

The killing must stop now

ICFTU/WCL statement on the crisis in the Middle East

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The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the World Confederation of Labour today issued a statement expressing their feelings of revulsion at the growing loss of innocent lives due to the escalating violence between Israel and Lebanon.

"We deplore the indiscriminate use of lethal force against civilians, and call for an immediate and unconditional cease fire. The region stands at a crossroads leading either to a deepening spiral of conflict, hatred and death, or to a lasting peace offering the hope of a better future for the working people of all countries.

On the eve of talks in Rome, to be attended by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, there is an urgent need for the international community to commit itself under UN leadership to new diplomatic initiatives to restart the peace process. Achievement of permanent peace must start with an immediate cessation of hostilities, and acceptance by all parties that sovereignty, territorial integrity and security is not only a basic right of other countries but in the interests of their own. No people can be secure with failed states as their neighbours.

The ICFTU and WCL therefore reiterate their call for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as 1559, and the Road Map for Peace.

The long years of reconstruction of Lebanon from the ravages of its civil war have been wiped out by the disproportionate use of military force which, in addition to the loss of innocent life it has inflicted, has deliberately destroyed the country's infrastructure. The long term challenge to the international community is to help the people of Lebanon rebuild once more in conditions of safety and freedom to determine their own future. The immediate challenge is to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance to the millions in desperate need of it.

We urge the international community to respond to the UN appeal for aid to the 800,000 people caught up in the conflict.

The ICFTU and WCL remind all parties of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. By renouncing the use of terror and aggression, by withdrawing to recognized borders, by the early exchange of prisoners, and by committing themselves to dialogue and diplomacy they can open the way to a peace which is within reach.

The harmonious coexistence of secure and sovereign states in Lebanon, Palestine and Israel is what working people in those countries want and need and the ICFTU and WCL express their solidarity with them and their

aspirations.

Those millions of families who are instead compelled to flee their homes or to live in shelters under the threat of lethal force, deserve better than further excuses for the violence and destruction visited upon them. The killing must stop now so that the task of building peace can begin."

Brussels, July 24, 2006

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers in 236 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. <http://www.icftu.org>. ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions.

The WCL represents 30 million workers worldwide.

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