

Israeli Report on 2006 war on Lebanon admits failure of Israeli Military

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An Israeli report on the 2006 Lebanon war is a victory for both the Lebanese Army and for Hizbullah, Lebanon's army chief said in comments published Thursday. "We did not expect an official Israeli body to publicly condemn its government and army," Lebanese Armed Forces commander General Michel Suleiman, who is tipped to become president, told As-Safir newspaper.

"The Winograd report confirms that Israel ... is the one that took the decision to launch a war on Lebanon without any justification," Suleiman said.

"Israel's public admission that its army failed in Lebanon strengthens our confidence in ourselves as Lebanese ... and confirms the joint victory of the army and the resistance," Suleiman added.

Hizbullah, which captured two Israeli soldiers in a raid that prompted Israel's invasion, welcomed the report's findings.

"Israel failed completely in achieving its goals and the Israeli Army suffered a military defeat at the hands of Hizbullah," spokesman Hussein Rahal told AFP on Wednesday.

Hizbullah supporters in the South staged parades Wednesday to celebrate the report's findings. Chanting slogans against Israel, demonstrators waved Hizbullah flags and held up pictures of Hizbullah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

The Winograd Commission issued a report Wednesday that criticized the conduct of the Israeli military and government during the war, but which excused key decisions at the time by Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert.

The Winograd Commission, appointed by the Israeli government to probe the 34-day war, said that the war was a missed opportunity and a grave failure for the Jewish state.

"But Olmert had acted in what he sincerely believed to have been the country's best interest," it added.

In other reactions Thursday, Lebanese Premier Fouad Siniora said the Israeli report on the summer war of 2006 set the stage for a possible future conflict and failed to address "Israel's crimes against Lebanon."

"The report calls for preparation for the next war, which shows that Israel has not learned

the appropriate lesson from its defeat," a statement from Siniora's media office said.

"The enemy's aims toward Lebanon have stayed the same - that is attacking Lebanon in the future," it added.

Retired Israeli Supreme Court Justice Eliahu Winograd said in a speech presenting his report that Israel must seek peace with its neighbors.

"At the same time, seeking peace or managing the conflict must come from a position of social, political and military strength, and through the ability and willingness to fight for the state, its values and the security of its population even in the absence of peace."

About 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and 159 Israelis, mostly soldiers, were killed in the war, which Israel launched after Hizbullah fighters captured two Israeli soldiers and killed three in a cross-border raid.

Siniora also said the report did not mention the war's cost on Lebanon. Israel pounded the Hizbullah bastions of southern Beirut and South Lebanon with aircraft, warships and artillery. It also hit other parts of the country.

Hizbullah fired about 4,000 rockets into northern Israel.

"The report does not contain any mention of the crimes Israel committed against Lebanon ... or of the massacres against civilians ... the report also doesn't mention huge destruction to infrastructure, most of which was hospitals, schools, places of worship, bridges and residential buildings," Siniora added.

In his latest speech on the occasion of Ashura early in January, Nasrallah said he doubted Israel had the political and military leadership and qualified army to launch a new war on Lebanon.

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