



Media Monitoring Project: More than Words

“WAR TO THE LAST MOMENT”

The Israeli Media in the Second Lebanon War

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מרכז להגנת הדמוקרטיה בישראל (ע"ר)
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**This report is dedicated
to the memory of Uri Grossman,
who was killed in the Second Lebanon War
on August 12, 2006.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction: “We’re going to win”

In the time that has passed since the Second Lebanon War, Israeli society has been washed over by an unprecedented wave of criticism aimed at the decision-makers in the Government of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces. By contrast to previous wars, many of the basic facts about this war reached the public several months after it ended, through the publication of the Interim Report of the Winograd Committee and the minutes of its meetings. In the resultant atmosphere, the impression arose that the Israeli media, which led the wave of criticism in question, had been critical of the war even while it was going on.

This report is intended to set the record straight: except for a few exceptional instances, which are set forth in the report, all of Israel’s main media covered the war in an almost entirely mobilized manner – even when their correspondents reported news items which included almost everything that the Winograd Committee discovered months later in its investigations. Those items were marginalized in the editing process. The media created a general atmosphere of complete and absolute support and justification of the war, and systematically suppressed questions that arose as early as the first day of the fighting. From time to time, this support was accompanied by criticism of this or that tactical component of the fighting. The criticism gradually increased toward the end of the war – as it became clearer that the IDF was not managing to win. But the general spirit of the war coverage, in the broad strategic sense, was utterly uncritical – from the beginning to the end of the war.

The report is based on analysis of the complete coverage of the war in the main news programs of Israel’s three major TV channels (Channel 1, Channel 2 and Channel 10) and in Israel’s three largest daily newspapers (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Maariv* and *Haaretz*). The volume of coverage in question was immense: more than 9,000 articles. It should be noted that not all of the media covered the war in exactly the same way. Channel 2 and *Maariv* provided their audiences, in the absolute majority of cases, with patriotic, furious, overtly mobilized coverage. *Yedioth Ahronoth* and Channel 1 were also mobilized, but more moderately. The coverage by *Haaretz* and Channel 10, at certain times, was more critical and profound; occasionally, the reporting on Channel 10 was not only critical, but courageous in every sense of the word. This fact is noteworthy. It is important to notice the differences between the various media, but no less important to understand that even *Haaretz* and Channel 10, like Israel’s other media, presented coverage which was mobilized in many definitive ways.

Since the war ended and to this day, we at Keshev have received considerable testimony, direct and indirect, from members of the press, who spoke of the self-mobilization of the newsrooms throughout the war. Many of these persons asked to remain anonymous; accordingly, we could not publish some of their testimony, as its content would have betrayed its sources. Nonetheless, the testimonies which we heard were consistently similar: members of the press spoke of a frenetic atmosphere, a sense of emotional overload, self-censorship and instructions handed down from the top, and of the fear of expressing opposing views in the face of the uniform and unequivocal reflection of the situation expressed day after day in the press coverage. The overall picture which arises from this testimony is a grave one: this is not how the press should conduct itself in a democratic society.

Of the material that reached us, we have chosen to publish two items in this report. One is the testimony of journalist Yael Gvirtz from *Yedioth Ahronoth*, who was one of a team of writers responsible for the paper's editorials. On August 9, Gvirtz wrote a trenchant article under the headline **HOSTAGES IN THE TURRET**, which warned against an irresponsible military operation. The next day, Rafi Ginat, then editor-in-chief of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, suspended her. The second document is an internal, unsigned document which was distributed to *Maariv* employees after the war, by the Deputy CEO for Marketing of the paper. The document describes the way in which *Maariv* conducted itself in the course of the war, and states, among other things, as follows:

Maariv proved, yet again, in the course of the Second Lebanon War, that it is the most patriotic of the three major dailies. By contrast to *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Haaretz*, which behaved during the war as they do every day of the year and did not formulate a clear editorial line, *Maariv* continued to do what it did, with its head held high, in the difficult times of Operation 'Defensive Shield' and during the disengagement – to support the Army, to stand firmly on the side of the State, and to call a halt to criticism as long as the war went on.

Even when we had problematic material related to the management of the war – the situation in the Emergency Supplies Units, the problematic appointments in the Northern Command, the embarrassing arguments between senior commanders, and heart-rending complaints by reservists going into battle with incomplete and worn-out equipment – we restrained ourselves. In a certain sense, we betrayed our role as journalists, but we did so because we took national, patriotic considerations into account and decided that in the event of war, and certainly a war which was not progressing as it should and was going awry, we were part of the Country; that it was permissible, and even required of us, to postpone disputes and criticism; and that we did not have to apologize, or to feel abashed, for our support and backing of the Army and the Government. [...]

The citation above is backed by testimony of *Maariv* employees.

In this sense, we may – in fact, we must – consider the Second Lebanon War as an opportunity from which we should learn. Today, two years after the war, after the report of the Winograd Committee, after the public fury, we all know more or less what there is to know about the war. Accordingly, we can now go back to the media coverage of the war as it transpired in real time, examine the patterns displayed by that coverage, what it contained and what it did not contain, understand the public significance of those patterns – and initiate a process of change.

2. The coverage of the goals of the war and the decision-making process: “Consensus around the Government table”

The complete support given by the media to the Second Lebanon War, from its very first days until its end, was primarily reflected in the way the media reported to their readers and viewers on the goals of the war and the decision-making process which gave rise to its outbreak. Following the publication of the conclusions by the Winograd Committee, we all know a thing or two about all that. It is hard to find words as unequivocal as those of the Winograd Committee, which stated that “the way in which Israel went to war is inadmissible; it must not be allowed to repeat itself; and efforts must be made to correct the situation as soon as possible”. Nonetheless, throughout the entire war, the media, again and again, fed their consumers with the impression that launching the war was a well-planned move, and that its objectives were clear, distinct, and – from Israel’s point of view – desirable. In so doing, the media created a misrepresentation of clarity and purposefulness – which, in reality, did not exist.

In the first days of the war, significant coverage of the decision-making process was almost entirely absent in Israel’s media. In the absolute majority of cases, the decision to go to war was covered in an official, almost ceremonial manner: “we are about to do what must be done”. The Government session was described as a dramatic and historic event, and the consensus among the ministers was emphasized time and time again. Only very few, very marginal items indicated that the consensus was not complete; that the IDF Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, evaded answering questions regarding the goals of the war, and that the Government actually approved going to war without having seen any real plans.

The media presented the goals of the war as absolute and clear, even when those goals changed from one day to the next; even when different players presented different goals, at times on the same day; even when it was obvious, from the very first day, that some of

the goals were unrealistic; and even when the goals contradicted each other. The most important contradiction of all was between returning the kidnapped soldiers and harming Hezbollah. It was not difficult to understand, from the very beginning of the war, that an operation intended to "change the rules of the game" in Lebanon would make the return of the kidnapped soldiers almost impossible. This basic insight, however, was never seriously discussed in depth and was never given any real headlines.

3. The coverage of the decision makers: "A backbone of steel"

The uncritical coverage of the decision-making process in the Second Lebanon War was almost ludicrously reflected in the way in which the media, at the beginning of the war, chose to portray Prime Minister Olmert and Defense Minister Peretz. Instead of asking both of them the obvious, difficult questions, the media proclaimed a transformation: lo and behold, the two civilian leaders had become tough military commanders. They spoke without fear, acted with confidence, controlled the situation with a strong hand – and enabled the IDF to take action against Hezbollah with an iron fist.

This fictitious image prevailed until the fighting in Lebanon began to go awry. At that point, more and more voices from the military establishment, claiming that the political establishment was preventing the IDF from acting freely and not allowing it to win, began to make themselves heard. Those voices took over the headlines of all Israeli media.

Throughout the fighting, reports on the back seat taken by the political establishment in favor of the IDF, and the scandalous nature of the working relationship between them were marginalized. This extremely newsworthy material was emphasized to a significant degree on Channel 10, and to a certain extent in *Haaretz* as well. Israel's other media never even touched it.

Reports on differences of opinion within the military establishment also appeared only rarely during the war. Nearly the only times such reports were emphasized were when critics called for the use of more force. The subject dominated the headlines for two or three days, when the Chief of Staff decided to appoint Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinsky as his representative in the north – thus, in practical terms, removing Maj. Gen. Udi Adam from his position as O/C Northern Command. But even at that moment, the reports on Maj. Gen. Adam's dismissal, in the overwhelming majority of cases, refrained from any in-depth examination of the way the war was being managed, focusing instead on the interpersonal relations between Adam and the Chief of Staff.

4. The fear of defeat: “The countdown for the entire Zionist enterprise”

As the war continued, and particularly toward its end, a profound feeling of disappointment began to dominate the media. The grave events in the course of the war, the kidnapping of the soldiers, the direct hit on an Israel Navy missile boat off the shores of Lebanon, the fierce battles in which dozens of soldiers were killed, the supply failures – all these were covered in a way which did not attempt to conceal the fact that the IDF was having difficulty functioning and, notably, was not managing to win. This kind of coverage gave rise to quite a few complaints against the media, which was felt to be too critical in its coverage of the war. This coverage, however, must be examined a bit more closely. The criticism voiced by the media against the IDF nearly always, with almost no exceptions, resulted from the declared and unequivocal media support for the war itself. This was criticism which called for harsher and more effective action and at times for revenge; it demanded more massive damage to Lebanon, and, most importantly, more results in the field – that is, more victories in battle. The criticism which appeared in the media, at the end of the day, conveyed the following message: “The war is just and right, but the decision-makers are not conducting it as they should, and that’s why we’re losing.” Not one article said: “There is something basically wrong with the war itself.”

When the media despaired of the decision-makers – the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff – they began to cling to the soldiers in the field, who had severe complaints against the higher echelons and reported failures which were not letting them, the soldiers, vanquish the enemy. The media, speaking on behalf of those soldiers, demanded again and again: “Let us win!” These reports on the frustration of soldiers and officers in the field joined many hundreds of articles which extolled the bravery and absolute devotion of those very soldiers and officers. All these reports together gave rise to the feeling that Israel’s media was totally mobilized in support of this war.

The overall feeling aroused by this coverage was not one of criticism, but rather, one of defeat. And that feeling grew stronger in light of the media coverage given to the other side – Hezbollah and its leader Nasrallah. Like Arafat and Bin Laden before him, Nasrallah was described as a figure from the world of legend: an evil genius, a sophisticated demon who, time and time again, succeeded in striking at us and coming out alive.

All this eventually gave rise to a near-hysterical feeling of existential war, a war of “to be or not to be”. This being the case, the IDF’s failures were deemed to have only one meaning: Israel was losing its deterrent force – and therefore, the war should never have been stopped before victory had been achieved. This apocalyptic picture obviously left no room for truly critical coverage of the type which attempts to examine the actual practical, political and moral justification for the war.

5. Israel's home front: Jews "don't break" – Arabs "believe in Nasrallah"

Today, following the publication of various studies of the subject, we know that Israel failed to care for the residents of the North during the war. In this state of affairs, which was hardly a secret even in the initial days of the war, the media might have been expected to present a serious examination of the relevant questions, in real time, to the decision-makers: Is there a functional civil defense system? Are the shelters serviceable? What has been done to provide protection to civilians who stayed in the north? Are there instructions which tell civilians how to behave in this state of emergency? Is the State prepared to evacuate civilians if necessary? Were these data taken into account when the decision to go to war was made?

This, however, is not how the media covered the story of the home front during the war. The media chose to present their readers and viewers with a different story, a mobilized story. The suffering of civilians in the North was harnessed by the media and used to support the war, and was, accordingly, told in two parts. One part told of Jewish civilians, who, in keeping up their day-to-day routine, were conveying a clear message to the enemy, the Government and the IDF: "They won't break us. We're strong, and we give the Government and the IDF our backing in whatever they do." The other part, which told of Arab civilians, was almost obsessively devoted to the question of loyalty: "Are you with us or against us?" This state of affairs left almost no room for reports on the actual situation of Israel's northern citizens.

The reports on residents of the North who weren't as resilient – the ones who needed help and didn't get it, and the ones who didn't exactly support the military operation – were all marginalized by the media coverage. Just as marginalized was the crucial fact that the State, notwithstanding its proclamations which embraced the citizens of the North, in fact abandoned them in its actions: it extended no help to them, did not ensure that they had proper shelters, and did not prepare an evacuation plan for them. In this context, *Haaretz* and Channel 1 did more impressive work than any other media outlet. But even they drowned this type of reporting in a sea of mobilized articles and reports.

6. The damage in Lebanon: "As if it had been hit by an earthquake"

The civilian population of Southern Lebanon and Beirut was extremely hard hit during the war – much harder, in fact, than civilians in Israel. According to various reports, the Israel Air Force attacks on Lebanon were responsible for the deaths of some 1,100 people, about one-third of them children. More than 4,000 people were injured. About 1,000,000

civilians fled northward and became refugees. Obviously, the overwhelming majority of Lebanese war victims had nothing at all to do with Hezbollah.

Coverage of this massive damage in Lebanon, in fact, reveals a fascinating pattern. Before the Israel Air Force bombing of Kafr Qana, on July 30, in which dozens of civilians were killed, the media, in the vast majority of cases, operated according to a principle which we, in this report, have termed the “separation principle”: the suffering of Lebanese civilians was given rather broad, and sometimes even empathic coverage – but it was almost entirely separated, by all possible editing means, from the IDF operations which caused the suffering in question. The IDF was described as being busy fighting Hezbollah, harming only the terror infrastructures, and taking pains not to harm the civilian population. The Lebanese suffering was described separately, as a disaster which befell the citizens of Lebanon out of nowhere – as if the sky had fallen in on them. Beirut, for example, was described in those articles and reports, in the words of one correspondent, as looking “as if it had been hit by an earthquake”. The combination of these two descriptions broke the chain of causality between the IDF operations and their results on the ground.

Critical reports on the massive IAF bombing of civilian population centers in Lebanon, especially Beirut, were marginalized by the coverage. Just as marginalized were reports on severe differences of opinion within the defense establishment, with regard to that very question. Obviously, these reports on the debates between the various defense and security entities cast a very grave shadow on the IDF’s repeated claims that it “had not known” about the civilians who were in various places which were bombed. The question was expressly raised at meetings of those defense and security entities, and correspondents received clear indications of it. This pattern was emphasized in the enthusiastic reporting of international support for Israel. The general feeling was one of “if the outside world does not reprove us, we needn’t reprove ourselves.”

After the incident in Kafr Qana, things changed. At that point the absolute majority of the media rallied in an attempt to prove, in various and sundry ways, that Israel was not to blame for the killing in Kafr Qana. The coverage, more than anything else, reflected the defensive propaganda adopted in civilian and military official circles in Israel following the incident. International reproof of Israel was depicted as anti-Israeli propaganda, and the coverage focused on the familiar arguments: “The IDF is the most moral army in the world; it does everything it can to avoid harming civilians; Hezbollah is the one using people as human shields.” It should be noted that, a day after the Kafr Qana bombing, it turned out that no targeted intelligence information had pointed to the building which was attacked. Out of the tangled web of excuses woven by the IDF in order to shake off any responsibility for the incident, extremely newsworthy information arose concerning the way in which the IDF selects its targets in Lebanon. The IDF strike on a building

which collapsed and buried its residents alive was not carried out *in error*: the selected targets had been defined, in a broad and unfocused manner, and they included all of the residential buildings within the targeted area. It also turned out that Defense Minister Peretz had “lifted all restrictions against IDF strikes on the civilian population”. This information, however, was no more than a needle in the haystack of excuses and denials, and never reached the Israeli public’s awareness.

7. The diplomatic negotiations: “We won’t call a ceasefire now”

This mode of coverage, in its various components, had a decisive effect on the way in which the media covered the various diplomatic attempts to reach a ceasefire and bring the war to an end. Throughout the war, various players made various proposals for diplomatic solutions. A number of ideas for compromise were raised at a summit conference of the eight industrialized states which met in St. Petersburg in mid-July; at the Rome Summit at the end of that month; and throughout the entire period, by the President of Lebanon, the United States Secretary of State, the United Nations and the European Union. Israel’s official spokespersons – Prime Minister Olmert, Defense Minister Peretz and the IDF commanders – overtly and extravagantly derided those proposals throughout most of that time. Eventually, however, when the ceasefire went into effect on August 14, quite a few persons within and outside the governmental establishment estimated that Israel could have attained greater diplomatic achievements if it had listened to those proposals in the opening stages of the war and thereafter. Such a listening attitude could obviously have saved many lives on both sides. Today, following the publication of the Winograd Committee Report, we know the extent to which the decision-makers were caught up in the fury of the war, which they had waged without really knowing what its goals were – and, accordingly, without knowing under what conditions it could and should be stopped.

