

# US Complicit In Israel War Crimes In Lebanon

By Dahr Jamail

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An acquaintance of mine in Lebanon just sent me this email:

"A friend of mine just called and told me of a massacre: civilian building destroyed in Tyre by Israeli aggression. There, Zouhair Edde's mother has been killed. Rayaan Qudsi has been killed along with her two daughters. This is a conservative number of martyrs thus far. This building is where refugees typically hide."

This is but an infinitesimal example of what is being carried out by the Israeli military apparatus against the civilian population of Lebanon on an hourly basis.

The official lines of the US and Israeli governments are that the destruction in Lebanon and Gaza are due to two Israeli soldiers being taken prisoner. This incredible display of willful amnesia omits the fact that at least 9,000 Palestinians are currently being held in Israeli prisons, 1,000 of which have had no charges brought against them. It also conveniently omits the fact that over 14,000 Iraqis are languishing in US prisons inside Iraq, most of whom have been charged with approximately nothing.

While the slaughter of innocents continues unabated, we must be very clear as to who is responsible for creating the conditions for it. "Israel has been the largest recipient of US foreign aid every year since 1976,"

Frida Berrigan, a senior research associate at the Arms Trade Resource Center at the World Policy Institute in New York told Inter Press Service recently.

On top of providing Israel with billions of dollars of sophisticated weaponry, in 2005 alone the US provided the Israeli government \$2.2 billion. This amount is expected to increase incrementally in the coming years.

Israel has the largest fleet of F-16 fighter jets in the world, outside of the US. Thanks to the US, these deadly warplanes are responsible for most of the death and destruction we've seen thus far in Lebanese cities, suburbs, and ports.

Most of the critical infrastructure of Lebanon has been reduced to smoldering ruins, as countless Lebanese are now living by generators and scavenging for food wherever possible. Bombings have included electrical stations, fuel storage depots, gas stations, hospitals, ambulance convoys, ports, factories, bridges and roads. As of this writing, the death toll in Lebanon is now over 350, all but 14 of which were civilians. There are over 1,000 wounded.

It's called collective punishment. It is a war crime. It is a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions.

An entire country is being collectively punished while the world sits by and watches.

The US military did it and continues to do it as you read this in Iraq, and now the Israeli military, after practicing it for decades in the occupied territories of Palestine, is carrying out this tactic /en masse/ against the country and people of Lebanon.

Let me be clear about which international laws are being violated by the Israelis.

Article 51 from the 1949 Geneva Conventions states, very clearly, that, "The civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited."

Al-Jazeera, who has been doing a remarkable job of covering the catastrophic situation in Lebanon, had one of their journalists shot in the leg while reporting in Israel. Jazeera showed the footage-of his colleague in front of the camera jumping out of the way so as not to be run down by an Israeli military vehicle-then she raced over with others to assist her shot colleague into an ambulance. The day before, Jazeera reported on the convoy of ambulances, along with civilian cars, being bombed by the Israelis.

Israeli warplanes are bombing ambulances and cars in Beirut.

The Geneva Conventions clearly specify that, "/Indiscriminate attacks are prohibited/."

According to Protocol I, Article 85, Section 3 of the Geneva Conventions, "An indiscriminate attack affecting the civilian population or civilian objects and resulting in excessive loss of life, injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects is a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions."

Hezbollah militants are also guilty of war crimes by targeting civilians in Israel, where at least 12 have been killed by their indiscriminate rocket attacks into Haifa and other locations. However, 12 Israeli military personnel have been killed by Hezbollah attacks. Thus, Hezbollah fighters have been approximately 50% accurate in their attacks against the Israeli military, when in contrast the Israeli military, according to latest figures, have killed 14 Lebanese soldiers, lending a 4% accuracy rate by comparison. Overall, for every one Israeli killed, 14 Lebanese die.

This disparity is due to the fact that people like the prime minister of Israel, George W. Bush and "Democrats" like Hillary Clinton clearly do not value the lives of the Lebanese people on par with those of Israelis.

