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***ALEF – act for human rights is profoundly disturbed by the recent violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) committed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in its operations in Southern Lebanon as well as several Lebanon based non-state armed groups and strongly calls, short of a cessation of hostilities, for the full respect of IHL standards.***

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Since the start of the conflict on October 7th, the IDF have systematically violated the IHL by indiscriminately attacking civilians, the targeting of journalists and medical staff, as well as repeatedly using white phosphorus in its operations in South Lebanon<sup>1</sup>, a weapon internationally prohibited by the 1949 Geneva Conventions<sup>2</sup>. Although the use of white phosphorus can be lawful, it strictly cannot be fired near populated civilian areas or civilian infrastructures. However, the white phosphorus attacks committed in Dhayra, for instance, affected most of the village and, as a consequence, necessitated the complete evacuation of the town and medical assistance for some civilians.

On October 13th, an Israeli shell targeted and killed Reuters videographer Issam Abdallah and wounded six other journalists.<sup>3</sup> Exactly one month later, a rocket attack by the Israeli army fell too close to a group of journalists present in the town of Yaroun,<sup>4</sup> injuring an Al Jazeera cameraman<sup>5</sup>.

On November 5th, in the town of Tayra Harfa, an ambulance was hit by an Israeli drone,<sup>6</sup> injuring four paramedics.<sup>7</sup> Six days later, the Mays Al Jabal Hospital was hit by Israeli shelling. The hospital was damaged and a doctor was injured.<sup>8</sup>

Also on November 5th, three children and their grandmother were killed by an Israeli drone strike as they were traveling from one town to another in the South.<sup>9</sup> A tally by media agency AFP has so far recorded a total of 11 civilian deaths in Lebanon.<sup>10</sup>

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1 LBCI (2023, October 17). Israeli army launches over 100 white phosphorus shells on Dhayra, Lebanon. Retrieved from: <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/lebanon-news/728721/israeli-army-launches-over-100-white-phosphorus-sh/en>

2 Amnesty International (2023, October 31). Lebanon: Evidence of Israel's unlawful use of white phosphorus in southern Lebanon as cross-border hostilities escalate. Retrieved from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/lebanon-evidence-of-israels-unlawful-use-of-white-phosphorus-in-southern-lebanon-as-cross-border-hostilities-escalate/>

3 LBCI (2023, November 30). RSF's findings unveil 'targeted strike' killed Reuters photojournalists Issam Abdallah. Retrieved from: <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/lebanon-news/731644/rsfs-findings-unveil-targeted-strike-killed-reuter/en>

4 Sawt Beirut (2023, November 13). Israel targets Lebanese journalists on live TV. Retrieved from: <https://english.sawtbeirut.com/lebanon/israel-targets-lebanese-journalists-on-live-tv/>

5 Al Jazeera (2023, November 13). At least two killed in Israeli strike on southern Lebanon as tensions soar. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/13/at-least-two-killed-in-israeli-strike-on-southern-lebanon-as-tensions-soar>

6 Naharnet (2023, November 5). 4 paramedics wounded as Israel bombs ambulance in south Lebanon. Retrieved from: <https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/301374-4-paramedics-wounded-as-israel-bombs-ambulance-in-south-lebanon>

7 WHO (2023, November 10). Situation Update No. 5.

8 Arab News (2023, November 11). Israeli missile strike hits hospital in southern Lebanon. Retrieved from: <https://arab.news/55y9j>

9 Al Jazeera (2023, November 5). Family, including three children, killed by Israeli attack in south Lebanon. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/5/woman-three-children-killed-by-israeli-air-strike-in-southern-lebanon>

10 France 24 (2023, November 13). Journalists in south Lebanon say targeted in Israeli strikes. Retrieved from: <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231113-journalists-in-south-lebanon-say-targeted-in-israeli-strikes>

Later during the night, a civilian in Israel was killed by a rocket attack launched by Hezbollah from Lebanon and three others were wounded.<sup>11</sup> On November 12, a cross-border guided missile attack by Hezbollah wounded two civilians in Israel.<sup>12</sup> One of them is said to have succumbed to his wounds the following day.<sup>13</sup>

ALEF – act for human rights is especially appalled that civilians are being targeted, in complete violation of the basic principles of the IHL. The definition of a war crime includes “Launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated”. As such, journalists, medical staff, and civilians must be protected at all costs, placing on all parties to the conflict the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

ALEF – act for human rights calls on all parties to the conflict – governments of both states, local authorities, and non-state armed groups – to prioritize the protection of civilians and adhere to international law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, their 1977 Additional Protocols, and UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

ALEF - act for human rights also invites the international community to open an investigation by an international fact-finding commission into the violations to IHL that have been occurring since the beginning of the conflict in order to uphold accountability for the unlawful killing of civilians, including children, and journalist Issam Abdallah.

Within that context, and though it should go without saying, we urge the international community to exert intensive and concerted diplomatic pressure for an immediate cessation of hostilities and to urgently provide humanitarian assistance that can alleviate the impact of the conflict on civilian lives.

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11 Arab News (2023, November 6). One killed, 3 wounded in cross-border Hezbollah attack on northern Israel. Retrieved from: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2391601/middle-east>

12 Reuters. (2023, November 13). Israel sharpens warning to Lebanon as cross-border hostilities spike. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/civilians-wounded-by-anti-tank-missile-near-lebanon-border-israeli-military-2023-11-12/>

13 Al Jazeera (2023, November 13). At least two killed in Israeli strike on southern Lebanon as tensions soar. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/13/at-least-two-killed-in-israeli-strike-on-southern-lebanon-as-tensions-soar>