.

## II. Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda



“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic is deeply concerned by the current escalation of the situation in the Middle East. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns [the] attacks of Hezbollah against Israel. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeals for [Hezbollah to] cease attacks and [unconditionally] release the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. The Czech Republic fully respects the right of self-defense of Israel....

“The current crisis affirms the importance of the renewal of complete sovereignty of Lebanon over its territory and disarmament of all militias, according to UN Security Council Resolution 1559.”

## II. French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy

“Israel must defend itself, and it had the right to do so. There is an aggressive element in the Middle East, and that is Hezbollah.”



## II. G-8 Statement



2006 G-8 Leaders

“Today, we the G-8 Leaders express our deepening concern about the situation in the Middle East....

“The immediate crisis results from efforts by extremist forces to destabilize the region and to frustrate the aspirations of the Palestinian, Israeli and Lebanese people for democracy and peace.... In Lebanon, Hezbollah, in violation of the Blue Line, attacked Israel from Lebanese territory and killed and captured Israeli soldiers....

“In Lebanon, UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1680 address the underlying conditions that gave rise to this crisis. We urge the UN Security Council to develop a plan for the full implementation of these resolutions.”

## II. German Chancellor Angela Merkel

“[O]ne needs to be very careful to make a clear distinction between the root causes and the consequences of something. So we started here from a case of kidnapping of a soldier, and one of the other root causes also is the activity of Hezbollah.... [T]hese incursions ... [are] not acceptable.... There has to be a good reaction now, not from the Israeli government, but from those who started these attacks in the first place.”<sup>1</sup>

“It is important that the government in Lebanon, which is on a peaceful path, should be strengthened, but it must be made clear that the capture [of the soldiers] cannot be tolerated. The attacks did not start from the Israeli side, but from Hezbollah’s side.”<sup>2</sup>



[1]“Merkel backs Bush in pressuring Iran,” *White House Bulletin*, July 13, 2006.

[2] “In Quotes: Lebanon reaction,” *BBC*, July 13, 2006.

## II. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert



“Israel did not ask for these confrontations, but there were those who interpreted our will for peace as a sign of weakness. Our enemies were wrong to think our restraint was a sign of weakness....

“Israel will not be a hostage – not of terror organizations and not of sovereign states....

“Will we agree to live under the threat of the axis of evil, or will we mobilize our inner strength and show determination and equanimity?”

## II. Israeli Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres



“We are in a situation where there are four organizations that are immune to any diplomatic or political considerations: Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah – two countries and two terrorist organizations.

“Nobody can influence them. They won’t listen to anybody, not to the United Nations, not the United States, not to the European Union, not to Russia – not even to the Arab states or the leader of the Lebanese government.

“This is the first time we can see the whole world standing helpless in the face of Iran and Syria trying to make a mockery of the international community by sending arms and money to Hamas and Hezbollah to instigate a war.

“.... We have to defend ourselves in a world in which international diplomacy is at such a low point that the Iranians can mock everyone; a dangerous world in which borders are of little use against missiles.”

## II. Israeli Foreign Minister Tzippi Livni

“Israel views the government of Lebanon as responsible for today’s unprovoked aggression. There is an axis of terror and hate, created by Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas that wants to end any hope for peace. The world cannot let them succeed. In these circumstances, Israel has no alternative but to defend itself and its citizens. We also expect the international community to act. We will fight back, in order to fight for peace.”<sup>1</sup>



“Israel has no conflict with the people of Lebanon and does not want to undermine the government of Lebanon. But Israel also has no higher responsibility than to defend its citizens from attack.”<sup>2</sup>

[1] Official Foreign Ministry Statement, July 12, 2006.

[2] Statement by Foreign Minister Livni on the Arrival of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, July 24, 2006.

## II. Saudi Statement

“Viewing with deep concern the bloody, painful events currently taking place in Palestine and Lebanon, the Kingdom would like to clearly announce that a difference should be drawn between legitimate resistance and rash adventures carried out by elements inside the state and those behind them [Hezbollah] without consultation with the legitimate authority in their state and without consultation or coordination with Arab countries, thus creating a gravely dangerous situation exposing all Arab countries and its achievements to destruction with those countries having no say.

“The Kingdom views that it is time that these elements alone bear the full responsibility of these irresponsible acts and should alone shoulder the burden of ending the crisis that they have created.”



