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From: AAP

THE latest events in the Middle East are happening because of a Hezbollah incursions, not because of Israeli violations, Prime Minister John Howard said.

Mr Howard said today he was appalled at the loss of life on both sides of the latest conflict but such incidents were fated to continue unless there were some basic understandings.

Israel has blockaded Lebanese ports and struck Beirut airport and two military airbases, expanding reprisals that have killed 53 civilians in Lebanon since Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers a day earlier.

Mr Howard took issue at whether the response to recent incidents was to condemn Israeli actions or not.

"This latest incident started because of the Hezbollah incursion into Israel against all of the resolutions of the United Nations, against all of the understandings now of international law," Mr Howard told ABC radio.

"Do I think it's appalling? Yes. Am I other than totally appalled at the loss of life on both sides? It is terrible.

"Like every other world leader, I would like it to stop.

"But you will never have any kind of lasting settlement in this part of the world until two things are accepted - there is an absolute acceptance of Israel's right to exist in peace and be free of terrorist attacks, and there's an absolute commitment to the emergence of a Palestinian state."