In the absolute majority of cases, the media covered the diplomatic option in such a way as to reflect the derision expressed by the decision-makers. The reports on the diplomatic contacts appeared in the inside pages of the newspapers and deep in the news broadcasts – and were buried in a mass of headlines, which were mobilized with a patriotic fervor on behalf of the war effort. The proposals by the Prime Minister of Lebanon were interpreted merely as “signs of breaking in Lebanon”; the diplomatic proposals by the Great Powers were viewed as permission for Israel to continue operations on the ground. Muffling the voices which held that a diplomatic solution was in Israel’s best interest, including the voice of Israel’s Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, unequivocally showed that the Israeli media preferred a military victory over a diplomatic solution. Throughout the entire war, this coverage of the diplomatic option primarily reflected the IDF’s fear that a diplomatic arrangement would only keep the IDF from “finishing the job”.

The growing frustration at the IDF's performance on the ground, in the second half of the war, only increased opposition to efforts toward a diplomatic arrangement. In the first part of the war, the message was: “Now is not the time to talk; now is the time to strike.” The message in the second half of the war was: “Now, when we're being accused of war crimes, or when the weakness of the IDF is showing – we have to strike even harder.” In the end, when a formula was found which enabled the fighting to be stopped, the media received it with a general feeling of defeat. Now, when the war was over, the media suddenly started to feature voices saying: “We should have accepted the original diplomatic proposals, from the beginning of the war.”

On Friday, August 11, 2006, when the UN Security Council was about to vote on the ceasefire resolution, Israel's security cabinet decided to launch an extensive ground operation in Lebanon. The declared objectives of the operation were to seize the territory up to the Litani River, to wipe out additional members of Hezbollah and stockpiled Katyusha rockets, and to attempt – as much as possible, and up to the last moment – to tip the draft agreement in Israel's favor. That operation was to cost the lives of 34 IDF soldiers. The concerns about the ground operation were hardly a secret on that day or in the days that followed; even then, however, they were consigned to the margins of the media coverage. Only Channel 10 asked courageous, critical questions about the reasons for approving that scandalous operation – including the Prime Minister's popularity ratings. The rest of Israel's media, almost without exception, called for “war to the last moment”.

8. Conclusion

Of all the feelings, opinions and habits which mobilize the media when war breaks out, one of the most persistent attitudes is that criticism must not be expressed while the fighting is still going on, but must be withheld until it ends. Of all possible feelings, opinions and habits, this is also the most absurd attitude of all.

Courageous, critical media reporting is meaningless when carried out in retrospect. The really difficult questions have to be asked while the war is still being waged, because that is when there is still a chance for change. If the media had headlined the fact that there were no shelters in many cities and towns, and that the State was not providing assistance to the residents of the North – the State might well have been forced into taking action in real time, and would not have left the work to Arkady Gaydamak. If the media had emphasized the fact that various international actors had raised favorable proposals for a ceasefire in the first days of the war, we would probably not have had to consider, in retrospect, the question of why Olmert and Peretz ignored those proposals. If the media

had stressed the fundamental criticism of that war, the understanding that it never had defined goals, the fact that it was launched out of a sense of insult and frustration – the war itself might well have been shorter. The political players who objected to the ground operation up to the Litani River, at the end of the war, might have succeeded in preventing that unfortunate decision, which cost the lives of 34 more soldiers. If the headlines had broadcast the fact that Defense Minister Peretz had released the IDF from the restrictions on opening fire, as the media should have done, it might have been possible to prevent some of the fearsome destruction that was sowed in Lebanon. Critical coverage which arises when it is already out of date is a meaningless ceremonial act. The media criticize, publish, disclose – and then move on to the next topic. Precisely for this reason, Prime Minister Olmert, during the period when he was most severely criticized, following the publication of the Winograd Committee Interim Report, was able to decide that he would stay in office. He knew full well that the wave of public criticism would subside. After all, it was already outdated when it began.

In light of all the above, the question is not only how the Israeli media covered the Second Lebanon War. The really important question is how the media will cover the next war. The media professionals, the editors and managers, the correspondents and commentators, must subject themselves to the moral reckoning which they demanded after the war, and rightly so, of the decision-makers in the Government of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces. This must happen – and it must happen now. Before – not after – the next war breaks out.

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1> INTRODUCTION: "WE'RE GOING TO WIN"

The story of the Israeli media during the Second Lebanon War should begin with the unbridgeable gap between two headlines published on the front page of the *Maariv* daily newspaper – one on the first day of the war, and the other about eight months after it ended. The first headline, which headed the July 13, 2006 edition of the paper, screamed: **DECLARATION OF WAR**. The top banner of the investigative article published on March 30, 2007 declared: **THIS IS HOW WE FELL INTO THE WAR WE DIDN'T WANT**.

Maariv, as usual, was crassly and overtly attempting to do what all of Israel's other media had tried to do, in more surreptitious ways, in the months after the war. It was attempting to cover its tracks and tell the story from back to front: Now, months after the war, in the midst of the furious public criticism, we know that we weren't supposed to have wanted this war – and therefore we didn't actually want it, even then.



➔ **DECLARATION OF WAR**
Front page of *Maariv*,
main headline of the
issue, July 13, 2006



➔ **INVESTIGATION: THIS IS HOW WE FELL INTO THE WAR WE DIDN'T WANT** (banner headline);
THE FIRST DAY (main headline)
Front page of *Maariv*,
March 30, 2007

In view of the above, it is incumbent upon us, at the very outset, to set the record straight: none of the main Israeli media covered the war as a war that we fell into, or as a war that we didn't want. Other than a few exceptional cases (which we will discuss later on), all of Israel's media covered the war in ways that transmitted full and absolute support of the war and its justification. This support was expressed in various ways: sometimes in a more impassioned manner and sometimes less. On occasion, it was accompanied by criticism of this or that tactical component of the fighting, which gradually increased toward the end of the war – as it became clearer that the IDF was not managing to win. But the general spirit of the war coverage, in the broad strategic sense, was utterly uncritical – from the beginning to the end of the war. The following headlines – a small sample out of many hundreds – illustrate this quite well:

Maariv, front page, main headline of the issue, July 13:

O/C HOME FRONT COMMAND: PREPARE SHELTERS IN THE NORTH (top banner)

DECLARATION OF WAR (main headline, in huge letters)

IDF LAUNCHES OPERATION “PROPER PAYMENT” LAST NIGHT * IAF PREPARES TO BOMB A SERIES OF OBJECTIVES DEEP IN LEBANON * THE COST OF YESTERDAY'S EVENTS: 2 SOLDIERS KIDNAPPED, 4 KILLED AND 4 MISSING IN TANK ENTIRELY DESTROYED (subhead)

Haaretz, front page, main headline of the issue, July 13:

GOVERNMENT APPROVES HEAVY ATTACKS IN LEBANON; ISRAEL PREPARES FOR LONG-RANGE ROCKET BARRAGES

Yedioth Ahronoth, front page, main headline of the issue, July 13:

IDF STRIKES HEZBOLLAH FOLLOWING FATAL AMBUSH * FEARED: MISSILES TO NETANYA * GOVERNMENT DECIDES: (top banner)

WAR (main headline, in huge letters)

AFTER MIDNIGHT, GOVERNMENT MINISTERS APPROVE: ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST HEZBOLLAH UNTIL THREAT ON NORTHERN BORDER ENTIRELY REMOVED * IDF WILL ATTACK FROM AIR, SEA AND IN GROUND OPERATIONS [...] (subhead)

Yedioth Ahronoth, page 2 headline, July 14:

BEIRUT WILL BURN

Maariv, headlines from the July 18 issue:

WE'RE GOING TO WIN (headline on the front page)

LAST NIGHT: LIMITED CALL UP OF RESERVES BEGAN (front page, main headline of the issue)

SPEECH ECHOED IN TEHRAN AND DAMASCUS (main headline on page 2)

OLMERT IS FACING A HARD FRONT; AS OF NOW, HE'S COPING ADMIRABLY * "IT WILL GET TOUGHER", HE TELLS NATION YESTERDAY IN CONFIDENT APPEARANCE WHICH TRANSFORMS HIM INTO A LEADER * NASRALLAH FELL INTO THE PIT WHICH BURIED SADDAM HUSSEIN AND ARAFAT, WHO THOUGHT THE ISRAELI HOMEFRONT WAS FRAGILE AND HYSTERICAL (subhead on page 2)

Yedioth Ahronoth, front page, main headline of the issue, July 18:

PRIME MINISTER EHUD OLMERT IN FIRST SPEECH SINCE START OF WAR:
(top banner)

"WE'RE GOING TO WIN" (main headline, in huge letters, quotation marks in the original)

THESE ARE THE SECTIONS NOW BEING FORMULATED FOR THE ARRANGEMENT TO END THE WAR: PUSHING HEZBOLLAH NORTH OF THE LITANI AND DEPLOYING LEBANESE ARMY FORCES, RETURNING 3 KIDNAPPED IDF TROOPS, STOPPING THE SHELLING OF ISRAEL, STOPPING ISRAELI ACTIVITY AND WITHDRAWAL FROM GAZA, RELEASE OF PALESTINIAN MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT * IN ORDER TO REACH AN AGREEMENT, FROM TODAY FIGHTING WILL CONCENTRATE ON 2 DIRECTIONS: STRIKING HEZBOLLAH TOP BRASS AND TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THE ORGANIZATION'S INFRASTRUCTURES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON (subhead)

81%: CONTINUE OPERATION UNTIL HEZBOLLAH IS REMOVED * 78%: OLMERT IS FUNCTIONING WELL IN MANAGING THE OPERATION * 72%: PERETZ IS FUNCTIONING WELL AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE * 87%: IDF IS MANAGING THE OPERATION SUCCESSFULLY (additional main headline)

Channel 1, headline at the opening of the news broadcast, July 18:

**IDF BOMBS OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON AND CRUSHES HEZBOLLAH HEADQUARTERS.
PERETZ: WE DON'T INTEND TO TAKE HALF MEASURES**

Channel 10, headline at the opening of the news broadcast, July 23:

IDF SOURCES: ONLY GOING IN UP TO LITANI WILL STOP THE KATYUSHA ROCKETS
[Quote from a soldier in the field:] **“WE UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS AND
WE WANT TO GO IN”**

Yedioth Ahronoth, front page, main headline of the issue, July 24:

**LARGE PARATROOP AND GOLANI BRIGADE FORCES ON WAY TO GROUND OPERATION
AGAINST MAIN HEZBOLLAH STRONGHOLDS** (top banner)

GOING IN TO CONQUER THE STRONGHOLD OF TERROR (main headline, in
large letters).

**SENIOR NORTHERN COMMAND OFFICERS: SIGNIFICANT PHASE OF GROUND
OPERATION BEGAN LAST NIGHT * BODIES OF HEZBOLLAH FIGHTERS WILL
BE TRANSFERRED TO ISRAELI TERRITORY AS BARGAINING CHIPS * O/C IDF
INTELLIGENCE: HEZBOLLAH HURT, BUT NOT BROKEN** (subhead)

Channel 2, headline at the opening of the news broadcast, July 29:

**ISRAEL TOOK OVER HEZBOLLAH TELEVISION BROADCASTS AND THREATENED
NASRALLAH – YOUR DAY IS NEAR**

Channel 10, headline at the opening of the news broadcast, July 30:

THOUSANDS OF RESERVISTS GO INTO UNIFORM [One of the soldiers says:] **“WE'RE
GOING TO BLOW YOU [Nasrallah] UP; YOU'LL BE SORRY!!!!”**

The general spirit of coverage throughout the war was utterly uncritical.



➔ **GOVERNMENT APPROVES HEAVY ATTACKS IN LEBANON; ISRAEL PREPARES FOR LONG-RANGE ROCKET BARRAGES**
Front page of *Haaretz*, July 13



➔ **PRIME MINISTER EHUD OLMERT IN FIRST SPEECH SINCE START OF WAR: (top banner) "WE'RE GOING TO WIN" (main headline, in huge letters) 81%: CONTINUE OPERATION UNTIL HEZBOLLAH IS REMOVED (additional headline)**
Front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 18



➔ **IDF STRIKES HEZBOLLAH FOLLOWING FATAL AMBUSH * FEARED: MISSILES TO NETANYA * GOVERNMENT DECIDES: (top banner) WAR (main headline, in huge letters)**
Front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 13



➔ **IDF CRUSHES HEZBOLLAH HEADQUARTERS**
Channel 1, headline at the opening of the news broadcast, July 18

This sweeping support of the war was also reflected in explicit expressions of media mobilization. To illustrate this point, cited below are sections from an article by Amnon Dankner, then editor-in-chief of *Maariv*, which appeared on the front page on July 17; an article by Rafi Ginat, then editor-in-chief of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, which appeared on the front page on July 28; and an article in *Haaretz* by the late Ze'ev Schiff, which appeared on the front page on July 27 (headlined **THE IDF MUST WIN THE WAR**):

It's not easy for us, certainly not for those who are being fired upon; but we are allowed to give our full support to the greatest strategic surprise of recent years: the Government of Israel surprised Hamas, and especially Hezbollah, by not getting cold feet and not looking for the 'easy way out' of fudging and surrendering to threats, but showing that it had a backbone of steel [...] Olmert and Peretz have shown a resolve which was pretty much missing from previous governments. There are those who sigh and express sentimental longings for Arik Sharon, but let's admit the truth: both Sharon and Ehud Barak allowed the Hezbollah to inflate its presence all along the border fence after the withdrawal from Lebanon; they belittled the need to implement the Security Council resolution calling for the deployment of the Lebanese Army down to the border; and they ignored the ongoing supplies from Iran and Syria, which built up Hezbollah's dangerous array of rockets. The policy of maintaining the tranquility of the Galilee guesthouses amounted to an overpayment on account of the future. That future has now arrived, and we are allowed to say what they say in the popular infomercial: it's a crime to pay more. (Amnon Dankner)

What is the right thing to do? To take action with a limited number of troops, thereby prolonging the duration of the war and increasing the number of missiles rained down upon us and the number of dead and wounded Israeli citizens – or to bring in fierce and deadly firepower, to feel less moral and to bring the moment of decision and deterrence closer? The basic dilemma is simple and incisive: is it correct to pay a heavy price, in blood and money, for being the most moral, against an enemy and its supporters who don't give a hoot for moral considerations? [...] I have no problem being less moral in my own eyes, if that's what will save the life of one boy from the Golani Brigade. For his sake, I'm willing to rain fire upon the Hezbollah terrorists, their assistants, their collaborators and accessories, and anyone who smells of Hezbollah – and for their innocent bystanders to die instead of ours. [...] We have to put aside the howling self-flagellation of all kinds of frustrated directors and self proclaimed cultural heroes. We have to ignore the pompous utterances and the effrontery of all kinds of newscasters and commentators, whose reaction to cameras and microphones inflates them to the

level of super-Chiefs of Staff. We have to look our soldiers and officers in the eyes, thank them and let them do what they know to do. And they do know. You'll see. (Rafi Ginat)

As we analyze the stages of Israel's wars and battles, we must not forget the most important strategic order of this war: Hezbollah and everything that terrorist organization stands for must be defeated at any cost. This is the only option Israel has. We must not bring about a situation which creates a strategic balance between Israel and Hezbollah. If Hezbollah doesn't feel that it has been defeated in this war, it will mean the end of Israel's deterrence against its actual and potential enemies. Israel did not choose this war, but in slipping into war, it came to a strategic crossroads. It is important for Israel's public to know that crucial decisions are about to be made. What is to be determined is not the future of the Shi'ite town of Bint Jbail and the Hezbollah positions in Maroun a-Ras, but the future and well-being of the State of Israel. (Ze'ev Schiff)

It should be noted that, on the same day, July 27, *Haaretz* devoted an article on its front page to a speech by a company commander inside Lebanon. The headline stated, in exactly these words: **COMPANY COMMANDER SAYS: "ANYONE WHO CAN'T DEFEND HIS FREEDOM IS NOT ENTITLED TO BE FREE"**. The text of the article, still on the front page, read as follows:

"It's our time now," says Capt. Uri Lavi. "It's our time now to be the ones who get up, put on bulletproof vests and helmets, and make sure this border is protected. And for every task we have to take on, against any enemy we have to take on, we'll do our very best. If not, we have no right to exist."

This speech was made the night before last, with no TV cameras and no cynicism. This is the real thing. [...] "Even though people have already talked to you about this, I will repeat," begins Lavi: "we are not going to lose this war. We are not the ones who started it, but our duty as an army is to be the defender of the Jewish People and to make sure that these residents, here in Metulla and in Haifa, can live in peace. If we don't do it, no one will do it. For 2000 years we waited for this State, and we're not going to crumple because a bunch of terrorists think they can intimidate us."

Capt. Uri Lavi continues: "I've already said this sentence, and I very much believe in it: anyone who can't defend his freedom is not entitled to be free. If we, as an army, as a state, don't fight with teeth and claws, to the last drop of blood, so that our people can live freely, in its own state, our people won't be able to do that."

