

# Israeli occupation of south



On May 14, 1948 British troops that were occupying portions of Palestine withdrew from the territory. As Britain withdrew from Palestine, they handed the land over to the Zionists to create Israel. Upon creation of the State of Israel, thousands of Palestinians were driven from their homes to make room for the Jews who were immigrating into the State. Many of the Palestinians fled to Lebanon to make new homes and start a new life.

Soon after the formation of Israel, war broke out between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The war lasted about 8 months and an armistice agreement was negotiated, between January and July of 1949. For the next twenty years tension would continue to rise between the two nations. Palestinians and Israelis committed numerous terrorist acts against each other until 1968. In 1968, Israel made its first significant incursion into Lebanon. On April 21, 1968 Israel blew up 13 airplanes at Beirut airport (Barrett). The Israelis justification for the Beirut airport bombing was repayment for the Lebanese trained Palestinian civilians who had made an attack in Athens. For the next ten years there were numerous small terrorist acts from both countries. Then in March 1978, Israel launched the first of four major attacks on southern Lebanon. The attacks have set up an Israeli zone of occupation, a security zone, in southern Lebanon that is still present today. The Israeli occupation and the attack on southern Lebanon has never been legitimately justified.

The first major Israeli incursion into south Lebanon came on March 14, 1978. The military action was named Operation Litany. The Israeli army attacked PLO positions that were in south Lebanon. As the Israelis moved through southern Lebanon they occupied a 6-mile strip of land. The Israelis killed

1500 people who were Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. The Israelis attempted to justify the killing of 1500 civilians and the occupation of Lebanon because PLO backed guerillas had killed 30 bus riders in a raid near Tel Aviv. The world and the UN strongly objected to this harsh move by the Israelis (Reuters, Chronology).

The UN then put resolution 425 into effect. The resolution called for strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon and also called upon Israel immediately to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory. The Israelis refused to leave so the UN created UNIFIL. UNIFIL stands for United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. It is a 5000 person peacekeeping force that was set up to push the Israeli army back to the border (Reuters, Intervention). Israel pulled back some of its military forces due to the world condemnation of the act and the UNs objection to the invasion. However, the Israelis kept some of their troops posted in southern Lebanon. Israel also brought in Muslim leftists and the Lebanese Christian militia, a Lebanese group opposed to the PLO. UNIFIL slowly pushed the Israelis back but never successfully got them to withdraw all the way back to the Israeli-Lebanese border.

In 1981, Israeli forces were still occupying a portion of southern Lebanon. The Lebanese people and the PLO were infuriated that this direct violation of Lebanons freedom had lasted so long and finally took action. PLO guerrillas and Lebanese trained civilians fired Katyusha rockets into the occupied portion of southern Lebanon and into northern Israel. The Israelis retaliated by launching air raids on Beirut that killed a large number of Lebanese and

Palestinian civilians. It seemed that the conflict was going to erupt into a full scale war but the UN, and countries such as the US, France, and Britain, stepped up to apply diplomatic intervention.

Following the diplomatic resolution there was a lull in the back and forth fighting. Then, in July of 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon stating that they were going to oust the PLO from Lebanon. The Israelis said that the PLO had seriously wounded one of their ambassadors in London and felt that they could no longer feel secure with the PLO in power in Lebanon.

The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was named Peace for Galilee and marked the second major military incursion into Lebanon. The invasion was supposed to involve 25 miles of southern Lebanon to eradicate the PLO. Israeli Prime Minister of Defense Aril Sharon assured that the invasion would go no deeper into Lebanon. However, the invasion moved an additional 25 miles further into Lebanon and circled Beirut. The Israeli army killed more than 15, 700 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians during their invasion. Besides the horrific death toll another 30, 000 people were wounded. Then between the dates of September 16th and 18th the Israeli army, who surrounded the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila, allowed Lebanese Christian militiamen to enter the camps and slaughter 3000 Palestinians and 167 Lebanese refugees (Chomsky).

Over the next 3 years Israel would maintain its presence deep within Lebanon. During this time there was political outrage and condemnation of the atrocities the Israeli army was committing in Lebanon. Besides the political objection to the occupation, Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas began attacking the Israeli army on a regular basis. Finally in 1985, under newly

appointed Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Israeli forces were withdrawn to a 9-mile so called security zone. The security zone was kept in place to stop the border attacks that Hezbollah guerrillas were making on Israel. The Lebanese despised the Israeli occupation and Hezbollah continued attacking the Israeli army in the security zone and in northern Israel. Hezbollah was ready to fight to the death against the Israel occupation and vowed to drive the Israelis from southern Lebanon.