King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud

## II. U.S. President George W. Bush



“The recent crisis in the region was triggered by the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by the terrorist group Hezbollah and the launch of rockets against Israeli cities. I believe sovereign nations have the right to defend their people from terrorist attacks, and to take the necessary action to prevent those attacks....

“For many years, Syria has been a primary sponsor of Hezbollah and it has helped provide Hezbollah with shipments of Iranian made weapons. Iran’s regime has also repeatedly defied the international community with its ambition for nuclear weapons and aid to terrorist groups. Their actions threaten the entire Middle East and stand in the way of resolving the current crisis and bring lasting peace to this troubled region....

“Hezbollah’s practice of hiding rockets in civilian neighborhoods, and its efforts to undermine the democratically elected government have shown it to be no friend of Lebanon. By its actions, Hezbollah has jeopardized Lebanon’s tremendous advances and betrayed the Lebanese people.”

## II. U.S. Congressional Resolution 921\*

### H. Res. 921

#### *In the House of Representatives*

Whereas on September 12, 2005, Israel  
eral withdrawal from Gaza, demon  
to make sacrifices for the sake of p

Whereas more than 1,000 rockets hav  
Gaza into Israel since Israel's diser

Whereas in a completely unprovoked a  
undisputed Israeli territory on Jun  
fense Forces Corporal Gilad Shalit  
being held hostage in Gaza by a  
group which includes members of I

Whereas Hamas political leader Khale  
cus, Syria, has acknowledged the r  
ing Corporal Shalit hostage;

Whereas in a completely unprovoked a  
undisputed Israeli territory on Jul  
of the terrorist group Hezbollah o  
ern Lebanon killed three Israeli  
others hostage;

Whereas Israel fully complied with U  
Council Resolution 425 (1978)  
drawing its forces from Lebanon  
United Nations Security Council a

“Condemning the recent attacks against the State of Israel, holding terrorists and their state-sponsors accountable for such attacks, supporting Israel’s right to defend itself, and for other purposes....

“Whereas in a completely unprovoked attack that occurred in undisputed Israeli territory on July 12, 2006, operatives of the terrorist group Hezbollah operating out of southern Lebanon killed three Israeli soldiers and took two others hostage...

“Whereas Israel fully complied with United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 by completely withdrawing its forces from Lebanon....

“Whereas both Hezbollah and Hamas refuse to recognize Israel’s right to exist and call for the destruction of Israel....

“Resolved, That the House of Representatives...

“[C]ondemns ... Hezbollah for engaging in unprovoked and reprehensible armed attacks against Israel on undisputed Israeli territory, for taking hostages, for killing Israeli soldiers, and for continuing to indiscriminately target Israeli civilian populations with their rockets and missiles;

“[F]urther condemns Hamas and Hezbollah for cynically exploiting civilian populations as shields, locating their equipment and bases of operation, including their rockets and other armaments, amidst civilian populations, including in homes and mosques.”

# III. Arab Press - Arab Times



السياسة

مقالات

ثلاثون عاماً بعد حرب الخليج الأولى، لا يزال العراق يعاني من آثارها المدمرة. في هذا العدد، نعرض لكم مقالة من قبل الكاتب العراقي، د. ياسين عطا الله، التي تتناول الوضع السياسي والعسكري في العراق، وتطرح أسئلة مهمة حول مستقبل العراق وبلدان المنطقة.

**ياسين عطا الله له «السياسة»: « حزب الله »**  
**لن يخرج من المعركة منتصرا ولبنان مدمر**  
 لا تريد أن نسمع خطابات عن الكرامة الوطنية في وقت أهدرت فيه كسرات الناس

مستشار الآلاف  
 د. ياسين عطا الله  
 هو الأستاذ المساعد في كلية التربية في جامعة الكوفة، العراق.

عالمنا اليوم من أزمات، بل في كل لحظة نعيش في حالة من الأزمات. أزمة اقتصادية، أزمة سياسية، أزمة اجتماعية، أزمة بيئية، أزمة أخلاقية، أزمة ثقافية، أزمة علمية، أزمة إنسانية... الأزمة التي نعيشها اليوم هي أزمة شاملة، أزمة تهدد مستقبلنا ومستقبل أمتنا. ولبنان، الذي كان يُعدّ منارة من منارات المنطقة، لم ينجح في تجاوز هذه الأزمة، بل أصبح جزءاً من المشكلة.

