

Joint press statement

Call for an immediate unconditional ceasefire in Lebanon

Last Sunday, Israel's air strike in the Southern Lebanese village of Qana killed at least 56 civilians, most of whom were women and children.

We express our shock, grief, and outrage at Israel's Government for displaying, once again, that the pursuit of its military objectives can be executed with utter indifference to human lives and suffering. It has already resulted in over 600 deaths and the displacement of over one million people from their homes.

The whole world has witnessed the indiscriminate use of force, despite Israel's claim that its military campaign in Lebanon is targeted merely at disarming the Hezbollah militia. By constantly insisting on shifting the blame to others, the Israeli Government has also shamefully displayed its lack of remorse and inability to bear the full weight of responsibility for the massacre of innocent civilians in Qana and elsewhere in Southern Lebanon.

Barely five days earlier, Israel's missile attacks had destroyed a UN observation post in the border region, prompting UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan to say that Israel's attack on the UN post appeared to be intentional and that he was "shocked and deeply distressed by the apparently deliberate targeting by Israeli Defense Forces of a UN observer post in southern Lebanon". Several other countries denounced this attack. But apart from promising to investigate it, the criticisms fell on deaf ears.

Israel is a regional military superpower in the Middle East. It possesses far more sophisticated military hardware than any of its neighbours. We are witnessing the use of its firepower superiority, in unjustifiably violent means, to try to solve the complex issues in the Middle East.

Israel continues to reassure the world that it is acting in self-defence. While we do not deny Israel's right to protect its citizens, we are deeply concerned that the manner in which Israel has handled this conflict has not served to lessen the tension and violence in the Middle East. Instead, tensions have continued to escalate dangerously.

The call by the Lebanese Prime Minister, Mr Fouad Siniora, as well as by Mr Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire is sensible, and should be given the fullest support by the entire international community.

We agree with the Singapore Government's call in urging all sides to exercise restraint, and to immediately cease the activities that have triggered this cycle of violence.

A Joint Statement by CCIS / PERGAS / PERDAUS dated 1st August 2006.