Until 1992 there was localized feuding between the Israeli army and Hezbollah but there were no large-scale confrontations. That would all change in February of 1992. Israeli helicopter gunships fired at the car of Hezbollah leader Sheik Abbas Musawi. The Israeli helicopter blew up the car and killed Musawi, his wife, and son who were also in the car. Hezbollah retaliated by rocketing the Israelis. The Israeli army then proceeded to take over two more villages outside the security zone. The UN, IRAN and the US negotiated a truce between the two groups for a short period until Hezbollah fired on the Israeli army in southern Lebanon killing 7 soldiers in 1993. The attack on the Israeli army and death of 7 soldiers caused the Israelis to launch its 3rd military action on Lebanon. Israel launched Operation Accountability on July 25, 1993 (Barrett). The military action lasted 7 days. During this period, 123 Lebanese civilians were killed and only 11 Hezbollah guerrillas were killed (Barrett). Additionally 500 civilians were wounded and half a million were displaced as refugees during the bombing and shelling of Lebanon. After the Israelis announced a cease-fire, Hezbollah stated that for every Lebanese civilian killed they would retaliate by rocketing northern Israel (Chomsky). Over the next three years Hezbollah kept its promise of

retaliation and retribution. Every time a Lebanese or Palestinian civilian was killed, Hezbollah rocketed northern Israel and the Israeli army.

On April 11, 1996 the most recent and violent military action since, Operation Litany was initiated by the Israeli army. The Israelis launched Operation Grapes of Wrath as the 4th major incursion and bombing of Lebanon. The operation lasted 16 days (Amnesty). The Israelis blasted southern Lebanon and Beirut killing about 200 civilians and wounding 500 more (Amnesty). On April 13th an Israeli helicopter fired on an ambulance carrying refugees. The ambulance was destroyed, killing 2 women and 4 girls (Amnesty). The Israeli government justified the killing by saying that a Hezbollah guerrilla was travelling with them. On the 14th of April Israel ordered those Lebanese civilians residing in the city of Tyre to leave or be attacked by an air raid and artillery bombardment. During the 16-day mission 102 refugees, mostly women and children seeking shelter at the UN headquarters in Qana, a southern Lebanese town, were shelled and killed. By the time a cease-fire had been reached on April 26 over 400, 000 people were left homeless due to Israeli bombing. The Israelis had also issued a naval blockade during the operation that kept 60, 000 Lebanese people from receiving humanitarian aid. The army had also destroyed a large portion of the newly renovated Lebanese infrastructure in Beirut. The Israeli operation that was aimed at destroying Hezbollah had only killed 7 Hezbollah guerrillas (Amnesty).

Israel views Hezbollah as a terrorist group and since the US has always backed Israel, many US citizens have been given only one side of the story. When the conflict is studied more closely and the roots of Hezbollah in

Lebanon are analyzed, it is easier to see Hezbollah more as a freedom-fighting group and less as a terrorist organization.

Hezbollah is an Islamic freedom fighting organization whose one to three thousand fighters are Lebanese. They receive funding and training from Iran through Syria. Hezbollah stands for Party of God and their strong religious background provides much of their will to fight even though outnumbered. Hezbollah was formed just after the 2nd major Israeli military operation called Peace for Galilee, in 1982. Hezbollah's objective is to liberate south Lebanon from the Israeli forces that occupy the 9-mile strip of land. The group believes that freedom cannot be allowed for one group and denied to another (Roummaneh). This is one of the major reasons for Hezbollah's formation. The Israelis are unjustly denying the Lebanese their right to be free on their own land and to establish a political system of their own. Since Hezbollah's resistance to Israel began in 1982, they have continued to fight for the freedom that the Lebanese deserve. Hezbollah leaders have stated that they do not believe that violence should be a way to gain power (Roummaneh). They see Israel as a terrorist aggressor that has slaughtered thousands of innocent civilians and occupied land belonging to Lebanon. Israel has constantly tried to portray Hezbollah as a terrorist group bent on attacking Israel. However, as Iranian foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayti said, in an article from 1996, you cannot label the just struggle of Muslims in Lebanon and Palestine for freedom and liberation of their own land from foreign occupation as terrorism. (Reuters, Iran)

Hezbollah is clearly not a terrorist group but freedom fighters that have vowed to stand up to Israel and its injustices. Hezbollah is trying to give the

Lebanese people back one of their basic human rights, the right to live on their own land and to be able to determine the political system they desire. In an Associated Press article from Dec. 28, 1995 a Hezbollah leader stated that they would stop attacking Israel, if Israel would sign a peace agreement and withdraw from the south Lebanon security zone. In the same article Hezbollah spiritual leader Sheik Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah said, an Israeli pullout would remove Hezbollah's rationale for its guerrilla war from Lebanese soil. It is obvious that Hezbollah is fighting for the freedom of south Lebanon.

