

Adalah The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
عدالة المركز القانوني لحقوق الأقلية العربية في إسرائيل
עזאלה המרכז המשפטי לזכויות המיעוט הערבי בישראל



26 August 2007

To the Honorable Members of the Governmental Committee of Examination into the
Events of the 2006 Lebanon War:

(Ret.) Judge Dr. Eliyahu Winograd

Prof. Ruth Gavison

Prof. Yehezkel Dror

(Res.) Major General Dr. Haim Nadel

(Res.) Major General Menachem Einan

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Re: Request to clarify the ramifications of the deployment and conduct of the political echelon and security establishment on the Arab towns and villages in the north during the Second Lebanon War

We are writing to you on behalf of Ataa – The Arab Center for Guidance and Assistance in a State of Emergency (hereinafter: “The Ataa Center”) with a request to examine, study and determine findings and conclusions in regard to the ramifications of the conduct of the political echelon and security establishment on the Arab towns and villages in the north during the course of the Second Lebanon War, as follows:

1. In accordance with the letter of appointment that the committee, led by (Ret.) Judge Dr. Eliyahu Winograd, received from the government to examine the events of the 2006 Lebanon War (hereinafter: “the Winograd Committee”), the

committee was assigned to examine the deployment and conduct of the political echelon and security establishment in regard to various aspects of the war in the north, which began on 12 July 2006 and ended on 14 August 2006. The Winograd Committee was assigned, *inter alia*, to study and draw conclusions and findings in regard to the deployment of the security establishment vis-à-vis the threat from Lebanon, as well as the conduct of the warfare and deployment of forces. This includes the Israeli army Home Front Command and auxiliary and support systems during the course of the war, as well as the decision-making process during the Second Lebanon War.

2. The Second Lebanon War had a far-reaching impact on all of the residents of Haifa and the north. This included bodily harm suffered by the injured and their families (5,091 people were injured and 52 citizens were killed), and the property damage incurred to private and corporate property as 3,970 missiles fell on Haifa and the north.
3. In attempting to cope with the Second Lebanon War and the damages it caused, the citizenry encountered many difficulties in light of the serious flaws in the conduct of the Home Front and in its deployment and functioning during the course of the war. The State Comptroller's Report on "The Deployment and Functioning of the Home Front during the Second Lebanon War," published in July 2007, noted failures in preparedness to assist the home front during the course of the war, and failures in the readiness of government ministries to supply various public services to residents of Haifa and the north, such as: the lack of preparedness of the police and Ministry of Interior; the inappropriate handling of dangerous materials, and the lack of preparedness of rescue and firefighting forces, health and welfare services; the poor mail, bank and transportation services, and the lack of readiness of the local authorities in times of emergencies.
4. However, the Arab citizens living in Arab towns and villages were forced to cope with a unique situation because the flaws in home front preparedness in the Arab

towns and villages were much more severe. Thus, for example, it became apparent that in most of the Arab towns and villages there was a shortage of shelters, firefighting services, health and psychological services, sirens and social welfare services. This shortage in the Arab towns and villages is also noted in the State Comptroller's report cited above.

5. Recently, the Ataa Center published a report entitled, "The Arab Population in Northern Israel under a State of Emergency – Damages from the Second Israeli War on Lebanon". The Ataa Center is a coalition of Arab organizations that was formed during the Second Lebanon War upon the initiative of the Galilee Society: The Arab National Society for Health Research and Services. The Ataa Center was established with the goal of providing consultation and assistance on all matters pertaining to property damage, physical injury, and emotional distress, suffered by Arab citizens of the state as a result of the Second Lebanon War.

6. The Ataa Center's report was written with the aim of understanding and documenting the role of the central government, the local authorities, and the non-governmental organizations in the shadow of the Second Lebanon War, as well as the level of preparedness of Arab citizens in Israel for emergency situations and the damages they incurred in the wake of the Second Lebanon War. The report is based on a survey conducted in 24 Arab towns and villages in the north, including the mixed-city of Haifa, that were harmed by missiles in the course of the war and included 1,129 respondents living in these localities. The report's findings underlined the weakness of the Arab population in the Arab towns and villages in the north and the difficulties they experienced in coping with the war. Thus, for example, in addition to a shortage of shelters and public services, the Arab residents encountered additional difficulties in gaining access to information, in finding alternative housing outside of their community of residence, and in finding a suitable supply of food during the course of the war.

We are providing six copies of the Ataa Center's report for your information.

7. In addition, during the course of the Second Lebanon War, the Ministry of Defense established temporary military bases within Arab villages and set up various military installations from which they fired missiles across the Lebanese border. The deployment of these installations intensified the level of injury and disturbance caused to the Arab residents of these villages and exposed them to greater danger as a result of Hizbollah's attempt to strike against the military bases and installations.

8. In light of the above, we ask you to study the impact of the security establishment's conduct during the course of the Second Lebanon War in all matters pertaining to the preparedness and protection of Arab villages and towns in Israel.

Respectfully,

Sawsan Zaher, Advocate