These are only a few examples. After it ended, the Second Lebanon War became “the war we didn’t want”. During the war itself, it enjoyed the complete and sweeping support of all of Israel’s media.

The comprehensive report before you is based on analysis of the complete coverage of the war – from July 12 to August 15, 2006 – in the main news programs of Israel’s three major TV channels (Channel 1, Channel 2 and Channel 10) and in Israel’s three largest daily newspapers (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, *Maariv* and *Haaretz*). The coverage volume in question was immense: more than 9,000 articles and reports. (The method of research is discussed in the box on pages 28-29) The chapters of the report are devoted to various aspects of the subject. Chapter 2 deals with the coverage of the decision-making process which led up to the war, and the way in which the media defined the goals of the war for their readers and viewers. Chapter 3 deals with the coverage of the decision-makers – Olmert, Peretz, Halutz and the generals. Chapter 4 describes the coverage of the events in the field, during the war, and the feelings of anxiety which gripped the media in view of the IDF’s failures and Hezbollah’s achievements. Chapter 5 discusses patterns in the coverage of the home front, and the sharp distinction made by the media between the strong and sturdy Jewish-Israeli home front and the questionable loyalty of the Arab-Israeli home front. Chapter 6 describes how the media rallied to the task of denying Israel’s responsibility for the suffering of Lebanese civilians during the war. Chapter 7 is devoted to the coverage of the diplomatic initiatives which took place throughout the war – coverage which, up to the very end, was overshadowed by fear that a diplomatic arrangement would “keep the IDF from winning”. Two appendices at the end of the report address how the media handled the question of unilateral withdrawals (from Lebanon and Gaza) and covered current events in the territories, while the war was still going on.

It should be noted that not all of the media covered the war in exactly the same manner. Channel 2 and *Maariv* provided their audiences, in the absolute majority of cases, with patriotic, furious, overtly mobilized coverage. *Yedioth Ahronoth* and Channel 1 were also mobilized, but more moderately. The coverage by *Haaretz* and Channel 10, at certain times, was more critical and profound; occasionally, the reporting on Channel 10 was not only critical, but courageous in every sense of the word. This fact is noteworthy. It is important to pay attention to these differences between the various media – to which we will refer again and again throughout the entire report. It is, however, no less important to understand that even *Haaretz* and Channel 10, like Israel’s other media, presented coverage which was mobilized in many definitive ways.

Since the war ended and to this day, we at Keshev have received considerable testimony, direct and indirect, from members of the press, who spoke of the self-mobilization of the newsrooms throughout the war. Many of these persons asked to remain anonymous;

accordingly, we could not publish some of their testimony, as its content would have betrayed its sources. Nonetheless, the testimony which we heard was consistently similar: the members of the press spoke of a frenetic atmosphere, a sense of emotional overload, self-censorship and instructions handed down from the top, and of the fear of expressing opposing views in the face of the uniform and unequivocal reflection of the situation expressed day after day in the press coverage. The overall picture which arises from this testimony is a grave one: this is not the way the press should conduct itself in a democratic society.

Of the material that reached us, we have chosen to publish two items in this report. One is the testimony of Yael Gvartz, a journalist from *Yedioth Ahronoth*, who was one of a team of writers responsible for the paper's editorials. On August 9, Gvartz wrote a trenchant article under the headline **HOSTAGES IN THE TURRET**,¹ which warned against an irresponsible military operation. The next day, Rafi Ginat, then editor-in-chief of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, suspended her. This is what Gvartz wrote in her article:

War, unfortunately, is not a request program. It is ended according to the choices and limitations which apply. Before (God forbid) paying far too dearly for another hastily launched battle, it would be better, at this stage, to accept the fact that the "Real Fighting Men" has turned out to be just another Israeli myth, and to consider paying what is required of us on the diplomatic front. Whereas it is not at all certain that taking over the area south of the Litani River will decide the fate of the war, [Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad] Siniora's seven points present a possible boundary. After all, a month ago, our hearts' desire was for Hezbollah to be moved away from the border and for the Lebanese Army to take its place. Are we suddenly longing for the Indonesians to defend us? We demanded the strengthening of the Lebanese Government. Will that strengthening not be considered an achievement?

And this is what she wrote in a letter to us:

Starting at the beginning of the war, I wrote eight articles, two per week, until Ginat sent me to the "freezer". From a professional standpoint, I remember that period as a time of supreme challenge and supreme loneliness. Because I represented almost a lone voice among the media, I was extremely aware of the responsibility incumbent upon me vis-à-vis the paper and vis-à-vis the readers. I relied on the vast experience which I had accumulated in writing articles on chaotic defense and

1 A play on words in Hebrew on "Exposed in the Turret" originally suggesting heroism in battle, but colloquially meaning neglected or left unprotected.

security-related events, and I performed an extremely stringent self-examination. From a personal standpoint, I actually felt a kind of relief when Rafi threw me out. Professionally, I saw no problem in his exercising his authority, except that this was “authority in the dark” – without giving reasons, without reporting to anyone, without taking responsibility.

The second document is an internal, unsigned document which was distributed to *Maariv* employees after the war, by the paper’s Deputy CEO for Marketing. The document describes the way in which *Maariv* behaved in the course of the war, and states, among other things:

Maariv proved, yet again, in the course of the Second Lebanon War, that it is the most patriotic of the three major dailies. By contrast to *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Haaretz*, which behaved during the war as they do every day of the year and did not formulate a clear editorial line, *Maariv* continued to do what it did, with its head held high, in the difficult times of Operation “Defensive Shield”² and during the disengagement³ – to support the Army, to stand firmly on the side of the State, and to call a halt to criticism for as long as the war went on.

Maariv adopted the slogan “Israel is Strong”, gave out stickers with that slogan to its readers, set up a national billboard advertising campaign, attached the slogan to every issue during the war, and reflected the spirit of the slogan in its responsible, restrained reporting.

Even when we had problematic material related to the management of the war – the situation in the Emergency Supplies Units, the problematic appointments in the Northern Command, the embarrassing arguments between senior commanders, and heart-rending complaints by reservists going into battle with incomplete and worn-out equipment – we restrained ourselves. In a certain sense, we betrayed our role as journalists, but we did so because we took national, patriotic considerations into account and decided that in the event of war, and certainly a war which was not progressing as it should and was going awry, we were part of the Country; that it was permissible, and even required of us, to postpone disputes and criticism; and that we did not have to apologize, or to feel abashed, for our support and backing of the Army and the Government. [...]

In the course of the war, while the battles were still going on, we received information about the telephone call made by the IDF Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, to his

2 A wide-scale IDF operation in 2002 set to destroy terrorist infrastructures.

3 The evacuation of Israeli settlers and settlements from the Gaza Strip by the IDF during August 2005, as part of the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

broker at Bank Leumi, on the day of the serious incident with Hezbollah, in which eight soldiers were killed and two were kidnapped. The temptation to publish that information – a first-class scoop, which was obviously explosive material as far as the public was concerned – was great. We held a series of meetings about it in the top echelons of the editorial board; we performed an additional check and received confirmation from an additional source that the call to the bank actually took place on the same day. Nonetheless, even though we knew that the story was accurate and was of interest to the public, and that our duty was to publish it – we showed restraint and froze the article until the end of the fighting, so as not to harm the country's morale and not to interfere with the war effort. Only the day after the decision on the ceasefire, when there was quiet on the ground, only then did we issue the story – and, even then, it was done with restraint. Not with a screaming tabloid-type headline, but under only one-third of the main headline, and phrased cautiously, rather than frenetically. [...]

Maariv is a commercial newspaper, which, by its very nature, wants to sell and to make a profit. Still, in time of war or crisis, the management of the newspaper chooses to freeze these matters in favor of national considerations. The editors and correspondents at *Maariv* consider this policy a source of professional pride, as well as a real qualitative advantage, relative to the other media outlets.

The material quoted above, naturally, speaks for itself, and is backed by testimony of *Maariv* employees. It should, however, be noted that by contrast to statements made in the above document, the other newspapers and the TV channels also acted in various ways to prove the extent of their patriotism. They, too, marginalized the coverage of extremely newsworthy items; they, too, refrained from publishing material of great significance that was in their possession.

In this sense, we may – in fact, we must – consider the Second Lebanon War as an opportunity from which we should learn. Today, two years after the war, after the Report of the Winograd Committee,⁴ after the public fury, we all know more or less what there is to know about that war. Accordingly, we can now go back to the media coverage of the war in real time, examine the patterns displayed by that coverage, what it contained and what it did not contain, understand the public significance of those patterns – and initiate a process of change.

4 An Israeli government-appointed commission of inquiry into the events of military engagement in Lebanon 2006, chaired by retired Supreme Court Judge Eliyahu Winograd. The final report was presented to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense on January 30th, 2008.

THE RESEARCH METHOD

The research method is based on a systematic distinction between two principal stages in the news-making process: the writing stage and the editing stage.

In the first stage, the correspondents, commentators and columnists create their texts and send them to the news desk (television correspondents, of course, send in filmed reports).

In the second stage, the editors create the issue or the broadcast. They determine which articles and reports will be published and which will not. They determine the location of the article or the report (in a prominent position, such as the front page or the beginning of the broadcast, or a marginal position, such as page 17 or the end of the broadcast). They add material, such as photographs and the like, to the articles. They design the pages and determine the structure of the broadcast. Most importantly: they formulate the headlines. In the written press, this includes the subheads and the photo captions. TV headlines also include the banners displayed at the beginning of the broadcast and the text spoken by the newscasters who introduce the reports.

Many studies indicate that media consumers principally rely on the editing products for their news: they often content themselves with reading (or watching) the headlines; in many cases, they never read (or watch) the actual reports. In other cases, when the consumers are exposed to the article itself, the editors' work has a significant effect on the way the article is read. An article published on the front page will be read as a serious, important and essential item. An article on page 17 will be read as a marginal item which has no effect on the really important affairs of the day, and so forth.

This, then, is the most important point: careful examination of the news items in both stages – the writing stage and the editing stage – reveals that they are not at all the same. For example, in many cases, as we will see throughout this report, the headlines composed by the editors for the articles do not reflect the contents of the article. In other cases, items which are extremely newsworthy are marginalized – pushed to the back pages or the end of the broadcast. In such cases, consumers' reliance on the editing products gives them a biased picture – a picture which does not reflect the newsworthy material brought by the correspondents themselves to their editors.

The gap between the correspondents' newsworthy material and the picture which arises from the editors' work is systematic in nature. Certain components of reality, which appear in the articles, are systematically marginalized by the editors. Others are systematically emphasized. As we show in the report, the coverage in each of the media outlets shows clear patterns of emphasis and suppression. These patterns have exceptions – and we mention them, throughout the report. But the patterns themselves are entirely clear, which makes it possible to analyze precisely the editorial position that each media outlet presented to its consumers during the course of the war.

2> THE COVERAGE OF THE GOALS OF THE WAR AND THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS: “THERE IS A CONSENSUS AROUND THE GOVERNMENT TABLE”

“We will especially note the fact that, when the Chief of Staff was asked, at the Government session on July 12, what he believed would happen following the first attack and what the plans for the military campaign were, he answered that talking about plans was meaningless, because it was impossible to predict several moves in advance. This reflected contempt for the highly experienced Minister Peres, who asked the question. This is not the way in which a Chief of Staff, who is assisting the Government to formulate a decision to go to war, should express himself.”

Winograd Committee Interim Report, Chapter 7: Conclusions, Section 184

The complete support that the media gave to the Second Lebanon War, from its very first days until its end, was primarily reflected in the way the media reported to their readers and viewers on the goals of the war and the decision-making process that led to its outbreak. Today, following the publication of the conclusions of the Winograd Committee, we all know a thing or two about that. It is hard to find words as unequivocal as those of the Winograd Committee, which stated that “the way in which Israel went to war is inadmissible; it must not be allowed to repeat itself; and efforts must be made to correct the situation as soon as possible”. As we will see below, this was not hard to understand, even in the first days of the war – and quite a few media actors knew, even then – that things didn’t look the way they sounded in the proclamations of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff. Nonetheless, throughout the entire war, the media, again and again, fed their consumers with the impression that launching the war was a well-planned move, and that its objectives were clear, distinct, and – from Israel’s point of view – desirable.

In the first days of the war significant coverage of the decision-making process was almost entirely absent in the media. In the absolute majority of cases, the decision to go to war was covered in an official, almost ceremonial manner: “we are about to do what must be done”. The Government session was described as a dramatic and historic event, and the consensus among the ministers was emphasized time and time again. This is how it appeared in the news broadcasts of Channel 1 and Channel 2; this is how

it appeared in the next day’s papers. For example, here is the reporting by Ayala Hason, in the seventh minute of the news broadcast of Channel 1 on July 12:

Haim Yavin: In fact, we already are in the midst of war. What the Government, which is now in session, has to decide is the scope and objectives of the war. The first objective, of course, is the return of the kidnapped soldiers; but not only that.

Ayala Hason: ... There is a consensus around the Government table that today – and, in fact, they accept the military definition in that context – that what happened today represents a turning point.

And here is the headline of the broadcast on Channel 2, that same evening:

THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE CONSIDERING THE MOVE TO WAR IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AT THIS VERY MOMENT. MINISTERS SAY: “WE HAVE TO DECLARE WAR – AND CONQUER SOUTHERN LEBANON.”

In the absolute majority of cases, the decision to go to war was covered in an official, almost ceremonial manner.



↓
**FIGHTING IN THE NORTH;
GOVERNMENT DISCUSSES POSSIBILITY OF WIDE-SCALE
MOVE IN LEBANON; GOVERNMENT MINISTERS: DECLARE WAR.**

Channel 2, headline of newscast, July 12

Only a single article, which was published on July 13 on page 2 of *Maariv*, contained a bit of information on the way in which the decision was actually made. That information remained buried deep inside the article. This is what it said:

Most of the ministers spoke. There was an almost complete consensus. The only one who showed a certain degree of independence was Shimon Peres, who spoke of restraint and putting an end to idle chitchat. Peres asked the Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz: "I understand your first move and your second move; I don't exactly understand your third move and your fourth move." Halutz countered at once: "The third move depends on the second move; the fourth move depends on the third move and on what happens on the ground."

But the headline of the article declared: **PERETZ: THIS TIME WE WON'T THREATEN – WE'LL TAKE ACTION**. The subhead added: **HEZBOLLAH GUERRILLAS WENT HOME WITH A CLEAR VICTORY, 10-0, OVER THE IDF. 8 IDF TROOPS KILLED, 2 KIDNAPPED * A DIFFICULT, INFURIATING AND FRUSTRATING DAY FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL**. The information appearing in that article is precisely that which appears in the paragraph quoted above, from the Winograd Committee Interim Report – but it was completely marginalized by the editors.

In this sense, the Channel 10 news broadcast on July 12 – the date of the kidnapping and the decision – was exceptional in its critical tone. The broadcast gave serious coverage to the failures that allowed the IDF soldiers to be kidnapped, as we will see below, and in it, commentator Emanuel Rosen said:

This must be clearly stated: the Government has no real plan. This is not... it's a plan pulled out of a drawer; this is principally frustration, principally revenge and principally the need to teach that arrogant man from the press conference [Nasrallah] a lesson. I think there will be a very large gap between the belligerent declarations we will hear today and what transpires as time goes on.

While this is truly remarkable, a reservation must be added. At that stage, on the first day, the Channel 10 news broadcast was operating under the assumption that the Government would not really decide to go to war. When it became clear, in the next few days, that this is where things were going, Channel 10 significantly lowered its threshold of criticism. This will be further discussed later on.

כרץ: הפעם לא נא'ים - אלא נעשה

להגיב בעוצמה

PERETZ: THIS TIME WE WON'T THREATEN - WE'LL TAKE ACTION (main headline)

Most of the ministers spoke. There was an almost complete consensus. The only one who showed a certain degree of independence was Shimon Peres, who spoke of restraint and putting an end to idle chitchat. Peres asked the Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz: “I understand your first move and your second move; I don't exactly understand your third move and your fourth move.” Halutz countered at once: “The third move depends on the second move; the fourth move depends on the third move and on what happens on the ground.”

From the text of the article

The Goals of the War (1): “The Kidnapped Soldiers Will Wait a Bit”

The absence of critical coverage was also reflected in the way in which the media defined the goals of the war. The absolute majority of reports and headlines explicitly or implicitly presented the war as an operation with clear goals that are important and beneficial for Israel. Over 100 headlines explicitly dealt with the goals of the war, and nearly all of them presented the same picture. In the next sample of headlines, please note two facts. First of all: each of the headlines, in and of itself, presents a clear goal, or a series of clear goals, for the war. The headlines create an illusion of clarity and purposefulness – which, in reality, did not exist. Secondly, please note how the goals change from one headline to the next, from one day to the next, at times within the same paper. This situation demonstrates what everyone knows today: the goals of that war were not clear and absolute; they changed from day to day – in many cases, as a result of various short-term image-related considerations, which we will discuss below.