The Palestinians want to reach a peace agreement with Israel for southern Lebanon and are proposing certain terms. The Palestinians want Israel to retreat to inside its own border without military presence outside of Israel and that proper and fair agreements be made with Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese approval. They also want compensation for the over three million refugees that have been produced by Israeli attacks and invasions. They request to have direct use of water and other resources from the West Bank that are outside Israel. The Palestinians also want Israel to convert into a true secular democracy where Israelis of Arab descent are equal citizens. Lastly the Palestinians would like Israelis immigration laws to have equal standards for all immigrants instead of the Jewish exclusivity.

The Palestinian requests are not unjustified. Since Zionists founded Israel in 1948, Palestinians have been thrown out of their homes and land to make way for the Jews to enter Israel. The Zionists displaced thousands of Palestinians when they founded Israel. Then, when the Palestinians became refugees, the Israelis put the blame on the surrounding Arab nations for not



absorbing them into their societies. Most of the Palestinians fled to Lebanon to make new homes. The Palestinians that still remained in Israel however, were crowded into small-disconnected groups. These Palestinians were looked upon as second class citizens. Zionism refused to allow Jews to associate with other people thus making any other race as inferior to the Jews.

Then, in 1978, Israel started to occupy southern Lebanon and impose their own government on the Lebanese and Palestinians residing in the area. Israel continues to persecute the Palestinians and Lebanese and occupy southern Lebanon. By continuing their occupation, Israel is denying the Palestinians and Lebanese one of their most basic human rights, freedom. The Israelis have occupied Lebanon for 21 years and since 1978 they have been trying to cover up their true motives for occupation. When Israels true motives are analyzed it is easy to see what the Israelis are really trying to do. It is important to look at what the Israelis original motives were when they invaded Lebanon. Israel was trying to oust PLO leader Yasser Arafat, turn Lebanon into an Israeli protectorate run by a Maronite warlord Bashir Gemayel, and to use Lebanon to precipitate the eventual breakup of Israels enemy nation, Syria. Since their original objectives, Israel has slightly modified them to suit their present day needs. Israels present goals are to maintain the security zone in order to keep Syria from taking control of Lebanon, to circumvent a military loss that would boost Arab military morale, and to exploit Lebanon economically by selling goods in an untariffed economy.

Since Israel's first invasion of Lebanon in 1978, countries throughout the world have condemned the Israelis for their actions. Religious leaders from many different beliefs have also openly objected to Israel's violence, stating the lack of necessity for such violence. The Vatican Secretariat of State spoke on behalf of the Pope and said, there are no political or military reasons which can justify such dramatic consequences in regards to the Israeli bombing of a UN post killing 100 refugees in February of 1996. The UN issued resolution 425 in 1978. Since 1978, the UN has issued 70 resolutions and charged Israel with everything from occupation, aggression, and terrorism, to violence against women and children. Yet the Israelis continue to disregard the UN and the world's objections to their deplorable acts.

Israel's reasoning for maintaining occupation in southern Lebanon has been completely unjust and false. Israeli retaliations on Lebanon during the occupation have always been disproportionate to the Hezbollah attacks on Israel. Over the past 21 years, Israel has lost about 1200 soldiers due to fighting in Lebanon. In contrast, 25,000 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians have been killed in the past two decades. Besides the death toll, an incredible 3 million civilians have been turned into refugees due to Israeli attacks and bombings. How can a nation justify killing 25,000 civilians and displacing 3 million refugees by saying that it is to maintain Israel's security? How can the Israelis call Hezbollah a terrorist group when by the UN charter and bill of human rights, Israel itself is the terrorist? The UN, numerous countries, and religious leaders have all condemned Israel's occupation of Lebanon, yet they refuse to acknowledge the world view. The Israelis should withdraw from south Lebanon and give them their freedom. It is the least

that they can do considering the hardship and suffering they have caused so many innocent people.