

Jerusalem, July 14, 1982

His Holiness Pope John Paul II
The Vatican.

Your Holiness,

May I thank you for your message dated 26 June 1982, in which you expressed concern for the civilian population of Beirut. I would like to assure you that we share your concern, and we hope and pray that peace and security for all will soon return to Beirut and to the whole of Lebanon.

At the same time I would wish to point out that the war in Lebanon did not begin with the entry of the Israeli Defense Forces. On the contrary, there is reason to believe - and certainly, all Israel so hopes - that our military action will put an end to the war which has already lasted eight years. That war caused the slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent Lebanese civilians, Christians, Moslems and Druze; sowed devastation and despair throughout the population, and destroyed the national sovereignty of Lebanon. Its people were the victims of nefarious deeds - murder, rape, assault - directed against them by the terrorist organizations which had seized their tranquil land and turned it into a center of terror and an international base for criminal activity throughout the world.

The citizens of Israel have been subject to countless attacks by these terrorist organizations which so cynically exploited Lebanon's weakness and established their bases and headquarters on its soil. To our sorrow nowhere in the world were protests heard or actions undertaken to restore Lebanon's sovereignty, to expel foreign forces from the country, and to bring peace once again to the northern border of Israel.

We, too, grieve deeply over innocent civilians hurt in the course of the hostilities. Our soldiers have been doing their

utmost not to inflict injury upon them, but the effort to avoid civilian casualties has been made most difficult by the terrorists' cruel practice of locating their arms depots inside towns, shooting out of private homes, and turning hospitals, schools and churches into bases from which to launch armed attacks.

The State of Israel lays no claims at all to Lebanese territory; its aim is solely to bring about the departure of all armed forces from Lebanon and thus to restore the peaceful border with Israel and indeed the national sovereignty of Lebanon. This aim, it seems to me, in all deference, deserves the moral support of the Holy See and of all lovers of peace and freedom in the world. It is my hope that Your Holiness will use your great influence to the end that this exalted aim be achieved without further bloodshed. Israel has in fact already affirmed that it will make it possible for armed personnel of the P.L.O. to leave Beirut, taking their personal weapons with them.

To our sorrow, political negotiations thus far have not borne fruit, and the terrorists continue to fortify themselves within the populated quarters of West Beirut, from which they fire. The lamentable suffering among civilians in the local population is caused by these actions which should be condemned in no uncertain terms.

I wish to assure Your Holiness that the people of Israel pray together with all men of good will for a swift end to the military conflict in Lebanon and the return of the soldiers to their homes. May it be the will of Almighty God that peace be restored to Lebanon after years of affliction and that true harmony and friendship reign between Lebanon and the State of Israel.

Yitzhak Navon
President of Israel