THE TARGET: NASRALLAH

PERETZ: THE OPERATION WILL CONTINUE; ISRAEL WILL BREAK HEZBOLLAH

* **NASRALLAH KNOWS – HE BROUGHT IT ON HIMSELF** (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 14, front page, main headline of the issue, and subhead)

CRUSH HEZBOLLAH (*Maariv*, July 14, front page, main headline of the issue)

ISRAEL WILL DEMAND A "BUFFER ZONE" IN LEBANON AS A CONDITION FOR A CEASEFIRE (*Haaretz*, July 14, main headline, page 6)

Udi Segal: **THE MATTER OF THE ALERT, THE SPECIAL SITUATION ON THE HOME FRONT, WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT SESSION TOMORROW – AND THIS DEFENSIVE ALERTNESS IS ISRAEL'S FIRST STEP. ONE STEP, PERHAPS THE FIRST STEP BEFORE ALL-OUT WAR. FURTHERMORE, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL DECLARE TO THE GOVERNMENT TOMORROW THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS CAMPAIGN IS TO MOVE HEZBOLLAH AWAY FROM THE BORDER. THIS IS THE IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE OF THE MILITARY ACTIVITY WHICH WE ARE CONDUCTING IN THE NORTH** (Channel 2 news broadcast, July 15, headline at the opening of the newscast)

ISRAEL: CLEAN THE MISSILES OUT OF LEBANON (*Haaretz*, July 18, front page, main headline of the issue)

OLMERT IN HAIFA: WE'LL FIGHT UNTIL WE BRING THE KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS BACK (*Maariv*, July 19, main headline, front page)

THE TARGET: TO KILL (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 24, headline, page 7)

Yoav Limor: **THE TWO PRINCIPAL GOALS OF THIS CAMPAIGN AROUND BINT JBAIL: ONE IS TO KILL OR CAPTURE AS MANY TERRORISTS AS POSSIBLE AND TO DAMAGE AS MANY WEAPON SITES AS POSSIBLE; AND THE OTHER IS TO WIPE OUT THE SPEECH BY HASSAN NASRALLAH, THE "SPIDER WEB" SPEECH,⁵ WHICH WAS GIVEN IN THIS VERY PLACE, AND INSTEAD, TO BRING IN THE WEBS OF STEEL – THE NAME OF THE OPERATION PRESENTLY BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE GOLANI BRIGADE** (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 24, headline at the opening of the newscast)

IS ISRAEL PREPARING FOR A PROTRACTED STAY IN LEBANON? PERETZ: THE MAIN EFFORT IS TO CREATE THAT SAME "SECURITY ZONE" WHICH WILL BE UNDER THE CONTROL OF OUR FORCES (Channel 10 news broadcast, July 25, headline at the opening of the newscast)

Haim Yavin: **GOOD EVENING AND HELLO TO YOU ALL. THE PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCES TONIGHT THAT THERE IS NO CEASEFIRE. THE FIGHTING WILL GO ON**

⁵ A victory speech given by Hassan Nasrallah following the Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in May 2000. In his speech, Nasrallah compared Israel, despite its military and technological advantages, to spider webs which are easily torn. Thus, even though Israel is a military power, Israeli society is weak and lacks endurance, and therefore can be broken.

UNTIL THE THREAT HEZBOLLAH POSES TO THE CITIES AND TOWNS IN THE NORTH HAS BEEN REMOVED AND THE KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN RETURNED
(Channel 1 news broadcast, July 31, opening headline)

ISRAEL: WE WILL AGREE TO A CEASEFIRE ONLY AFTER THE DEPLOYMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE (*Haaretz*, August 1, headline, page 2)

Yigal Ravid: **DIPLOMATIC DRAMA AND MILITARY DRAMA. YOAV LIMOR, IS THE IDF ALREADY ON ITS WAY TO THE LITANI?**

Yoav Limor: **ALL OF THE DIVISIONS, ALL OF THE TROOPS ARE READY FOR ACTION. WE WON'T DISCUSS THE TIMING. THIS OPERATION HAS THREE OBJECTIVES: FIRST, TO REMOVE THE KATYUSHAS FROM THE NORTHERN BORDER; SECOND, TO PUSH AS FAR NORTH AS POSSIBLE WHEN THE STARTING SIGNAL IS GIVEN; AND THIRD – NO LESS IMPORTANT – A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT AT THE END OF THE GAME** (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 11, headline at the opening of the newscast)

The headlines depicting the goals of the war created an illusion of clarity and purposefulness, but in fact they changed from day to day.



THE TARGET:
NASRALLAH
Yedioth Ahronoth, front page, July 14



ISRAEL: CLEAN THE
MISSILES OUT OF LEBANON
Haaretz, front page, July 18



OLMERT IN HAIFA:
WE'LL FIGHT UNTIL WE
BRING THE KIDNAPPED
SOLDIERS BACK
Maariv, front page, July 19

It is necessary to note several points: first of all, not all of the goals mentioned above can be reconciled with each other. The most important contradiction is between the return of the kidnapped soldiers and the damage (“wiping out”, “crushing” and so forth) to be done to Hezbollah. It was not hard to understand, from the very beginning of the war, that an operation intended to “change the rules of the game” in Lebanon would make the return of the kidnapped soldiers almost impossible. This basic insight, however, was never seriously discussed in depth and was never given any real headlines. It was mentioned in the media only rarely and was usually marginalized in the coverage. For example, this is how it was brought up in a discussion between Ofer Shelah and Zvi Yehezkel, in the 98th(!) minute of Channel 10’s Friday evening news broadcast, on July 14:

Ofer Shelah: ... The kidnapped soldiers, as far as the Government of Israel is concerned, will wait a bit. You’re saying that the breakup of Hezbollah might also be dangerous to the kidnapped soldiers.

Zvi Yehezkel: Definitely. Dangerous from our standpoint, the Israeli standpoint. Because if Hezbollah collapses, and after all, the Chief of Staff talked about crushing the organization militarily, it could be, and Nasrallah didn’t mention the kidnapped soldiers, either – it could be that, in the collapse of Hezbollah, the kidnapped soldiers would disappear within the breakup of the organization. This has already happened with the POW navigator Ron Arad,⁶ in the breakup of another Shi’ite organization. There is a danger... and I would say that Nasrallah, at this point, is no longer able to return to his old formulas of returning prisoners only in exchange for soldiers. As far as he’s concerned, that story is over, and he also understood it in his speech. He knows that, at this point, the war with Israel is a different war.

Ofer Shelah: Amiram Levin, you were not only O/C Northern Command; after that, you were the Deputy Head of the Mossad. You were quite familiar and deeply involved in the Ron Arad affair. Is there something that can be done to prevent this scenario?

Amiram Levin: The only thing that I can say, in this uncertainty, is that time always works against us. What can be done tomorrow, or in two weeks, or in two months, will be harder to do in a year or two, and the matter will have to be handled quickly, the minute they stop firing. One of the problems about Ron Arad is that several opportunities were missed because people hoped to get better opportunities as time went by. And time fooled them.

6 An Israeli Air Force Navigator, his plane was shot down in Lebanon in October 1986. Held prisoner by different armed militias in Lebanon, the last sign of life from him was received in 1988. His fate is unknown.

None of this reached the headlines of the broadcast. The same thing happened with Ben Caspit's article in *Maariv* on July 14. The main headline of the issue shouted: **CRUSH HEZBOLLAH**. The article started on the front page and continued to page 2, where the top banner read: **PM TO GHQ GENERALS: “GO AHEAD; YOU HAVE NO TIME LIMIT”**. The huge main headline of that page said: **OLMERT TO IDF: DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY**. Caspit's own opening words left little room for imagination:

Blood, sweat and tears, with the emphasis on blood. Here, there and everywhere, with the emphasis on there. That's what's waiting for us in the days ahead. [...] Because Messrs. Ahmadinejad, Nasrallah and Mashal are as dangerous as Hitler, perhaps more. Fortunately, this time, we're on the side that's launching the blitz, not the side that's absorbing it. Hezbollah must come out of it beaten, bruised, crawling, bleeding and howling. Hezbollah must never approach the border fence again. Its rocket stockpile must be wiped out; this threat must be wiped out. Nasrallah must die.

In the last paragraph of his article, however, Caspit remembered to say the following (and please note how Caspit refers to what he himself wrote earlier as frenzy):

And after all that frenzy, we must remember and we must not forget: three soldiers' lives are in the balance here, two in Beirut and one in Gaza (the IDF is doing everything possible to prevent them from being taken out toward Iran), and we haven't even begun dealing with that problem. It will apparently be solved only after all this is over, in some sort of convoluted international arrangement that someone will try to achieve here.

“We must remember and we must not forget” is all very well; in actual fact however the media forgot and never reminded us. Once again, *Maariv* – this time, on July 19, a front page headline states: **WE'LL FIGHT UNTIL WE BRING THE KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS BACK**. Under the headline there is a picture of Olmert. But Amir Rapoport's commentary column on page 5, under the headline **DRAWING FROM THE TRENCHES**, says:

As the days go by, the pretentious goals of the war – that is, the freeing of the kidnapped soldiers and the total disarming of Hezbollah – are obviously becoming less and less realistic. The IDF has already begun the process of lowering expectations. As of today, the IDF will definitely be willing to settle for a situation where Hezbollah comes out of this conflict battered and beaten, with no remaining presence in Southern Lebanon. It may be assumed that this weakness will also facilitate the return of the kidnapped soldiers, but only a long time after the last aircraft returns to its hangar.

Maariv, July 14. The main headlines call for crushing Hezbollah. The return of the kidnapped soldiers is mentioned in the last paragraph on page 16. There was no discussion of the possible conflict between these goals.



→ CRUSH HEZBOLLAH
Main headline of the issue, on the front page



→ PM TO GHQ GENERALS:
"GO AHEAD; YOU HAVE NO TIME LIMIT";
OLMERT TO IDF:
DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY
Main headline on page 2

And after all that frenzy, we must remember and we must not forget: three soldiers' lives are in the balance here, two in Beirut and one in Gaza (the IDF is doing everything possible to prevent them from being taken out toward Iran), and we haven't even begun dealing with that problem. It will apparently be solved only after all this is over, in some sort of convoluted international arrangement that someone will try to achieve here.

Page 16, last paragraph of article by Ben Caspit

Today, following the publication of the Winograd Committee transcripts, we know that the return of the kidnapped soldiers was never a real goal in the war. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, in response to a question by Winograd Committee member Prof. Ruth Gavison, explained in the following words why he had declared that the return of the kidnapped soldiers was one of the goals of the war:

Prof. Ruth Gavison: ... But there you say two things which are important to our discussion. First, you explain why it was actually necessary to launch this operation, this move. And you say: These are the objectives; first and foremost, the return of the kidnapped soldiers, and we won't stop fighting until these objectives are attained.

Ehud Olmert: Prof. Gavison, there are things that you say because you have to say them. It doesn't necessarily mean that, when we get to the moment when we have to decide if it's better for us to go on fighting or not to go on fighting, someone will come to me and say: "Listen, you're going to have to give Prof. Ruth Gavison of the Commission of Inquiry an answer, as to why you said on the 17th that we wouldn't stop fighting until we attained all the objectives." There are moves which are manifold and complex. There is a political campaign here; there is a PR campaign here; there is the internal morale of the Israeli public, in the shelters, under fire. There are soldiers who were kidnapped; I have to give them hope. That's a consideration, too.

In other words, Olmert said that the return of the kidnapped soldiers was an objective of the war – because “there are things that you say because you have to say them”. But the discretion of the Prime Minister cannot be the discretion of the media – and a situation in which the Prime Minister's utterances to the media are transformed into facts by the press coverage is unacceptable. That is precisely what happened – and that is also what prevented the development of any true public debate on that question. It should also be remembered that Olmert's statements were not always in line with the statements by the military – and the contradictions between the two could have given the media an opening for truly critical coverage. That, too, happened only rarely. One of the few times in which such a discussion was emphasized in the TV broadcast was on July 15, on Channel 10. In a studio discussion, which began in the eighth minute of the broadcast, Emanuel Rosen said the following:

It's totally clear in Jerusalem that this story is not an easy one, and all this talk of public endurance and home front endurance has to... The people who make the decisions in Jerusalem nonetheless have to set some kind of finish line, some kind of end point – if not in terms of setting a schedule, then at least in terms of setting a goal.

And now the question is: What is the actual goal of this operation? And it depends whom you ask. If you ask the Army, the goal is a bit broader. They're talking, and I quote, about “a general weakening of Hezbollah throughout the entire territory of Lebanon, and a change in the balance of deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah.”

On the other hand, if you ask Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the ministers, the members of the political echelon, the definition is narrower. It has to do with removing Hezbollah from Southern Lebanon, whether according to UN Resolution 1559 – that is, getting Hezbollah to leave here nicely, according to this or that agreement with the Government of Lebanon – or just using the Army to get them out.

It is entirely clear that these are two different goals. At the moment, the political echelon is combining its goals with those of the military echelon; but it's perfectly clear that this won't last long. And, for those who thought that this operation won't be over before Nasrallah's bloody head is served up to us on a platter – as we said, that's not the goal of the operation.

... The goal is minimal. It's limited: the removal of Hezbollah from Southern Lebanon. That, at the end of the day, is what Israel is going to want to declare at the end of this operation.

The Goals of the War (2): “A Slightly Unrealistic Wish”

A second point worthy of attention is this: Even if there were no contradictions between the various goals declared by the decision-makers, they could have known, even at the beginning of the war, that the goals themselves, or at least some of them, were not realistic. Many of them did know that at the time. This vastly important fact was the subject of vague allusions in the Israeli media, in this or that form, no less than 310 times during the war. Those allusions, however, were marginalized, drowned in a sea of headlines which proclaimed clear and attainable goals. Thus, for instance, the main headline of *Haaretz* on July 18 declared: **ISRAEL: CLEAN THE MISSILES OUT OF LEBANON.** A commentary column on page 2, written by Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, was headlined: **WHAT DOES NASRALLAH WANT TO ATTAIN?** But within the column, it emerged that it was actually Israel which did not exactly know the difference between a real goal and an illusion:

Even if the IDF is given all the time in the world, the last Katyusha will not be destroyed, and the finale of the conflict will apparently not include the raising of a white flag above the bunker. Israel is striving to harm Hezbollah to an extent that will disrupt its activity in the future, will create sufficient deterrence to prevent firing and kidnapping, and will enable the Government of Lebanon to restrain it. [...] In IDF circles, notwithstanding the restrained position taken by the G-8 this week, the assumption is that the diplomatic clock has started ticking. Israel has a limited amount of time, probably a week, before a ceasefire is forced on us. The Army will consider the removal of Hezbollah from its outpost line along the border as an achievement, and the posting of the Lebanese Army in its place as a resounding success. It is not certain that these moderate expectations can be reconciled with the illusion which was heard this week, in interviews with civilians in the press, about solving the problem once and for all.

From time to time, in the margins of the media coverage, it was revealed that senior IDF officers (and retired senior officers) were aware that the situation did not resemble

the one reflected in the headlines. Once during the war, for example, on July 16, *Maariv* published a headline on page 8 which read **AMIRAM LEVIN: WIPING OUT HEZBOLLAH IS A PRETENTIOUS GOAL**. The article stated:

Levin added that the goal of the struggle against Hezbollah had to be changed. “It’s not going to be possible to wipe out Hezbollah; Hezbollah represents more than 50% of the Shi’ites in Lebanon,” said Levin. “That’s why it’s a pretentious goal, and an incorrect one. The goal is to punish them.”

The commentary column by Zvi Barel, which appeared on page 6 of *Haaretz* on July 19, stated as follows:

In fact, even in briefings with Israeli politicians and senior officers, disarming Hezbollah appears to be a slightly unrealistic wish – to the point that those people content themselves with the phrase “significant weakening of Hezbollah”, and no one is capable of interpreting what the extent of that weakening should be.

It is hard to imagine more important information than this: the declared goals of the war are not even acceptable to senior figures within the defense and security establishment. Nothing of that, however, made it into the headline, which stated simply: **TERMS OF SURRENDER**.

Haaretz, July 19, commentary column on page 6. Deep inside the text, extremely important information can be found: the declared goals of the war are not acceptable to senior figures within the defense and security establishment. This information was relegated to a commentary column deep inside the paper. The headline of the column, TERMS OF SURRENDER, does not reflect this information.

In fact, even in briefings with Israeli politicians and senior officers, disarming Hezbollah appears to be a slightly unrealistic wish – to the point that those people content themselves with the phrase ‘significant weakening of Hezbollah’, and no one is capable of interpreting what the extent of that weakening should be.

