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Speaker of the Knesset

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My dear Colleague,

I write to share with you some of my thoughts in the wake of Operation "Peace for Galilee". Unfortunately, the fighting still continues at the time of writing, and therefore it is too early to pronounce a final judgement concerning the outcome of this Operation. However, already at this time, and in view of the massive propaganda campaign designed to distort the objectives of the Operation, its motives and its effects, I feel that some preliminary observations may be in order.

Israel is being accused of having invaded without provocation, a sovereign country. Lebanon, however, has been occupied by Syria in one part, and by PLO terrorist armed forces in others and has been prevented from exercising its sovereignty. The government of Lebanon has not been able to prevent armed aggression against Israel undertaken from its territory, for quite a number of years now. The fact that the world has come to accept as normal the presence in Lebanon of armed PLO terrorists who are committed openly to the destruction of the State of Israel could not be tolerated by the victims of the aggressors.

Thus, Israel was fully justified in taking defensive action against Lebanese territory, and foreign troops occupying that territory, both Syrian and PLO, in strict adherence to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Israel has no designs whatsoever on Lebanese territory, and - I make this statement with full concurrence of each and every one of the Members of the Knesset - we do not want a single inch of Lebanese territory. All we want is to ensure that never again will Lebanese territory be used as the base and jumping-off ground for aggressive action against Israel's citizens, and indeed Jewish personalities and institutions, throughout the world.

The armed aggression undertaken from Lebanese territory against Israel, and the massive assistance which has been afforded from Lebanese territory to most terrorist movements throughout the world, have never been in accordance with the will of the Lebanese people nor with its real interests, but is a result of a factual forceful domination of the country by PLO and Syria. Now it is hoped that Israel's military operation, which has cost many lives on both sides, will finally afford the Lebanese people an opportunity to constitute a

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meaningful central government, capable of controlling its territory, and conducting its own affairs. With such a government, Israel would be anxious to sign a peace agreement.

However, the constitution of a Lebanese government is not an Israeli affair, and Israel will not intervene in internal Lebanese affairs. As long as the central government of Lebanon will not be in a position to afford Israel the guarantees it requires for its own national security, Israel will expect the international community, or, at least, those member-states of the international community who loyally care for Israel's security and welfare, to establish an international force, as a buffer to prevent the recurrence of attacks on our settlements and towns in the North of the country, whose civilian inhabitants have been compelled to spend days and weeks on end in underground shelters, in order to avoid the casualties which the PLO wished to inflict by means of massive artillery and Katyusha bombardment.

The Israel Defense Force, as a body, and each and every one of its soldiers, had been briefed and instructed very specifically before this operation began, to spare civilian life and property, and quite a number of Israeli soldiers sacrificed their lives in order to avoid such casualties. Not a single instance has been recorded so far, of deliberate killing of civilians. Even so innocent civilians have unfortunately paid with their lives for the PLO's devilish designs and tactics of establishing their headquarters and their ammunition dumps in the center of densely populated civilian areas; thus, whilst attacking these ammunition dumps and disguised sanctuaries, innocent bystanders were in a number of cases affected. The responsibility for these civilian casualties lies squarely on the shoulders of the PLO criminals who used a sports stadium as well as churches and places of worship for ammunition dumps and schools, as military camps. If in any country an armed gang of robbers would use a kindergarten as a safe refuge, trying to hide behind the children in that institution and the forces of law and order would find it necessary to attack such a kindergarten - who will be to blame for the death of children in such an operation?

Moreover, many PLO terrorists fought without uniforms, or shed their uniforms at the first opportunity, and mingled with the civilian population. The distinction between PLO terrorists and civilians thus has been made very difficult, and it will probably take weeks of investigation in order to establish precisely who was actively involved in terrorist activities and in the fighting, and who was an innocent civilian indeed.

It is unfortunately true, that many civilians have been killed, wounded or have been turned into refugees as a result of this operation. Israel is at the present engaged in a massive effort to alleviate the resultant sufferings; medical aid is offered to all Lebanese hospitals in the territories at the present time under control of the Israel Armed Forces, to enable them to fulfil their humanitarian responsibility. Many hundreds of Lebanese, including active members of the PLO, are at present being treated in Israeli hospitals. There is a determined effort to allow civilian life to return to its normal course in these territories, not by means of Israel military Commanders, but through the reinstatement of Lebanese law, legal and civil institutions, which for many years were unable to fulfil their functions because for all practical purposes these territories were under



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PLO and Syrian control. Many thousands of refugees are now finally being enabled to return to their homes in the South of Lebanon, from which they had been forcibly ejected by the PLO in previous years. Many more Lebanese of all persuasions and communities en route from the North to the South, fleeing not from the Israeli forces, but escaping into the territory controlled by our army, with the assistance of the Israel Defense Forces. Final figures for refugees, killed and wounded, are not yet available. However, it must be pointed out that the figures which have been spread by hostile propaganda machines are the products of malicious, villainous propaganda and I dare state at this juncture, that the total number of casualties is inferior to the number of massacred Christians in Damour alone (by the Palestinians in 1975) or the Palestinian victims of the carnage in Tel El Zatar (by the Syrians), which had not given rise to any serious outcry by the civilized world. Just to quote one instance the number of refugees mentioned by one interested source, and taken over without checking by an otherwise reputable international organization, far exceeds the total number of inhabitants of the area in question.

As Israel forces advanced, the full extent of the atrocities committed by the PLO in the areas previously under its control have come to light; not only the massacres conducted during the so-called civil war of 1975-1976, but also the inhuman treatment meted out to the civilian population in subsequent years. Innumerable stories of rape and coercion, of robbery and of forceful ejection, have come to light. Thus it should not be surprising, that in most localities Israel forces were welcomed as liberators.

Mr. Speaker, I fully realize that operation "Peace for Galilee" has occasioned a debate, possibly a violent debate, in Parliament and amongst your public. I believe that it is too early to assess this operation and its outcome. However, I have ventured to present to you the above observation and facts, in order to assist the Members of your House in an assessment of events, and to keep the debate within rational and realistic boundaries.

To conclude, I may sum up the results of the campaign at this juncture as follows:

- A. Extirpate the infrastructure of International Terror and remove the menace to Israel's population in the north.
- B. Creating an opportunity for establishing the sovereignty of the Lebanese over their land.
- C. Destruction of Soviet sophisticated arms (Sam 6, MIG 21 - 23) by superior Western weaponry which has wide strategic ramifications.
- D. Remove the threats and intimidation from the inhabitants of the Samaria, Judea and Gaza Strip territories, opening opportunities for peaceful unconstrained negotiations with a responsible Palestinian leadership for solving the conflict.



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May I add, that the above observations express the sentiments of the vast majority of the Knesset, Coalition and Opposition alike.

I will be grateful if you would circulate them to the Members of your House.

Please accept, Mr. Speaker and dear Colleague, the renewed expression of my highest consideration.

Menahem Savidor

Mr. Peiter Dankert  
President of the European Parliament  
Strasbourg