



Intervention of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Second Special Session of the Human Rights Council Geneva, August 11, 2006

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Council is faced with heavy responsibilities by the very serious events currently underway since the electoral victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Territories and that have culminated with the Israeli intervention in Lebanon. These responsibilities emanate both from its status and from the hopes placed upon it by the international community.

In this context, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) believes that the Council's duty is to play a new role that would allow the achievement of concrete results, as was repeated during the process leading to its creation. To do so, it is necessary to avoid the rhetoric and unbalanced resolutions void of follow-up that discredited the Human Rights Commission, all the while embracing its specificity, which is to ensure the respect of human rights and, in case of conflict, the full rigor of humanitarian law by all parties.

Like other non-governmental organisations that have followed the situation since the beginning of the conflict, OMCT has observed a number of violations of both human rights and humanitarian law, such as the 5th Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement within their own country, the Geneva Conventions, and more specifically, common Article 3 to the four Conventions.

Among the grave violations perpetrated by both parties to the conflict, OMCT takes note of the indiscriminate attacks against civilians in the framework of military operations conducted by the Hezbollah in Lebanon, which sent a flurry of rockets in densely populated civilian areas, and by Israel, whose bombardments on cities and villages have caused numerous civilian victims. In the context of these attacks, Israel has caused the death of nearly one thousand civilians (men, women and children) in Lebanon, and, notably, of many dozens in the events of Cana on July 30, 2006. Its bombardments have also caused the death of several observers of the United Nations.

OMCT also notes that both parties to the conflict have resorted to the taking of hostages, an act that goes against the conventions. More specifically, Hezbollah has captured two Israeli soldiers, an act that would not be contrary to humanitarian law if the goal had not been the use of these soldiers, who were no longer participating in the conflict, as currency for the liberation of prisoners by Israel. Such a practice does in fact constitute hostage taking.

Furthermore, the Israeli Army is destroying civilian infrastructure in Lebanon by bombarding bridges, the airport in Beirut, power plants, hospitals and fuel reservoirs, among others. These destructions, which claim to prevent Hezbollah from stocking up on arms or to destroy its bases, do not seem proportional to the desired outcomes and cause considerable damage to Lebanese society. Moreover, the Israeli Army has knowingly prevented humanitarian assistance operations and provoked a serious crisis by announcing the blockade of certain regions and bombarding all transportation routes in certain zones without taking into consideration the nature of those transports. Finally, the Israeli intervention has resulted in massive movements of population within Lebanon, up to 900,000 people according to some sources.

Mr. President,

These are but a few of the serious violations that are being perpetrated on a daily basis in Lebanon. OMCT calls for the immediate cessation of military operations by all the parties to the conflict and for the establishment of an UN-led investigation mission whose mandate should be:

1. To establish the facts;
2. To draw up a list of violations of both human rights and humanitarian law;
3. To identify the culprits and to launch legal action against them;
4. To identify the victims and the damages incurred;
5. To ensure the full reparation for said damages.

Mr. President,

As we have already stated, this Council must show that it has understood the lessons from the malfunctions of the Human Rights Commission, and that it is able today, in the case of this serious conflict, to contribute effectively to the restoration of law.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Eric Sottas
Director