From the text of the article



On even less frequent occasions, the Israeli media voiced a truly significant argument: that even if it were possible to achieve the declared goals, this would not materially change Israel's strategic situation. This argument, which deals with the overall logic of Israel's defense and security concept, was pushed, in most cases, far beyond the news pages – as if it was utterly unrelated to actual events. Thus, for instance, on August 10, an article headlined **MR. LEBANON** appeared on page 8 of the daily supplement of *Maariv*. The subhead stated: **“HEZBOLLAH CAN BE GRAVELY HARMED, BUT IT WILL COME BACK”, SAYS TIMOR GOKSEL, WHO SERVED AS THE UNIFIL SPOKESPERSON FOR 24 YEARS AND LIVES IN BEIRUT * HE BELIEVES WIPING OUT NASRALLAH WILL BE A CATASTROPHE FOR THE REGION AND RECOMMENDS: “IF I WERE OLMERT, I WOULD GAG A FEW GENERALS AND OFFICERS”**. The article itself read:

Whoever says Hezbollah needs to be pushed back north of the Litani River is an idiot. Push what Hezbollah? Do they have a battalion or brigade that can be repulsed? They are individuals that fight and then disappear into their homes. They hide their weapons in their wardrobes.

[...] We will all miss him very much. [Nasrallah] is the only one keeping Hezbollah together, including the military wing. Without him, Hezbollah – with its rifles and its launchers – is likely to shatter into little fragments. That would be a disaster for Lebanon, and it wouldn't really be healthy for Israel, either.

Sever Plocker's article, which was published on July 13 on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* under the headline **FATAL DECISION**, is an impressive example of the fact that it was not hard, even at the beginning of the war, to understand that there was another side to this issue as well. The example is impressive precisely as it appears against the backdrop of the main headline of that day's edition: **WAR**. Plocker writes:

Is the goal to start a protracted war of attrition, which will end in the destruction of the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Lebanon? It is possible, but not necessarily desirable. Is the goal to bring both of the terrorist organizations to their knees and make them plead for a ceasefire, from a position of weakness? It is desirable, but not necessarily possible. Meting out savage beatings to terrorist organizations doesn't always weaken them; sometimes it actually strengthens them. Is the intention to retake the Gaza Strip and the security zone [in Lebanon]? To go back to Nabatiya and Dahaishe? Does anyone miss them? [...]

In a moment of self-criticism, more than an hour after the start of the Channel 10 news broadcast on July 21, Yaakov Eilon and Ofer Shelah discussed the role of the media in this war, and the absence of any real public debate on the question of its goals:

Yaakov Eilon: Sometimes it seems as if this war is taking place on TV, no less than on the ground. Maybe in this regard – Ofer Shelah, all of you out there in the media – I’m playing a role – Some people say, you are reporting, while the war is still taking place, and in the past, perhaps – not “perhaps”; for sure – we weren’t accustomed to that, here in Israel. What I’m talking about is that while the fighting is still going on, while the war is still going on, everything here is broadcast live. The media are allowing themselves to point things out, to show angles, to make comments, and to talk about failures and difficult moments for the IDF while they are still happening. That’s new.

Ofer Shelah: No. First of all, Yaakov, I’m not sure it’s new. This has actually been happening for the last six years and in the conflict with the Palestinians as well. And in this sense, I think that Israeli media are playing a different role – a very bad one, as I see it: they are very busy stirring up panic about Israel’s strength... The impression is that we’ve bought into Nasrallah’s spider web theory, even more strongly than he really intended to sell it... And in this sense, this inflammatory media coverage is facilitating something which, as I see it, is extremely problematic, and that is the setting of frameworks for this war which are not realistic. If this inflammatory media coverage is helping the Defense Minister say that Nasrallah will remember the name Amir Peretz, then a situation arises in which Hassan Nasrallah’s fate is becoming the goal of this fighting... And that, among other things, comes from this inflammatory media coverage, which is transforming this campaign – which, with all due respect, is a local campaign; it’s not a campaign which determines the existence of Israel; it’s not a campaign which determines the strength of Israel. It’s a local campaign, which has to have the right local goals defined for it. And this situation is transforming it into much more than it is, and the media are part of that.

Emanuel Rosen: ... The very definition of this thing as a war, as a battle for our existence, as arm wrestling – who’s going to win? Hezbollah or us? – is an infantile definition. It’s a childish definition, which, in the final analysis, is also costing human lives. When a major newspaper in the State of Israel puts out a sticker that says “Israel is strong” or “Israel is winning”, that’s all very nice; but, eventually, this sort of thing causes the childishness and infantilism of the entire debate.

The Goals of the War (3): “Olmert Changed his Position Yesterday”

The last point which should be brought up in the context of the goals of the war is this: In the course of the war, the decision-makers changed the definition of the goals several times. Here too, the frequent change of goals should have alerted the media – but nothing

happened. When the goals changed, the media proclaimed the new goals as if they had always been there. The very fact that the goals had changed was mentioned only about 60 (!) times, by all of the media, throughout the war – and the overwhelming majority of those mentions were marginalized to an extreme degree in the media coverage. Only once in the entire war, in the July 23 issue of *Haaretz*, was an article, which appeared on page 6, devoted to the criticism within the political establishment of the goal changes – in the context of the transition into action by ground forces. The headline read: **CRITICISM IN KNESSET AND GOVERNMENT ON EXPANSION OF WAR: THEY DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THE GROUND OPERATION WITH US**. The text of the article said, among other things:

[...] Yatom stated: "I want to get a clear and unclouded report on what exactly the ground forces are doing in Lebanon, what the scope of those forces is and whether there is any intention of expanding the ground activity. I emphatically object to bringing in large forces. No one has been talking about that until now, and if that's what's happening, I want to know. We have to keep our eyes open."

Another MK from the Labor Party said: "Until now, the backing has been kept up. We all support the military operation – but it's time to start questioning the decision-makers who set pretentious goals."

At the same time, it should be noted that the top banner on the front page of that issue made no reference to this criticism by Government ministers, but flatly stated: **IDF INCREASES ITS ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON**.

The remaining mentions appeared in op-ed articles and similar texts. For example, Prof. Galia Golan wrote in an op-ed article which was published in Section B of *Haaretz* on August 6, under the headline **CHANCE FOR PEACE**:

The escalation and the war in Lebanon developed at lightning speed, and little, if any thought was devoted by either the Government or the Army to the results of the conflict. The declared objectives changed every week.

And this is what Uzi Benziman wrote in an op-ed article which was published in Section B of *Haaretz* on July 30:

Now the Government and the GHQ are debating how to end the campaign. The diplomatic formula now on the table is the posting of a multinational force along the border with Lebanon. The way Olmert is reacting to this plan illustrates his conduct throughout the entire war: more improvisation than profound thought. Initially, the Prime Minister dismissively belittled the idea; a week later, he changed his mind, and now he is displaying extreme interest in it. Israel is increasingly giving the appearance of really desiring the posting of an international force along its northern border. This deployment is being presented as a long-awaited achievement of the war.

Haaretz, July 23. Significant information on criticism by Government ministers and Knesset Members regarding changes in the goals of the fighting was pushed to the inside pages of the paper. The top banner of the issue, which told of the expansion of the ground operation, did not mention that criticism.

מלחמה בצפון

כ-200 קטיושות על יישובי הצפון; צה"ל מרחיב את פעילותו בדרום לבנון

↓
IDF INCREASES ITS ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON
Top banner of the issue, front page



↓
The article on page 6. The headline read:
CRITICISM IN KNESSET AND GOVERNMENT ON EXPANSION OF WAR: THEY DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THE GROUND OPERATION WITH US.

Yatom stated: “I want to get a clear and unclouded report on what exactly the ground forces are doing in Lebanon, what the scope of those forces is and whether there is any intention of expanding the ground activity. I emphatically object to bringing in large forces. No one has been talking about that until now, and if that’s what’s happening, I want to know. We have to keep our eyes open.”

Another MK from the Labor Party said: “Until now, the backing has been kept up. We all support the military operation – but it’s time to start questioning the decision-makers who set pretentious goals.”

From the text of the article

The question of the multinational force is worthy of slightly more detailed discussion here. At the beginning of the war, the deployment of the Lebanese Army in Southern Lebanon, along the border, was depicted as a distinct Israeli goal and an explicit demand addressed by Israel to the Government of Lebanon. The option of deploying a multinational force, on the other hand, was portrayed as undesirable. For example, an article published in

Haaretz on July 18 stated: “The working assumption in Jerusalem is that the Lebanese Army is strong enough to enforce the security arrangements, whereas a UN force in a UNIFIL format will be of no value, and the posting of a strong international force will pose a dilemma for Israel, because troops of friendly nations will be required to endanger their lives for its sake.” This was also the way it looked in the TV news broadcasts. Note the following discussion, between Haim Yavin and Ayala Hason, on the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 16:

Ayala Hason: Israel has very clear demands... first of all, the return of the soldiers and the complete implementation of 1559 – that is, the deployment of the Lebanese Army and no other army.

Haim Yavin: Israel hasn’t budged from the positions it expressed at the beginning of the operation.

Ayala Hason: As long as it has the international wind at its back, and as long as the operation succeeds, Israel has no intention of relinquishing those demands.

The next day, July 17, the Channel 2 news broadcast headline stated: **OFFICIALS IN OLMERT’S OFFICE: WE WON’T LET A MULTINATIONAL FORCE LIMIT OUR ACTIVITY AGAINST HEZBOLLAH**. Only in the 64th minute of the broadcast could it be understood, for one brief moment, that there was also another perspective:

Nevertheless, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they are saying that the posting of an armed NATO force, backed by the Americans, which would supervise the deployment of the Lebanese Army, as they did in Kosovo, would not be a bad solution at all... In the Prime Minister’s Office, they are saying: We won’t let a multinational force deploy along the border and limit our activity against Hezbollah – but some people there are also saying: We’ll have to make a precise examination of all the alternatives. It is necessary for there to be some possibility of our doing something like that. We shouldn’t just say no. We shouldn’t just stubbornly refuse.

A week after that, a dramatic change took place in the goals set by the Prime Minister – the multinational force was transformed from an undesirable option to an uncompromising demand by the Government. Thus, for example, a reference headline on the front page of the July 24 issue of *Haaretz* declared: **THE DIPLOMATIC ARENA – OLMERT’S MODEL FOR SOUTHERN LEBANON: “INTERNATIONAL FORCE WITH MILITARY CAPACITY AND FIGHTING EXPERIENCE”, COMPOSED OF EUROPEAN AND ARAB STATES**. In the article itself, on page 5, Aluf Benn reported that the most senior members in the Israeli government supported Olmert’s approach: “Livni, Defense Minister Amir Peretz, and Deputy Prime Minister

Shimon Peres presented a united front to the guests from Europe: the multinational force is necessary in order to help the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Army impose their sovereignty."

What is the meaning of this shift? What does it indicate about the initial rejection of this option at the beginning of the war? What, again, does it indicate about the decision-making process? None of these questions arose for discussion. The very fact that a change in direction took place was mentioned in the commentary by Aluf Benn, which appeared alongside the article; that commentary, however, "understood" Olmert, and did not seek to examine the critical questions in depth:

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert changed his position yesterday and expressed support for the deployment of a multinational force in Lebanon. In doing so, he joined forces with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who had favored that idea as early as the initial stages of the crisis. Last Tuesday, Olmert was still speaking dismissively of the multinational force: "That's a good headline, but our experience shows that there is nothing behind it." His opinion apparently changed when he realized the depth of the pit that he would have to climb out of, in the absence of a decisive military victory.

Some sort of attempt to understand why Olmert changed his mind so dramatically could be found in Nahum Barnea's commentary column, which appeared the same day on page 21 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* (with a reference headline on the front page):

When the delegation of UN diplomats was here last week, Olmert told them: Why are you talking about an international force? There already is such a force, UNIFIL, and it has proven to be a disgraceful failure. Livni was prepared to discuss the establishment of such a force. Olmert had reservations. Yesterday, speaking to a delegation from the United States Congress Intelligence Committee, Olmert spoke positively about a multinational force. Has he changed his mind? Not really, but he has understood that he has to transmit a positive vision, a peaceful solution which is acceptable to the entire world. It's good for PR, and maybe, at the end of the day, we will find the sucker who will be tempted into sending his troops into Nasrallah's arms and allowing Israel to wind up the operation honorably.

Toward the end of the month, on July 26, two commentary columns were published in *Haaretz* – both with reference headlines on the front page – which sought to address the question of goals and objectives in a more general manner. Aluf Benn's column appeared on the front page, under the headline **HOW WERE THE DECISIONS MADE?**

The objectives. The disadvantage of a hasty decision was that the objectives of the operation were vague and changed during the fighting. Breaking the might of Hezbollah turned out to be impossible, and the attempt on Nasrallah's life – an ostentatious move, which could have provided a well-covered achievement for the IDF and Olmert – failed as well. Senior IDF officers, in the first days of the war, contented themselves with a less ambitious and unquantifiable goal: “to weaken Hezbollah”.

Several days later, the operation got a new diplomatic wrapping. According to the updated version, the Israeli military operation was only the preamble to an international diplomatic maneuver aimed at enforcing Security Council Resolution 1559, which calls for disarming Hezbollah and deploying the Lebanese Army in Southern Lebanon. Israel announced that it would establish a buffer zone on the Lebanese side and would forcibly prevent the return of Hezbollah to that zone. The new approach placed the responsibility for the solution on the international community.

Israel agreed to the posting of a large international force on the other side of the border, in order to assist the Lebanese Army in its new deployment and prevent Hezbollah from returning to the fence. This meant that the required outcome of the operation was now the removal of Hezbollah from the border, in order to prevent incidents. Israel waived its previous demand: forcible removal of the rockets from the hands of Hezbollah and supervision of the Lebanese-Syrian border, so as to prevent any transfer of armaments to the organization.

In addition, Ze'ev Schiff published a commentary column headlined **WERE THE OBJECTIVES ATTAINED?** This column also began on the front page and continued on page 4. It opened with the following paragraph:

On Wednesday, exactly two weeks ago, Hezbollah initiated an attack on Israeli territory. Since then, a war began, in which the Government and the IDF set a series of objectives. During the fighting, declarations by leaders and senior officers were heard, and at times, the impression arose that Israel's objectives were fluid and insufficiently clear. Now that two weeks have passed, it may be definitively stated that Israel is still far from winning the war, and its principal objectives have not been attained.

These two commentaries are noteworthy – but no less noteworthy is the fact that the newspaper did not present this important material as news reportage. The hasty decision, the fact that the goals were not presented properly to the public, the fact that the goals changed and, in the final analysis, were not attained – all this constitutes extremely newsworthy material. *Haaretz* left it at the level of commentary. Only on August 14, a day after the Government had accepted the ceasefire agreement, did *Haaretz* publish a substantial article, under the headline **HOW THE GOALS OF THE FIGHTING CHANGED.** The article presented a diagram which shows the changing goals along a timeline:

Diagram and timeline under the headline HOW THE “GOALS OF THE FIGHTING” CHANGED

כן השתנו "מטרות הלחימה" בלבנון

12 ביולי
ראש הממשלה אהוד אולמרט: ישראל תגיב באופן שיבחר לכן שאלה שהחלו בפעולה המלחמתית ישאו באחריות כואבת מאוד ומורחקת לכן למשעיהם; לא נהגל מרמז עם גורמי טרור בכל מה שקשור לחייהם של חיילים ישראלים

17 ביולי
אולמרט: נאבק על החזרת שני החיילים החטופים, על הפסקת אש מוחלטת, פריסת צבא לבנון בכל דרום לבנון והוצאת חיבאללה מהאזור תוך מימוש החלטת האו"ם 1559. נסגע בכל טרוריסט המסייע לתקוף את אזרחי ישראל, נהרוס כל תשתית טרור ישראל לא תסכים לחיות בצל איום הטילים

19 ביולי
הקבינט מגדיר את חיסול ראשי חיבאללה כאחת ממטרות המבצע בלבנון. מטרות הלחימה הנוספות, על פי הרחלת הקבינט: להחזיר את החטופים ולהפסיק את ירי הטילים ולהסיר את איום הטילים

25 ביולי
אולמרט: כל הסדר יהיה חייב להיות מבוסס על עקרונות הצהרת הג'י-8 וישום מלא של החלטה 1559, כולל שילוב כוחות בינלאומיים

31 ביולי
אולמרט: נסיים את המלחמה כשיסור האיום מעל החיילים. לא נבליג עוד על מעבר כלי נשק לחיבאללה ולא נאפשר לארגון לחוש את יכולותיו. ישראל מעוניינת שכוח רב לאומי אפקטיווי יתפרס לאורך הקו הכחול ובמערב הלבול בין טוריה ללבנון, מיד עם התפרסותו יהיה אפשר ליישם הפסקת אש

1 באוגוסט
אולמרט: המהום הראשון אל הבסטונ שנתום המערב לא יהיו כלכל טילים במטוח ירי לישראל

3 באוגוסט
שר הביטחון עמיר פרץ תוקף בהרחבת המבצע הקרוקעי על נהר הליטאי כדי להשתלט על מרחב השיגור של הרקטות קצרות הטווח של חיבאללה

8 באוגוסט
אולמרט: היעד המרכזי הוא לצמצם את היכולת של חיבאללה לירות קטיושות על תושבי ישראל. העמדת בראש סדר העדיפויות שבאב לבנון יהיה בדרום לבנון אחד המאמצים המרכזיים של העמות הוא שתחורר החטופים ללא תנאי

9 באוגוסט
החלטת הקבינט הביטחוני: מחליטים להמשיך את המאמצים להגיע להסדר מדוי. במטרה להשיב החיילים החטופים ללא תנאי; להפסיק מידית את כל פעולות האיבה מלבנון נגד ישראל ונגד מטרות ישראליות, כולל הפסקת ירי הטילים והרקטות. ליישם במלאה את החלטה 1559 של מועצת הביטחון. לפרוס כוח בינלאומי יעיל בדרום לבנון, יחד עם צבא לבנון, לאורך הקו הכחול; ולמוע חיבאללה לרסק את יכולותיו המבצעיות

13 ביולי
מקורות מדיניים: ישראל דרשה הרחקת מוצבי חיבאללה הגבול וצירת אזורי חץ צבא הלבנוני של הגבול כתנאי להפסקת אש בצפון. מטרת המבצע היא לשנות את יחסי הכוחות בין ישראל לחיבאללה, ישום החלטה 1559 ושחרור שני החיילים החטופים

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2 ביולי
החיל הטחוף אהוד גולדווסר

4 ביולי
החיל הטחוף אלדר רנב

5 ביולי
רקטות בתחום מטרה בחיפה, 24 ביולי

10 ביולי
מחליטים ירי טיל לאסאט (טחוף חיוני) בירי

JULY 12
PRIME MINISTER EHUD OLMERT: Israel will respond in a manner that will cause those who started an act of war to bear very painful and far-reaching responsibility for their actions; [...]
POLITICAL SOURCES: The goal of this action is “to impose a cost and to change the rules of deterrence”.
MINISTER OF DEFENSE AMIR PERETZ: The goal is that the incident will end with Hezbollah struck to the point that everyone there regrets starting the incident.