Underscoring this stance are the recent remarks of the UN "Ambassador" for the US, John Bolton-who the Jewish lobby group JINSA nominated for the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize.

Bolton told reporters that there was no moral equivalence between Lebanese civilian casualties generated by Israeli air raids and Israelis killed by "malicious terrorist acts," as if there is a difference in these two "terrorist acts."

"I think it would be a mistake to ascribe moral equivalence to civilians who die as the direct result of malicious terrorist acts," he said.

Recently at the northern border of Lebanon and Syria, a 25 year-old American social studies teacher who was staying with his family in downtown Beirut before fleeing for the border, told me, "Everything is being bombed. It's a terror! We've literally been terrorized!"

The teacher, Abdul Rahman, added, "We have not slept for three days because we were living in terror and never knew when the Israelis would bomb us since they were hitting everything. If they want to hit Hezbollah, let them hit Hezbollah, but not the civilians-but civilians are all that they are hitting!"

Article 48 from the 1949 Geneva Conventions states that the "basic rule" of the Geneva Conventions is to protect the civilian population:

"In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives."

Bolton also said, in defense of the Israeli military, "It's simply not the same thing to say that it's the same act to deliberately target innocent civilians, to desire their deaths, to fire rockets and use explosive devices or kidnapping versus the sad and highly unfortunate consequences of self-defense."

Cannot the same be said of Hezbollah?

Bolton went on to show his true colors-that the lives of westerners are of value, whereas the lives of the Lebanese are not. He was asked to comment on the deaths of eight Canadian citizens as the result of an Israeli air strike. "it is a matter of great concern to us ...that /these/ [emphasis mine] civilian deaths are occurring. It's a tragedy."

The Canadians had three of their Lebanese relatives die as well, but Bolton wasn't speaking about /those/ deaths.

Let me clear about this-Bolton is a war criminal. Cheney/Bush, with their shameless aiding and abetting of the Israeli military and Prime Minister Olmert's policy in Gaza and Lebanon, are war criminals and should be treated as such. Several other past US presidents, including Bill Clinton and his golfing buddy Bush Senior, are war criminals for this same aiding and abetting.

Others who aid and abet and cheerlead, like the corporate media in the US, are Hillary Clinton, Joe Lieberman, Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld, to name but a select few.

The slaughter continues day and night. Today, in one air strike alone, Israeli warplanes killed 13 civilians, all from two families in southern Lebanon. Nine of the dead were children.

It's going to continue for at probably "a few weeks," according to Israel's deputy army chief, Major General Moshe Kaplinsky. "We need more time to complete our very clear goals. When we fight terror it is a

war that needs to be very accurate, very schematic and it takes time," he said hypocritically in his radio address, before adding that a ground invasion of Lebanon was not being ruled out.

"Very accurate," he says.

On Tuesday, Israeli air raids struck the Christian coastal town of Byblos north of Beirut and the eastern city of Baalbek.

At the northern border I also interviewed a man named Abud Aziz, a 31 year-old Lebanese pastry chef from Beirut who carried his suitcase under a sweltering sun as he crossed the border into Syria for refuge. Having just fled Beirut, Aziz told me, "Lebanon is in a terrible state. I left everything but some cash and the clothes on my back. I ran for my life because of the hellish bombing!"

Aziz said there was no water or electricity since yesterday, anyone who could was leaving Beirut for the borders or mountains, and the bombing from Israeli war planes was rampant. "Yesterday I saw two hospitals bombed with my own eyes," he told me, "Nobody who remains in Beirut can be safe. No way."

A 25 year-old construction worker named Hamed also told me he witnessed war planes bomb a hospital in Beirut. "I left just hours ago, and I saw them bomb a hospital yesterday. They are bombing everything-houses, casinos, fuel stations and so many bridges."

"Very accurate," said Kaplinsky.

In 1946, in Nuremberg, an American Judge wrote: "To initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.

And this is exactly what Israel is doing in Lebanon. And this war of aggression which "contains within itself the accumulated evil of the

whole" is being aided and abetted by the leaders of the US government and all those who support them.

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