



# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

MONDAY, 9 AUGUST 1982

## LEBANON

The Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, made the following statement today on the situation in Lebanon:

"The continued fighting and destruction in Beirut, costing the lives and destroying the livelihood of innocent and powerless Lebanese citizens, is of the gravest concern to the Australian Government and people.

Australia has always been deeply conscious of the age-long suffering of the Jewish people and their right to a homeland. Australia has always supported, and of course continues to support, Israel's fight to exist as a state within secure and recognised boundaries.

Australia does understand Israel's concern at the repeated terrorist attacks and the threats made by the PLO. We deplore terrorism of all kinds.

We deplore the unwillingness of the PLO to recognise the right of Israel to exist, and its unwillingness to negotiate sensibly in the cause of a lasting peace.

However, despite the provocations Israel has received, its present actions in persisting with the use of its formidable military strength in Beirut, long after achieving its initially declared objective, are short sighted and foolish.

Lebanon has been caught up in a quarrel of which it has wanted no part. The PLO forces came to Lebanon to use it as a sanctuary for attacks on Israel, particularly its northern settlements. Israel has responded by actions which have resulted in the destruction of the Lebanese capital and of significant parts of the country, and have caused immense misery to the Lebanese people.

By the continuation of its present actions Israel is serving its own interests and the interests of the region very badly indeed. There can be no solution to this problem by destruction, by killing, by war. Ultimately there has to be a political solution which allows people to live out their lives. The belief that military victory alone can achieve solutions is making it difficult for Israel's traditional friends to sustain their support.

There are over two million Palestinians in the Middle East who have no homeland. Of these many are not accepted as full citizens by any country in the region. This represents a condemnation of all countries in the region and outside it which have allowed this situation to continue for over 30 years.

The Foreign Minister and I will also seek to discuss with the Jewish community in Australia the Government's concerns. We will seek to explain in detail why this statement of policy has been issued, and we will elicit their support for policies on Israel's part that are conducive to lasting peace. We will appeal to Jewish communities around the world to take note of a voice that has been raised in friendship and support of Israel in a way which has been unequalled and unchallengeable.

If an Australian Government which has supported Israel so staunchly believes there needs to be as comprehensive a change in Israel's mind and approach as is called for in this statement, that surely is warning enough that world opinion can no longer be ignored, and that the very survival of Israel itself may be dependent upon everyone involved bending their minds and their energies and their opinions to the search for a lasting peaceful solution.

This will require a corresponding readiness on the part of the PLO to accept the reality of the state of Israel and to make it possible for the Lebanese people to regain effective control in their own country. All those able to bring influence to bear on the PLO to act in this direction should do so.

Australia does not pretend to have the details of a solution. That is not for us to propose. We are not party principals to this dispute. We are not a country with major influence. But we are concerned, and our support for Israel in the past gives us not only the right but the responsibility to speak our mind bluntly and honestly."

(Canberra)

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