JULY 13
POLITICAL SOURCES: Israel will demand the distancing of Hezbollah posts from the border and the creation of buffer zones on the Lebanese side of the border as a condition for a ceasefire in the north. The goal of the operation is to change the balance of forces between Israel and Hezbollah, implementation of Resolution 1559 and the release of the two kidnapped soldiers.

JULY 17
OLMERT: We will fight for the return of the two kidnapped soldiers, for a complete ceasefire, deployment of the Lebanese Army in all of Southern Lebanon, and the removal of Hezbollah from the area through implementation of UN Resolution 1559.

[...]. Israel will not agree to live in the shadow of the threat of missiles.

POLITICAL SOURCES: Israel will demand that demilitarization arrangements be introduced that will rid Southern Lebanon of missiles.

JULY 19

The Cabinet defines the elimination of the heads of Hezbollah as one of the goals of the operation in Lebanon. Other goals of the fighting, **ACCORDING TO THE CABINET DECISION:** To return the captives, to stop the firing of missiles and to remove the threat of the missiles.

AMONG THE PRINCIPLES OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION: Full implementation of Resolution 1559 including disarmament of all the militias.

JULY 25

OLMERT: Any arrangement will have to be based on the principles of the G-8 declaration and full implementation of Resolution 1559, including integration of international forces.

JULY 31

OLMERT: We will end the war when the threat to the soldiers is removed. We will no longer be restrained regarding arms transfers to Hezbollah and we will not allow the organization to renew its capabilities. Israel is interested that an effective international force deploy along the blue line and at border crossings between Syria and Lebanon. As soon as it deploys it will be possible to implement a ceasefire.

AUGUST 1

OLMERT: From day one we did not promise that at the end of the campaign there would be no missiles within firing range of Israel.

AUGUST 3

MINISTER OF DEFENSE AMIR PERETZ supports the expansion of the ground operation to the Litani River in order to gain control of the launch zone for Hezbollah's short range missiles.

AUGUST 8

OLMERT: The main goal is to reduce Hezbollah's ability to fire Katyushas on Israel's residents. We have placed as the top priority that the Lebanese Army will be in Southern Lebanon. One of the central efforts of the confrontation is the unconditional release of the captives.

AUGUST 9

DECISION OF THE SECURITY CABINET: Decide to continue efforts to reach a political arrangement, in order to return the kidnapped soldiers unconditionally; to immediately halt all hostile action from Lebanon against Israel and Israeli targets, including cessation of missile and rocket fire; to fully implement Security Council Resolution 1559; to deploy an efficient international force in Southern Lebanon, together with the Lebanese Army, along the blue line; and to prevent Hezbollah from rehabilitating its operational capacities.

3> THE COVERAGE OF THE DECISION MAKERS: “A BACKBONE OF STEEL”

“The estimates and recommendations by the Chief of Staff were central, and to a great degree also decisive, in formulating the positions held by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, and the political echelon in its entirety. The Chief of Staff almost single-handedly managed all of the military activity. This fact, in part, is explained by the structure of the defense establishment; in part, it is derived from many years of tradition; and, in part, it is related to the inexperience of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense in defense-related matters, and to their position as strangers to the defense and security establishment...”

Winograd Committee Interim Report, Chapter 7: Conclusions, Section 168

The uncritical coverage of the decision-making process in the Second Lebanon War was reflected almost ludicrously in the way in which the media, at the beginning of the war, chose to portray Prime Minister Olmert and (then) Defense Minister Peretz. Instead of asking both of them the obvious, difficult questions, the media proclaimed a transformation: lo and behold, the two civilian leaders had become tough military commanders. They spoke without fear, acted with confidence, controlled the situation with a strong hand – and enabled the IDF to take action against the Hezbollah with an iron fist. For example, Emanuel Rosen, in the Channel 10 news broadcast on July 17, said the following:

It seems to me that the most interesting point of all is the position assumed by Ehud Olmert. He entered the Prime Minister’s Office as a civilian, as someone who was perhaps perceived as a weak person, a moderate person – some people even said, “Heaven help us, a leftist” – and therefore, it’s much easier for him today to be tough, uncompromising and unstoppable in the face of this threat which has arisen before us. Imagine Ariel Sharon today, speaking from the same podium in the same situation. He would immediately be suspect; people would immediately come and say: “Sharon has unfinished business in Lebanon; he has to settle accounts; he’s a professional Arab-eater” – figuratively or literally. No one suspects Olmert of such a thing, and accordingly, as a supposedly weak Prime Minister backed by a supposedly weak Defense Minister, it’s a lot more convenient for him.

On July 13, Alex Fishman published a commentary column on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, under the headline **AND NOW: TOTAL OFFENSIVE**. The column read as follows:

Nasrallah doesn't believe Israel will really take action. [...] He views this Government with scorn. That's what the research studies in Israel show. He estimates that this is a Government which will give in to pressure. He doesn't understand one thing: precisely because this Government has fewer badges of military rank, it's harder for it to withstand the pressure of Israeli public opinion. And Israeli public opinion is sick and tired of operational failures and malfunctions and political infirmity. It wants Hezbollah to finally get clobbered. [...] Strange. Ministers of Defense in recent years, highly experienced old hands in battle, gave advice, contented themselves with threats and signals, and allowed Hezbollah to grow powerful and grab us in a stranglehold. The one who took the risk and decided to change the strategic direction was, of all people, the civilian, Amir Peretz.

The editor-in-chief of *Maariv*, Amnon Dankner, in an article mentioned earlier, which was published on the front page of the newspaper on July 17 and headlined **ISRAEL IS STRONG**, said the following:

It's not easy for us, certainly not for those who are being fired upon; but we are allowed to give our full support to the greatest strategic surprise of recent years: the Government of Israel surprised Hamas, and especially Hezbollah, by not getting cold feet and not looking for the “easy way out” of fudging and surrendering to threats, but showing that it had a backbone of steel. Olmert and Peretz have shown a resolve which was pretty much missing from previous governments.

It should be stated, as a marginal note, that, in the first days of the war, a few media voices were also heard calling for Peretz to be replaced by Minister Avi Dichter. Those voices disappeared after several days.



The security-expert status newly attained by Olmert and Peretz also entitled them to photographs of the kind usually reserved for generals. On July 16, a picture on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* showed Olmert sitting in a military helicopter, holding a flashlight in his mouth and reviewing documents. The headline above the photograph read: **WAR DIARY**. The same picture appeared on the same day on page 3 of *Maariv*. A photograph on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 19 showed Defense Minister Peretz reviewing Israel Air Force pilots standing at attention, their faces obscured. One of the headlines of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 1 declared: **RINA MATZLIAH ACCOMPANIES THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON THE 21ST DAY OF FIGHTING**. In the background, Defense Minister Amir Peretz was shown in an IAF helicopter, with earphones on his head, gravely going over military material with a senior officer. This is how the report itself sounded:

Rina Matzliah: Today, the 21st day of the fighting, the Minister of Defense went up north to tour the northern border. After last night's Cabinet meeting, we are obviously in the last stage of the campaign, and there is a feeling that there will be a chance of a turning point on the front. He uses the minutes of the flight to go over secret material brought to him by his military aide, Brig. Gen. Eitan Dangut. What hasn't already been said about the Minister of Defense and his relationship with the military establishment, of which he is in charge? One thing is clear: Amir Peretz is not the same man we knew from the Histadrut [Israel General Federation of Labor], from the [Labor] Party. The weight of the responsibility is showing on him, as if he were 20 years older. First stop: the division war room. The Minister of Defense greets the officers more as a friend than as their commander. Notwithstanding his total identification with the establishment, there is still something in him, as we will see later on, which seems to observe it from the outside looking in... No military operation was ever named for him; he does not keep badges of rank in his desk drawer; and that makes his relationship with the senior officers different – cleaner, perhaps. On the way, he exchanges opinions with the Deputy Chief of Staff... He gets out of the car and goes right into a protected building, to meet with mayors. They like his militant spirit and encourage it. How does this fit in with his former image as the whitest “dove” in the left-wing of Labor?... Few, if any, Ministers of Defense had had to face so many challenges in such a short time, at the very beginning of their term in office.

The security expert status newly attained by Olmert and Peretz also entitled them to photographs usually reserved for generals.



↓
Captioned photographs on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 19: **WITH A PONYTAIL IN THE COCKPIT**



↓
Captioned photograph on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 16: **WAR DIARY**

A more critical view of this image change was almost always relegated to the margins of the broadcasts and newspapers. Thus, for example, this discussion between Ofer Shelah, Raviv Drucker and Chico Menashe waited until the 95th minute of the Channel 10 news broadcast on July 14 (and please note: the question of the image is raised in only a semi-critical manner; Menashe almost identifies with it):

Raviv Drucker: I can just see Dan Halutz talking about setting Lebanon back, the clock in Lebanon back, 20 years... Amir Peretz telling Alex Fishman something like "Hassan Nasrallah will never forget the name of Amir Peretz". Is this some kind of tendency to overreach themselves?

Chico Menashe: The ones who are managing this whole operation are Prime Minister Olmert and Amir Peretz, and – what can you do? – they've been labeled as inexperienced. And accordingly, the level of their declarations is also... they're giving out a message – a rather pompous one – and the important thing is that they naturally want it to be heard by the Israeli public, the viewers at home, and Hassan Nasrallah, too. They're saying: "We won't give in; we're not frightened; we've let this monster, the Hezbollah, grow and stockpile weapons for 10 years; we've been reluctant until now, because of the home front – but no more." The Prime Minister sums up: "This is our moment of determination... the People of Israel, and I as its representative, will not give in."

Ofer Shelah: That explains the style, too: it's "the People of Israel".

Nothing in the headlines of that news program, which were broadcast 95 minutes before, even hints at this discussion:

THESE ARE PICTURES FROM THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH, AS IT NEARS THE END OF THE THIRD DAY: KATYUSHAS, DOZENS OF KATYUSHAS FELL ON THE GALILEE TODAY; THERE WERE SCORES OF WOUNDED; WE'LL HEAR A REPORT ON THAT IN JUST A MOMENT. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER, THE IDF CONTINUES TO ATTACK LEBANON FROM AIR AND SEA, IN THE SOUTH AND PRINCIPALLY IN THE BEIRUT AREA. THE ENTIRE PROGRAM, OF COURSE, WILL BE DEVOTED TO THE FIGHTING, AS THE THIRD DAY OF FIGHTING COMES TO A CLOSE.

Other voices which claimed that this image transformation concealed the fact that Olmert and Peretz had actually been "kidnapped" by the generals, and had lost their independence as a political echelon, were marginalized by the media coverage. In *Haaretz*, on July 25, Nehemia Shtrasler wrote an article in Section B, under the headline **THE TWO CIVILIANS JUMPED TO ATTENTION:**

Hopes were high. For the first time in many years, two civilians stood at the head of Israel's defense pyramid. Many celebrated the victory of the civilian-social agenda over the military-security agenda and believed that when the Chief of Staff would press for a military solution, Olmert and Amir Peretz would stand like a fortified wall against him. After all, they don't see their world through rifle sights. But what happened was just the opposite. The civilians felt inferior to the generals, and within moments, they approved a fateful decision and pretentious, unattainable goals: removal of the Hezbollah from Southern Lebanon and deployment of the Lebanese Army in its place.

On July 27, Reuven Pedatzur published an extensive article on the subject – again in Section B of *Haaretz*. Under the headline **KIDNAPPED BY THE GENERALS**, Pedatzur wrote:

[...] And that's precisely the difference between us and the others. Whereas, in all democracies, a certain dependency of the politicians on the generals is evident, and attempts are made to reduce that dependency, in Israel, it's not just a dependency – the politicians are 'kidnapped' by the generals. The process of formulating the national defense and security policy is actually subservient to the IDF and the defense establishment. In the absence of national security planning mechanisms outside the IDF, most of the planning activity – not just on the operative and tactical level, but on the strategic and political level – is performed within the military. The result is that military considerations have become dominant, sometimes even more so than political considerations. In this way, Israel's foreign relations have come to be founded on a fundamentally force-based concept, which gives military considerations priority over diplomatic considerations. In this way, the IDF Chief of Staff is given power which exceeds that of corresponding officials in other Western armed forces. He is the one who decides which policy proposals will be brought before the Prime Minister and the Government. This, obviously, gives him great political power. The Knesset and the Government generally do not intervene in the actions of the defense establishment, which enjoys almost absolute autonomy in its policy-making – starting with such weighty subjects as the extent and composition of the defense budget, and even the planning of wars, which are brought to the attention of the Government for its approval only after the preparation process is complete. No wonder, then, that to this day, two weeks after the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War, the Knesset has not held even a single debate on this war, its objectives and the IDF course of action.

And in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on August 13, Eitan Haber published an opinion piece in the daily supplement:

The question of why we really wage this war will not be fully, correctly, fairly and truly answered by any commission of inquiry. No one can get into the box in the back of Olmert and Peretz's heads. What I am saying is that the two of them will never admit it – but in those tempestuous moments of success by Hezbollah, when the proposals to strike in Lebanon were placed before them, each of them said to himself: “They say we’re civilians, that we haven’t the slightest idea about defense, and that – excuse the expression – we don’t have the balls to act. So we’ll show them.” How do I know that’s what happened? Because the spin put out by the Prime Minister’s Office that same day was the most idiotic of this century: “Olmert made a bold decision, even bolder than Barak and Sharon”.

The Image Cracks: “Olmert Prevented an Achievement”

This, then, is how it looked at the start of the war: the IDF was very pleased with the free hand given to it by Olmert and Peretz, and the two of them were portrayed as generals. Toward the end of the war, however, that image began to crack. The more the campaign in Lebanon went awry, the more voices from the military establishment, claiming that the political establishment was preventing the IDF from acting freely and not allowing it to win, began to make themselves heard. Those voices took over the headlines of all Israeli media. Thus, for example, the main headline of *Haaretz*, on August 11, stated: **AGREEMENT TO END WAR IN SIGHT**; the subhead of that article emphasized the IDF’s position: **GHQ OBJECTS: “CEASEFIRE WILL BE A BIG MISTAKE”**. One of the headlines on page 2 said: **SECURITY FIGURES: OLMERT PREVENTED AN ACHIEVEMENT**. The article read as follows:

The Ministry of Defense and the GHQ strongly object to the proposal for a ceasefire now, in the wording that is being formulated in various contacts. Security figures claimed that the Prime Minister stopped the military campaign from progressing to the Litani River, and that, in so doing, he prevented the possibility of any significant military achievement for Israel. According to those figures, it would have been better for the Cabinet to permit the IDF to start moving forward, thereby increasing the pressure, in order to achieve an agreement more favorable to Israel. The wording of the agreement as it stands, they said, is very problematic for Israel. It contains no solution for the immediate return of the kidnapped IDF soldiers, provides no mechanism for close supervision which will prevent the smuggling of new armaments to Hezbollah, and does not promise that the organization will be disarmed. “Nasrallah will keep playing with us, and in the end, there’ll be another war,” they warned. Senior GHQ officers told *Haaretz*: “The political echelon is the one authorized to decide. But stopping the operation now, when the troops have been waiting for days to go into the Litani area, will be a big mistake.”