عندما نتحدث عن لبنان، نتحدث عن دولة تعاني من انهيار اقتصادي، من أزمة سياسية عميقة، من أزمة اجتماعية خطيرة، من أزمة أخلاقية مدمرة، من أزمة ثقافية كارثية، من أزمة علمية خطيرة، من أزمة إنسانية مروعة. لبنان اليوم هو لبنان المدمر، لبنان الذي فقد كرامته وبلاده.



المدنيون يعانون من الدمار الذي لحق بهم في بيروت، لبنان، نتيجة العمليات العسكرية.

**إصلاحو إيران: لبنان ساحة معركة تشن بالواسطة في مواجهة طهران مع الغرب**

لبنان، الذي كان يُعدّ منارة من منارات المنطقة، لم ينجح في تجاوز هذه الأزمة، بل أصبح جزءاً من المشكلة. إيران، من ناحية أخرى، تستخدم لبنان كساحة معركة في مواجهة الغرب، مما يزيد من تعقيد الوضع في المنطقة.

الغرب، من ناحية أخرى، يحاول احتواء إيران في المنطقة، مما يؤدي إلى مزيد من التوترات. لبنان، في هذه الحالة، يصبح الحلقة الأضعف في سلسلة الأحداث.

“[T]he only way to get rid of [Hezbollah] is what Israel is doing. The operations of Israel in Gaza and Lebanon are in the interest of people of Arab countries and the international community.”

-- Ahmed Al-Jarallah, editor-in-chief of Kuwait's Arab Times

### III. Canadian Press – *The Gazette* Editorial



“The world must understand that the recent upswing in terrorism (including rockets fired from unoccupied Gaza) involving Israel is a calculated tactic by Iran and her co-conspirators in Syria and the Hezbollah, and yes, Al-Qaeda. Iran clearly feels the international heat with regards to its nuclear-weapons project and needs to retaliate. In the eyes of the power brokers in Iran, terrorism against Israel is the perfect method....”<sup>1</sup>



“No nation can tolerate persistent shelling from a neighbor. The question isn't 'How dare Israel attack Gaza and Lebanon?' but 'What took so long for Israel to respond effectively?’”<sup>2</sup>

[1] “Iran is the key to terror,” *Gazette* (Montreal), July 14, 2006.

[2] Gil Troy, “Israeli attacks followed months, even years, of provocation,” *Gazette* (Montreal), July 15, 2006.

### III. British Press – *The Telegraph* Op-Ed

# Telegraph.co.uk

“The Iranian hydra has many heads. The ayatollahs sponsor militias and political movements across the Muslim world and beyond. Hezbollah is, in reality, the Lebanese branch of the Islamic Revolution. Lop off that head and another will grow in its place. It is in Tehran that the monster’s heart beats...

“The policy of appeasement has failed; it is time to try coercion.

“This does not necessarily mean the direct use of military force: there are many intermediate steps, including targeted sanctions, the seizure of assets and the sponsoring of opposition movements. But leaving Tehran unmolested will mean more Hezbollahs, more terrorism and, ultimately, more wars.”

### III. British Press – *The Times* Editorial

“America, understandably, will not deal directly with Hezbollah. Most Sunni Arab governments also have little truck with a group they regard as a long-term threat to themselves, intent on sabotaging any settlement with Israel and using its militancy to increase Iran’s influence.”



### III. German Press – *Der Spiegel* Op-Ed



**“Israel is fighting a just war. Germany and the European Union should unequivocally back Israel.**

“Islamism has attacked Israel from both the south and the north and Israel has no choice but to react. But there is more to it than that. Israel's military operation is important for the entire Western world. Until 2005, Islamism was able to successfully mislead the West into thinking that the ‘occupation’ of Gaza and southern Lebanon was the cause of the terror attacks carried out against Israel. Now we know better: Islamism isn’t out to change Israeli policy in the region, Islamism is out to completely eradicate the country of Israel. The same strategy is being used on a larger scale: The Middle East conflict is not the cause of Tehran’s conflict with Western secularism. It is merely a convenient alibi.”

**“Israel wants peace.**

“These are the goals being pursued by the Israeli military operation. The infrastructure in Lebanon is being attacked, but only insofar as it is relevant to the arming and operations of Hezbollah. The Lebanese civilian population has been warned with leaflets and radio messages prior to attacks in residential areas. Hezbollah, on the other hand, is marching to a different drummer. Their motto is: ‘You love life, we love death.’ There is nothing, gushes Hezbollah’s patron Ahmadinejad, ‘more beautiful, holier or more eternal than the death of a martyr.’ Thus, Hezbollah is not only happy to kill as many Jews as possible, it is not bothered by the deaths of Shiite Muslims as well and has thus strategically based many of their rockets directly in the middle of Shiite residential districts.”



