

Canada Condemns Hezbollah Assault

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January 28, 2015 - Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird today issued the following statement:

“Canada condemns the assault by Hezbollah on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that tragically killed two IDF members. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of those lost and injured. Canada also extends its condolences to the family and friends of the Spanish UN peacekeeper killed in the exchange.

“Hezbollah, another Iranian proxy, is a brutal terrorist organization bent on the destruction of Israel. Canada fully supports Israel’s right to defend itself by itself.

“This is just another example of the threats Israel faces—from Gaza to Southern Lebanon and Syria—from all proxies funded, trained and materially supported by Iran. It illustrates the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran and the need for the international community to ensure that never becomes a reality.

“Iran is a destructive force in the region, contributing to much of the current instability. The international community must condemn today’s assault and stand by the only liberal democracy in the region, which is far too often on the front lines in the struggle against terrorism.”

A backgrounder follows.

- 30 -

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Backgrounder - Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a radical Shia group ideologically inspired by the Iranian revolution. One of the most technically capable terrorist groups in the world, its goals are the “liberation of Jerusalem” and the destruction of Israel.

Formed in 1982, Hezbollah carried out some of the most infamous terror attacks of the Lebanese civil war, such as the suicide bombings of the barracks of United States Marines and French paratroopers in Beirut and the hijacking of TWA Flight 847. While all other Lebanese militias disarmed at the end of Lebanon’s civil war in 1990, Hezbollah continued to fight, waging a guerilla war against Israeli troops stationed in southern Lebanon. Following Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah attacks against Israeli forces continued, concentrated on the disputed Shebaa Farms area. In 2006, Hezbollah provoked Israel’s invasion of Lebanon by kidnapping two Israeli soldiers and killing eight others.

The group began taking part in Lebanese parliamentary elections in 1992 and has two seats in the Government of Lebanon's Council of Ministers.

Canada has listed Hezbollah as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code and has a non-contact policy with Hezbollah, including its members of cabinet; however, this does not affect Canada's relations with other members of the Lebanese cabinet.

Hezbollah is a destabilizing presence in the Middle East. It remains a threat to Israel and actively supports the Assad regime in Syria, which Canada lists as a state supporter of terrorism. On July 18, 2012, Hezbollah was responsible for a bomb attack in Burgas, Bulgaria, that killed five Israeli tourists and the Bulgarian driver and wounded another 34 Israelis. On January 25, the group fired two rockets from Syria into the Israel-controlled Golan Heights. Hezbollah has also claimed responsibility for firing anti-tank missiles at an Israeli convoy in the Rajar area on January 28 in response to the January 18 Israeli air strike on southern Syria that killed six Hezbollah members and a high-ranking general of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who appeared to have been planning future attacks on Israel. Early reports indicate that six Israeli soldiers were injured in the strike, four of them critically.

Hezbollah is a proxy of Iran. In addition to the spiritual and religious connection, which is genuine and important to both sides, Hezbollah is seen by Iran as a practical asset. Hezbollah is a valuable tool to extend Iranian influence regionally, exert pressure on Israel directly and expand its reach internationally. Hezbollah operatives have carried out attacks across the world at the behest of Iran, and its fighters have been key in supporting Iranian objectives in Syria. Hezbollah is an important part of Iran's forward defences in its confrontation with Israel. Hezbollah forces—especially its rocket forces supplied largely by Iran—are seen by Iran as part of their deterrence-retaliatory force in the event of hostilities between Iran and Israel, and Hezbollah's strength and presence in Southern Lebanon are continuing sources of pressure on Israel's northern border. Iran pays dearly both in financial and material support for Hezbollah. While Hezbollah's actions in the region often drag the rest of Lebanon into these conflicts, the support it gets from Iran has boosted the group's ability to play an important political role in Lebanon—giving Iran itself important influence in Lebanon.