The front page of the same issue, however, contains a reference to a commentary column on page 5, written by Avi Issacharoff and Amos Harel, who were also among the authors of the article cited above. The column warns against the military spin – to which the editors of the paper themselves had succumbed in the news headlines:

For several weeks now, the top brass of the IDF have been talking about the need for a “victorious image”. [...] There is still no image, but it looks as if they’ve finally found a victory story yesterday, which the Army will go on telling itself, and us, in the weeks and months to come: how we were about to subdue Hezbollah for all time, in a broad campaign up to the Litani River, until the politicians intervened.

Haaretz, August 11. The headlines of the issue and the articles on the first pages emphasize the military perspective, which undermines the discretion of the political echelon. On the other hand, a commentary column on page 5 warns against the IDF’s spin. The editors of the paper themselves succumbed to that spin in the news headlines.



[...] For several weeks now, the top brass of the IDF have been talking about the need for a “victorious image” – an impressive military achievement that will justify the blood that was spilled and the time that was wasted, which will end the campaign by restoring Israeli deterrence. There is still no image, but it looks as if they’ve finally found a victory story yesterday, which the Army will go on telling itself, and us, in the weeks and months to come: how we were about to subdue Hezbollah for all time, in a broad campaign up to the Litani River, until the politicians intervened.

From the text of the commentary column on page 5

↓
AGREEMENT TO END WAR IN SIGHT; GHQ OBJECTS: “CEASEFIRE WILL BE A BIG MISTAKE”.
Main headline and subhead of the issue, front page

➔ **GHQ DOESN'T LIKE THE CEASEFIRE**
The commentary column headline on page 5

A similar situation can be seen in *Yedioth Ahronoth*. The news headline on page 5 of the paper, on August 13, read: **BECAUSE THE OPERATION WAS DELAYED, WE LOST PRECIOUS TIME**. The top banner read: **CRITICISM IN THE IDF**. The attack by the military echelon on the political echelon continued in the text of the article as well:

Senior Northern Command and GHQ officers expressed criticism this weekend of the decision to delay the ground operation deep inside Lebanon. [...] According to those officers, the Northern Command had forwarded the operative plans to the GHQ, which had passed them on to the political echelon, but the plans had not been approved. "The day after the war ends, we will have to ask why the plan was not carried out."

An additional news headline, which appeared on page 3 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on August 11, claimed that decisions by the political echelon were endangering the lives of the soldiers on the ground:

SOLDIERS FURIOUS: WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HESITATES, WE'RE DYING
(main headline)

RESERVISTS IN LEBANON TO YEDIOTH AHRONOTH: DECISION BY POLITICAL ECHELON TO FREEZE CAMPAIGN IS HARMING TROOPS ON THE GROUND * "THE OFFICERS DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO; NO ONE KNOWS WHERE WE'RE GOING – AND MEANWHILE, HEZBOLLAH IS FIRING MISSILES AT US. WE'RE LIKE SITTING DUCKS"
(subhead)

The other position, which held that the political echelon was actually obligated to restrain the IDF, appeared only on page 6 of the weekend supplement of that issue. The headline of the article, by Sima Kadmon, was **TWO CLICKS FROM NEW YORK**,⁷ and the subhead stated:

ONLY A HERO CAN APPROVE AN OPERATION LIKE THE ONE THE IDF PROPOSED, SAYS THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE; AND ONLY A HERO CAN FACE DOWN ALL THOSE GENERALS

The article itself made the following statement:

Olmert must weigh the matter in the most finely calibrated balance. He no longer has to prove that he is capable of making decisions at a heavy price. He has already proven that. The IDF feels it is duty bound to propose military operations

7 In the Hebrew original: "Two Fingers from New York", referring to the Israeli film "Two Fingers from Sidon" about the First Lebanon War. (Dir. Eli Cohen, Israel/Lebanon, 1986, shot by the IDF Film and Photography Unit).

of this type, which are likely to bring about a distinct victory. Olmert’s role, say his advisers, is to define the boundaries for them, to clarify the objectives for them, and not to forget that the Army is a tool in the hands of statesmen, and not the other way around.

The following appeared further in the same article:

The impression which can be gotten is that the Cabinet made a decision which it did not want to make. The one who clearly expressed this was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. You’re always talking about deterrent force, said Livni. You say that the entire world is watching our decision, and that a decision against bringing in ground forces would detract from the IDF’s potential for deterrence. What am I supposed to do now? After all, if I vote against it, I’ll detract from the potential for deterrence. Livni expressed in words the feelings shared by quite a few ministers, who believe that the Army did not leave them a choice; that it presented apocalyptic forecasts and transformed the war into an existential test. If the head of the Mossad declares that if we do not win this war the hourglass of our existence will turn over and start running, how is it possible to vote against it?

This is an exceptionally important, newsworthy story, which demonstrates how the political echelon took a back seat to the IDF officers. However, with the exception of Channel 10, and to a certain degree, *Haaretz* as well, the subject never made the headlines. Israel’s other media never even touched it. Here is a commentary column by Aluf Benn, which appeared in *Haaretz* on August 10. The first part of the column was published on the front page, under the headline **HOLD ME BACK:**

The proposal by the defense establishment for a broad-based ground operation by the IDF in Lebanon, up to the Litani River, was approved yesterday by a great majority in the Cabinet: nine in favor, three abstentions. According to the participants in the meeting, however, the results of the vote did not reflect the ministers’ real opinions. “If everyone had voted the way they talk, the majority would have been against the proposed operation,” says one minister. If this is true, why did no one vote against it? “We were afraid,” explains the minister, “to show the public and Hezbollah that there are cracks in the Government and its support of the IDF.” The problem is that the cracks exist, and people are no longer making efforts to hide them.

This is how it sounded on the Channel 10 news broadcast on August 14:

Raviv Drucker: What we are hearing now from political players is rather astounding – that from the very beginning, the operation had no purpose; that there weren't any military achievements that people wanted to attain.

Yaakov Eilon: Are you talking about the 60 hours, starting on Friday night at approximately 1 a.m., when the Security Council resolution was passed, and up to this morning?

Raviv Drucker: That's right. In the course of the operation, we've been paying a very, very heavy price. More than 30 soldiers have been killed in this operation. As we said, we've been told that the Prime Minister did not want this operation. And what actually happened is that, as a result of the threat which arose when he said "Were going for a military operation", the operation started like some kind of train that left the station. And when they wanted to stop it, when the Prime Minister wanted to stop it, it was very, very difficult, because the soldiers were already en route, and then they had to, well, to take positions, all kinds of things like that. The Army has its own versions of this story. This is something that will have to be looked into very, very carefully. Because this is one of those operations that, from the beginning, didn't have a feasible, attainable goal. They just went there in order to stay there, to take the best possible positions as defensive positions, before they left and some other force came in.

Emanuel Rosen: ... As a direct continuation to what Raviv said, I can unequivocally state that the Prime Minister did not want this ground operation, and it will definitely be necessary to examine the question of why he went for it, if he didn't want it. The Minister of Defense came that morning with a definitive position, pounding on the table; there was military pressure, there was media pressure, there were articles in the press. People went in for a hopeless military operation with an extremely high price.

This, then, is the situation. It seems that, quite possibly, if "everyone had voted the way they had talked, the majority would have been against the proposed operation". Apparently, the Government ministers, once again, put aside their own opinions in the face of the Army's apocalyptic position. All this, it appears almost unnecessary to state, is extremely newsworthy material, which was systematically marginalized in the media coverage.

The Wars of the Generals: “This is Really Damaging for Udi Adam”

“The Chief of Staff, precisely because he is a charismatic person and extremely dominant within the Army, was also responsible for the culture of the discussions within the Army, which was extremely flawed – as was discovered in the context of the campaign in the North, from the very beginning.”

Winograd Committee Interim Report, Chapter 7, Section 186

Reports on differences of opinion within the military establishment appeared only rarely during the war. Almost the only times such reports were emphasized were when critics called for the use of more force. Nevertheless, the subject dominated the headlines for two or three days, when the Chief of Staff decided to appoint Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinski as his representative in the north – thus, in practical terms, removing Maj. Gen. Udi Adam from his position as O/C Northern Command. But even at that moment, the reports on Maj. Gen. Adam’s dismissal, in the overwhelming majority of cases, refrained from any in-depth examination of the differences of opinion which led to the ouster, focusing instead on the interpersonal relations between Adam and the Chief of Staff, and the general statement that the IDF was “uncomfortable” with the general’s conduct. Thus, for example, a headline on the front page of *Haaretz* stated: **MAJ. GEN. UDI ADAM OUSTED FROM MANAGEMENT OF WAR IN NORTH**. The article stated that the ouster was motivated by “the Army’s lack of success in the fighting”. Further down, the article also said that: “Halutz’s decision was made with the knowledge and approval of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense. The two did not like Maj. Gen. Adam’s statements in interviews with the media over the weekend, in which he hinted that the political echelon had limited the offensive activity proposed by the Northern Command.” The commentary column by Ze’ev Schiff, under the headline **ADAM OFFERED TO RESIGN**, alludes to more material differences of opinion, which were not limited to Maj. Gen. Adam himself:

It is a mistake to think that the decision to appoint the Deputy Chief of Staff, Moshe Kaplinski, over Maj. Gen. Udi Adam’s head was made in an instant. It was initially raised before the Minister of Defense, Amir Peretz, and was also brought before Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. [...] It seems that, if there is a command problem in the North, it is not focused only on one point, but concerns an additional senior level. Obviously, the change at the top of the command structure is not good for Maj. Gen. Adam personally; in addition, however, it sends a negative message to the IDF and the general public.

In *Maariv* as well, the headlines left the story at the level of the interpersonal relations between Halutz, Kaplinski and Adam. A front page headline on August 9, stated:

TEMPEST IN THE IDF (top banner)

KAPLINSKI PARACHUTED OVER UDI ADAM'S HEAD (main headline)

IN MIDST OF FIGHTING, CHIEF OF STAFF DROPS BOMB: HALUTZ SENDS HIS DEPUTY TO REINFORCE O/C NORTHERN COMMAND * MAJ. GEN. ADAM: "THIS IS WAR, AND THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN THAT" (subhead)

The headline on page 5 added:

ONE COMMAND – TWO COMMANDERS (main headline)

KAPLINSKI'S APPOINTMENT YESTERDAY AS COMMANDER OF NORTHERN FRONT RAISES MANY EYEBROWS * THIS DESPITE CLARIFICATION BY CHIEF OF STAFF, WHO EXPRESSED COMPLETE FAITH IN MAJ. GEN. ADAM * "THERE ARE WORSE THINGS AT THIS MOMENT," SAID MAJ. GEN. ADAM IN RESPONSE, "BUT DOES THAT MEAN THIS WILL GO WITHOUT PROTEST? PROBABLY NOT" (subhead)

In this case as well, the more material discussion remained deep within the article:

According to those sources, the main problem with the Northern Command was that it did not succeed in bringing about a highly significant, morale-raising achievement for the IDF. Rather, it became embroiled in a protracted and exhausting wrestling match, in which the IDF and Hezbollah appeared almost equal in strength, although, in actual fact, the IDF won every battle it got into. In the Northern Command, however, these arguments were summarily rejected. According to senior officers in the Command, Adam believed, from the start of the war, that this wouldn't be a "fly-swatting" operation, and that the State of Israel and its citizens would have to be patient, because Hezbollah is a serious enemy which had been preparing for war for years and enjoys the support of two states. According to those sources: "Anyone who now says that Adam was too careful and too slow has to think about what explanations the IDF commanders and the heads of the political echelon would have to give the public if we had gone in with all our might and at full speed and suffered dozens of casualties each day."

In the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 8, speaking with Gadi Sukenik, Roni Daniel alluded to material differences of opinion as to the planning of the war – and stopped there:

Gadi Sukenik: ... By the very nature of things, we'll start, of course, with what's been happening in the last few hours – a kind of – Roni Daniel, correct me,

perhaps you’ll correct me, but this is how it looks to me from over here – a kind of live-broadcast ouster of the O/C Northern Command, in one way or another.

Roni Daniel: The move was made, and people here aren’t holding still for it. That is, officers within the Northern Command, we hear them saying “This is really damaging for Udi Adam”... For a month now, this war has been going on along the northern border; people have been dissatisfied with the way it’s been going, especially the incessant damage being done to the home front; that may well be the background. The thing is that the plans for this campaign were not made in the Northern Command, and Maj. Gen. Adam was in the position of having to carry out moves, although he didn’t agree with all of them.

And on Channel 1, the same day, military correspondent Yoav Limor spoke critically of the Chief of Staff – but also exposed an open secret about the way he himself had been covering the war: “We were very careful, this last month, not to express criticism of the Army.”

Look, Haim, the Chief of Staff can’t oust himself, I suppose, so he went after the O/C Northern Command. I think that’s the way it is. The failure is the Army’s failure. We were very careful, this last month, not to express criticism of the Army... This is certainly bad news because it lets the public know that something is happening. Because the public has been sitting in shelters for 28 days, while the political establishment, the international establishment, everybody has been letting the Army win – and what this means is that the Army isn’t managing to win.

In the days after the ouster, the media continued, in one way or another, to follow up on the developments in the affair. The story became Adam’s personal story. The concepts which arose in the coverage included “scapegoat”, “an injustice was done to him”, “his name was besmirched” and so forth. Comparisons with the incident on the southern front in the Yom Kippur War, when Haim Bar Lev was “parachuted” in over Shmuel Gorodish’s head, were repeated several times. The more important questions were dropped from the agenda.



הרוחות סוערות בצה"ל

קפלינסקי הוצנח מעל אודי אדם

באמצע הלחימה, הטיל אתמול דרמטכ"ל פצצה: הלוחן שלה את סגנו לצפון כדי לתגבר את אלוף הפיקוד ■ האלוף אדם: "זו מלחמה ויש דברים קשים מזה" ■ פליקס פריש, עמ' 5

עמיר רפפורט

הדחה בפועל

"מאמצי צה"ל להציג את מוטויו של משה קפלינסקי אתמול בפיקוד העפון כמחלף "טבעי" החסורים לא משום משמעותם. במקרה הטוב יש כאן הבעת אי אמון. במקרה הנורע זו הדחה בפועל. התשובה לתגנות רב אלוף חיים כי ים מעל ששאל מודיעין בחיית הדרום מכליחית יום הטיורים מיט מנומט אביל יש קהים על דימית" האמפר הפלא בנפ" 5

Reports on differences of opinion within the military establishment appeared only rarely during the war. They dominated the headlines for two or three days, when the Chief of Staff decided to appoint Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinski as his representative in the north – in effect removing Maj. Gen. Udi Adam from his position as O/C Northern Command. But even at that moment, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the reports refrained from any in-depth examination of the differences of opinion which led to the ouster. Any material discussion was marginalized in the coverage.

→ TEMPEST IN THE IDF; KAPLINSKI PARACHUTED OVER UDI ADAM'S HEAD *Maariv*, main headline, front page, August 9

A material discussion appeared only deep within the article on page 5

In the Northern Command, however, these arguments were summarily rejected. According to senior officers in the Command, Adam believed, from the start of the war, that this wouldn't be a "fly-swatting" operation, and that the State of Israel and its citizens would have to be patient, because Hezbollah is a serious enemy which had been preparing for war for years and enjoys the support of two states. According to those sources: "Anyone who now says that Adam was too careful and too slow has to think about what explanations the IDF commanders and the heads of the political echelon would have to give the public if we had gone in with all our might and at full speed and suffered dozens of casualties each day."

4> THE FEAR OF DEFEAT: “THE COUNTDOWN FOR THE ENTIRE ZIONIST ENTERPRISE”

“The campaign in the North exposed, among other things, problems related to structural, cultural and operational characteristics unique to the Israel Defense Forces. Some of the subjects which came up in the course of our examination are not new. They were raised, for example, by the State Comptroller and the comptroller of the defense and security establishment. Some of them also appear in the Agranat Commission⁸ report. This fact gives rise to questions as to the IDF’s ability to draw conclusions from deficiencies and problems discovered within it.”