### III. Italian Press – *Corriere della Sera* Column



“Well, now it is up to the West, as it is committed to the spread of democracy across the world, to reply first to a fundamental question: Can one who denies Israel’s right to exist and resorts to terrorism to destroy it be considered a democrat? It is up to the West, some 60 years after the Holocaust of the Jews by the Nazi regime, which also came to power in a democratic way, to unequivocally pronounce on the legitimacy of ‘democratic’ Islamic forces that are promoting a war intended to wipe the land of the Jews off the map. This is why it is precisely up to the West to take the initiative to declare, on the basis of international law, that Israel’s right to exist is an unalienable principle and an incontrovertible value that substantiates democracy and that, besides, to preach and work for the destruction of Israel is a crime against humanity and a negation of democracy, which cannot disregard the recognition of everybody’s right to life and freedom.”

### III. U.S. Press – *New York Times* Column



Thomas Friedman  
*New York Times* Columnist



“What we are seeing in Iraq, the Palestinian territories and Lebanon is an effort by Islamist parties to use elections to pursue their long-term aim of Islamizing the Arab-Muslim world....

“The world needs to understand what is going on here: the little flowers of democracy that were planted in Lebanon, Iraq and the Palestinian territories are being crushed by the boots of Syrian-backed Islamist militias who are desperate to keep real democracy from taking hold in this region and Iranian-backed Islamist militias desperate to keep modernism from taking hold.

“It may be the skeptics are right: maybe democracy, while it is the most powerful form of legitimate government, simply can’t be implemented everywhere. It certainly is never going to work in the Arab-Muslim world if the U.S. and Britain are alone in pushing it in Iraq, if Europe dithers on the fence, if the moderate Arabs cannot come together and make a fist, and if the Islamist parties are allowed to sit in governments and be treated with respect – while maintaining private armies.”

## U.S. Press – *Wall Street Journal* Op-Ed

“[The argument of proportionality] is all well and good for democratic nations that deliberately locate their military bases away from civilian population centers. Israel has its air force, nuclear facilities and large army bases in locations as remote as anything can be in that country. It is possible for an enemy to attack Israeli military targets without inflicting ‘collateral damage’ on its civilian population. Hezbollah and Hamas, by contrast, deliberately operate military wings out of densely populated areas. They launch antipersonnel missiles with ball-bearing shrapnel, designed by Syria and Iran to maximize civilian casualties, and then hide from retaliation by living among civilians. If Israel decides not to go after them for fear of harming civilians, the terrorists win by continuing to have free rein in attacking civilians with rockets. If Israel does attack, and causes civilian casualties, the terrorists win a propaganda victory: The international community pounces on Israel for its ‘disproportionate’ response. This chorus of condemnation actually encourages the terrorists to operate from civilian areas....



Alan M. Dershowitz  
Harvard Law Professor

“This misuse of civilians as shields and swords requires a reassessment of the laws of war. The distinction between combatants and civilians -- easy when combatants were uniformed members of armies that fought on battlefields distant from civilian centers -- is more difficult in the present context. Now, there is a continuum of ‘civilians’: Near the most civilian end of this continuum are the pure innocents -- babies, hostages and others completely uninvolved; at the more combatant end are civilians who willingly harbor terrorists, provide material resources and serve as human shields; in the middle are those who support the terrorists politically, or spiritually.”

# U.S. Press – *Washington Post* Column

“Hezbollah makes a fatal mistake. It crosses the UN-delineated international frontier to attack Israel, kills soldiers and takes hostages. This aggression is so naked that even Russia joins in the Group of Eight summit communiqué blaming Hezbollah for the violence and calling for the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty in the south. But only one country has the capacity to do the job. That is Israel, now recognized by the world as forced into this fight by Hezbollah’s aggression.

“Only two questions remain: Israel’s will and America’s wisdom. Does Prime Minister Ehud Olmert have the courage to do what is so obviously necessary [continued military operations to disarm Hezbollah]? And will Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s upcoming peace trip to the Middle East force a premature cease-fire that spares her the humiliation of coming home empty-handed but prevents precisely the kind of decisive military outcome that would secure the interests of Israel, Lebanon, the moderate Arabs and the West?”



Charles Krauthammer  
*Washington Post* Columnist



## IV. Acknowledgments

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