Winograd Committee Interim Report, Chapter 4, Section 51

Meanwhile, as the war continued, and particularly toward its end, a profound feeling of disappointment came over the media. The grave events in the course of the war, the kidnapping of the soldiers, the direct hit on an Israel Navy missile boat off the shores of Lebanon, the fierce battles in which dozens of soldiers were killed, the supply failures – all these were covered in a way which did not attempt to conceal the fact that the IDF was having difficulty functioning and, notably, was not managing to win. This kind of coverage gave rise to quite a few complaints against the media, which was felt to be too critical in its coverage of the war. This coverage, however, must be examined a bit more closely. The criticism voiced by the media against the IDF nearly always, with almost no exceptions, resulted from the declared and unequivocal media support for the war itself. This was criticism which called for harsher and more effective action and at times for revenge; it demanded more massive damage to Lebanon, and, most importantly, more results in the field – that is, more victories in battle. Toward the end of the war, when the media despaired of the decision-makers – the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff – they began to cling to the soldiers in the field. The media, speaking on behalf of those soldiers, demanded again and again: “Let us win!”

The overall feeling aroused by this coverage was not one of criticism, but rather, one of defeat. And that feeling grew stronger in light of the media coverage given to the

8 An official National Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Israeli government to investigate the circumstances leading to the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War.

other side – Hezbollah and its leader Nasrallah. Like Arafat and Bin Laden before him, Nasrallah was described as a figure from the world of legend: an evil genius, a sophisticated demon who, time and time again, succeeded in striking at us and coming out alive. All this eventually gave rise to a near-hysterical feeling of existential war, a war of “to be or not to be”. This being the case, the IDF’s failures were deemed to have only one meaning: Israel was losing its deterrent force – and therefore, the war should never have been stopped before victory had been achieved. This apocalyptic picture obviously left no room for truly critical coverage of the type which attempted to examine the war’s actual practical, political and moral justifications.

The Kidnapping of the IDF Soldiers: “The Rules Which Used to Apply in the North are Over”

All of the media outlets described the incident which set off the war – the ambush in which eight IDF soldiers were killed and the soldiers Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were kidnapped – as a grave failure on the part of the IDF. This is how Haim Yavin and Yoav Limor sounded, on the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 12:

Haim Yavin: Yoav, the writing was actually on the wall. After what happened in Kerem Shalom, and after similar kidnapping situations in the past, in the North itself, can you explain to me how such a kidnapping happens again?

Yoav Limor: I suppose that, if I say “a fiasco”, I will be putting it in extremely mild terms. Yes, “a really serious operational fiasco”, “a resounding failure on the part of the IDF” – all of those headlines are headlines. But this is what happened here this morning: there was no intelligence alert of any type whatsoever. This morning began as a routine day in the cities and towns of the North. As I said, there was no alert; the IDF was entirely surprised by this event. Two IDF soldiers were kidnapped, three soldiers were killed, and subsequently, another four soldiers were killed, in a chain of events that’s been expanding ever since the kidnapping incident. Yes, the IDF will have to do a lot of thinking, because Nasrallah has been declaring and warning us for more than a year now that he was going to kidnap. The Northern Command discussed the possibility that [the terrorists] would attempt to recreate the kidnapping incident in Kerem Shalom, but that was never translated into proper preparations at the border – and now this is where we are. And Haim, this is an entirely different reality. The rules which used to apply in the North are over. They’ve been broken. Starting this evening, after the Government session, the boundaries are entirely different.

Haim Rivlin asked similar questions in an item transmitted as part of the Channel 2 news broadcast on the same day (July 12):

Haim Rivlin: The most disturbing question of all is this: How did a Hezbollah force succeed in infiltrating into Israel? Did the electronic fence transmit an alert of the infiltration? How did it happen that none of the observation points and cameras along the border noticed what was happening, and if there was a so-called “dead zone”, how did it happen that Hezbollah was familiar with it and the IDF was not? After the Hezbollah force succeeded in entering Israeli territory undisturbed, how did it manage to take up a position a few dozen meters from the border, inside Israeli territory, not far from an IDF outpost, and set up a sophisticated ambush, attack the IDF force, claim a heavy blood toll, and finally, return to Lebanese territory with two kidnapped soldiers? And now for what will probably turn out to be the biggest failure of all: why did it take so much time to activate the “Hannibal procedure” – the emergency procedure for when an IDF soldier is kidnapped into enemy territory...?

The next morning, July 13, the headline on page 8 of *Maariv* said:

ATTACKED FORCE DIDN'T EVEN MANAGE TO FIRE BACK

The subhead continued:

HEZBOLLAH PLANNED KIDNAPPING CAREFULLY * SITE CHOSEN WAS HIDDEN FROM OBSERVATION POINTS * WHEN PATROL REACHED AMBUSH NEXT TO THE FENCE, TERRORISTS ATTACKED * O/C NORTHERN COMMAND: “ATTACKED FORCE WASN'T TRAINED WELL ENOUGH”

At the bottom of the page is a box with the headline **KIDNAPPING FIASCO – THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS.**

A similar feeling is reflected in a headline spreading across pages 4-5 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on the same day:

SERIES OF FAILURES, PRECISE PLANNING ENABLED HEZBOLLAH TO STRIKE: 2 SOLDIERS KIDNAPPED, 4 KILLED, 4 MISSING IN LEBANESE TERRITORY
(top banner)

BLACK DAY FOR IDF (main headline)

The media outlets described the incident which set off the war as a grave failure on the part of the IDF.



➔ **SERIES OF FAILURES, PRECISE PLANNING ENABLED HEZBOLLAH TO STRIKE: 2 SOLDIERS KIDNAPPED, 4 KILLED, 4 MISSING IN LEBANESE TERRITORY** (top banner)

BLACK DAY FOR IDF (main headline)

THE KIDNAPPING: THIS IS HOW IT HAPPENED (subhead with diagram)

Yedioth Ahronoth, headline spread across pages 4-5



➔ **ATTACKED FORCE DIDN'T EVEN MANAGE TO FIRE BACK**
Maariv, headline spread across pages 8-9

Note the difference between these items and the coverage of the event on Channel 10. This is how Yaakov Eilon and Alon Ben-David sounded at the opening of the broadcast on July 12:

Yaakov Eilon: Alon Ben-David, our military correspondent. A series of IDF failures took place today on the northern border. Do you want to rank them?

Alon Ben-David: I'm having difficulty finding the words. I think I can't remember an incident in which the IDF entangled the State of Israel in such a complicated

and difficult situation as the kidnapping of two soldiers in Lebanon, and the war which is about to follow it. Let's just say that we heard the O/C Northern Command saying that there was no alert. I don't think a person has to be an intelligence expert. It would have been enough to listen to the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, in his speeches over the last year, promising again and again that he would try to kidnap a soldier. They were aware of that in the Northern Command; they prepared for it – and nonetheless, Hezbollah carried out a kidnapping in what's called a "dead zone", an area which cannot be observed from the IDF observation points; it managed to get the soldiers out; and it took a long time until the Northern Command understood that a kidnapping had taken place. By the way, after the event in Ghajar 10 months ago, we warned, in our broadcasts, that the IDF was having difficulty reporting in real time, here on the northern border, and that it was hard to get a picture of combat situations in real time. The Northern Command rejected those statements – but today, it took 60 minutes from the moment the incident began until the IDF launched the "Hannibal procedure" – the kidnapping procedure, and those were 60 priceless minutes. That was the time in which it might have been possible to stop the chain of events in that kidnapping, to stop the Hezbollah vehicle with the kidnapped soldiers in it. But the IDF didn't have a chance, because it understood what was happening too late, and Israel is being dragged into a situation which is really not in its favor – a snowballing situation which, I think, has far-reaching implications, even beyond the northern border...

Ben-David, in this broadcast, raised the real questions. He did not get dragged down in the gut reaction of the defense and political establishment to the kidnapping fiasco – the gut reaction that said "We've been humiliated, and therefore, we have to strike now". What he said was: "I think I can't remember an incident in which the IDF entangled the State of Israel in such a complicated and difficult situation", and he later added: "Israel is being dragged into a situation which is really not in its favor". The remaining media adopted the gut reaction of the defense and political establishment, thereby removing any critical content from the coverage of the kidnapping itself. Yoav Limor, as shown above, reported a fiasco – but he immediately jumped to the bottom line: as of that evening, "the boundaries are entirely different". In the July 13 issue of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, which described the kidnapping fiasco on page 4, the main headline of the issue read as follows:

IDF STRIKES HEZBOLLAH FOLLOWING FATAL AMBUSH * FEAR: MISSILES TO NETANYA * GOVERNMENT DECIDES: (top banner)

WAR (main headline, in huge letters)

AFTER MIDNIGHT, GOVERNMENT MINISTERS APPROVE: ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST HEZBOLLAH UNTIL THREAT ON NORTHERN BORDER ENTIRELY REMOVED * IDF WILL ATTACK FROM AIR, SEA, AND GROUND OPERATIONS * EMERGENCY PREPARATIONS DECLARED IN HOME FRONT COMMAND FOR FEAR HEZBOLLAH WILL LAUNCH MISSILES AGAINST CENTRAL ISRAEL * NORTHERN RESIDENTS IN SHELTERS * SERIES OF FAILURES ENABLED HEZBOLLAH TO STRIKE PAINFUL BLOW AGAINST ISRAEL YESTERDAY * 2 SOLDIERS KIDNAPPED, 4 KILLED, 4 MISSING IN LEBANESE TERRITORY
(subhead)

The main headline on page 2 of the issue states: **RULES OF GAME HAVE CHANGED**. The article quotes the gut reactions of Olmert and Peretz:

What happened on the northern border is not just one more event in a series of incidents with Hezbollah, said Olmert to the ministers, but the crossing of a line that no state would be willing to accept. Someone extremely close to the Prime Minister defined the emergency session yesterday and the decisions made in the discussion in a single word: “War”. [...] Peretz told the ministers that there is an intention “to act, with all the strength available to Israel, so that, at the end of the conflict, the Government of Lebanon and Hezbollah will regret the moment they got us started”.

The headline on pages 2-3 of *Maariv* that day phrases, in the clearest possible way, both the sense of insult and the mobilization to regain Israel’s lost national honor:

PERETZ: THIS TIME WE WON’T THREATEN – WE’LL TAKE ACTION (main headline)
HEZBOLLAH GUERRILLAS WENT HOME WITH A CLEAR VICTORY, 10-0, OVER THE IDF. 8 IDF TROOPS KILLED, 2 KIDNAPPED* A DIFFICULT, INFURIATING AND FRUSTRATING DAY FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL (subhead)

And Dan Margalit, in an article published on page 3 of the paper, under the headline **TO RESPOND WITH FORCE**, compared Nasrallah to Hitler and expressed a hope that Olmert would prove that he “belongs to the school of Winston Spencer Churchill”:

[...] But the speech given by Nasrallah, who presented Ehud Olmert, Amir Peretz and Dan Halutz as miserable creatures, who would not dare, who would be deterred by his threats, who manifested the spider web state and the miserable democracy – left the Government in Jerusalem only one choice: to respond with force, immediately, unless it did not desire to survive. [...] Adolf Hitler and his cronies used the technique of arrogance and intimidation,

which won them considerable strategic achievements and sweeping support in view of the weakness of England and France. Israel must remember this. Nasrallah accused Olmert yesterday of being Neville Chamberlain. Only Olmert can prove that he actually belongs to the school of Winston Spencer Churchill.

Maj. Gen. (res.) Amiram Levin is quoted in *Captives in Lebanon*, a book by Ofer Shelah and Yoav Limor, as having described this emotional response, in the first days of the war, with the term “the Zidane effect”. In the 2006 World Cup, the soccer player Zinedine Zidane could not bear the insults thrown at him by Marco Materazzi, a player on the Italian team who cursed his sister, so he head-butted Materazzi in the chest – and thereby contributed, to a great degree, to his team’s loss. Today, following the publication of the Winograd Committee Report, we know that this is exactly how we launched the Second Lebanon War. This, in most cases, is also exactly how the media operated.

The Fear of Defeat: “Where is the Military Might of the IDF?”

Feelings of defeat and anxiety gradually took over the war coverage, as the extent of the IDF fiasco unfolded: the direct hit on the Israel Navy missile boat; the collisions between IAF helicopters in the air; the many Merkava tanks hit by anti-tank missiles; the complaints by soldiers in the field that the war was being mismanaged; and the reports of shortages of basic equipment and even food for the IDF troops. These subjects made headlines throughout the war coverage:

A BLOW AT SEA – ONE OF HEZBOLLAH’S SURPRISES * MISSILE BOAT’S SOPHISTICATED DEFENSE SYSTEMS WERE NOT ACTIVATED BECAUSE NO ONE THOUGHT HEZBOLLAH HAD CRUISE MISSILES * RESULT: 1 KILLED, 3 MISSING * SENIOR NAVY OFFICER: THIS IS ONE OF OUR MOST DIFFICULT MOMENTS (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, headline on the front page, July 16)

BLOODY BATTLE BY SPECIAL FORCES UNIT

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS: 1. WHY DID THE IDF SEND EXPOSED, VULNERABLE INFANTRY FORCES INTO VILLAGES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, INSTEAD OF BOMBING THEM FROM THE AIR? 2. IS THE IDF USING ITS TANKS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON CORRECTLY, GIVEN THE THREAT OF HEZBOLLAH EXPLOSIVE CHARGES AND MISSILES? 3. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE EXACT NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN THE INCIDENT WAS NOT KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME? (*Maariv*, headline and teaser on page 2, July 21)

BODY OF FIFTH CASUALTY IN MAROUN A-RAS BATTLE EXTRICATED; IDF TESTIMONY: OPERATION POORLY PLANNED (*Haaretz*, headline on page 7, July 23)

13TH DAY OF WAR: HARD DAY: 2 PILOTS KILLED; CASUALTIES FOR IDF; GRAVE BATTLES FOR HEZBOLLAH STRONGHOLD IN BINT JBAIL... YOAV LIMOR IN MANARA ON NORTHERN BORDER: IDF SURPRISED BY HEZBOLLAH FIGHTERS' FIERCE RESISTANCE? (Channel 1 news broadcast, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 24)

Haim Yavin: Tell me, what exactly happened in Bint Jbail? How did it happen that, after the IDF declared yesterday that the battle in Bint Jbail was over, today we had more than eight soldiers killed there, more than 20 wounded, in the bloodiest battle of this war? How did it happen that an IDF elite unit walked into that kind of an ambush?!

Yoav Limor: ... The IDF was surprised today. Yes, the IDF was surprised by Hezbollah, which has been planning this campaign for six years; by Hezbollah which, throughout the night, observed the area and sent in forces...

Haim Yavin [addressing Maj. Gen. (res.) Yossi Peled]: Tell me, Yossi: are we doing something basically wrong in this war – something that calls for a fundamental change? More troops? More firepower? Should we be thinking of this as a war? (Channel 1 news broadcast, studio discussion, 19th minute, July 26)

WOUNDED SOLDIERS DISCUSS BATTLE WITH RARE OPENNESS [SOLDIER:] “WE WERE CANNON FODDER THERE” (Channel 2 news broadcast, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 27)

FIGHTERS' PARENTS COLLECTED MONEY TO BUY THEM HELMETS

RESERVISTS IN ELITE UNIT FOUND BASIC EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES * IDF SAID “THAT’S WHAT THERE IS”; **SOLDIERS HAD TO ASK RELATIVES FOR DONATIONS** (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, headline and subhead, page 5, august 13)

RESERVISTS SUM UP: NO EQUIPMENT, WEAPONS, TRAINING – IT WAS ANARCHY (*Haaretz*, headline on the front page, august 15)

Feelings of defeat and anxiety gradually took over the war coverage, as the extent of the IDF fiasco was unfolded.

קרב הדמים של לוחמי הסירה

פעילות צה"ל בדרום לבנון גבתה אתמול מחיר כבד... שני לוחמים בסירה אמו נהרגו... מאש שנמתה לעברם שעה ששמעו בכאוו הכפר מרח אראם... במהלך הלחימה נהרגו הרבה, שהתבצע תחת יד מאסבי של מעצת מרנדה, ומג עוד מספר חילים

השאלות הקשות

- מדוע מפקד צה"ל כונן את חייו הפופים והקנים בכפרים בדרום לבנון, במקום להפציץ אותם מאויר?
- האם צה"ל מפעיל נכון את הספקים בדרום לבנון לנוכח איום הספקנים והמילים שבדי חיבלאללה?
- כיצד ייתכן שבמשך זמן רב לא היה ברור מספר הפגעים המדויק באירוע?

➔ BLOODY BATTLE BY SPECIAL FORCES UNIT (main headline)

THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS: 1. WHY DID THE IDF SEND EXPOSED, VULNERABLE INFANTRY FORCES INTO VILLAGES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, INSTEAD OF BOMBING THEM FROM THE AIR? 2. IS THE IDF USING ITS TANKS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON CORRECTLY, GIVEN THE THREAT OF HEZBOLLAH EXPLOSIVE CHARGES AND MISSILES? 3. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE EXACT NUMBER OF CASUALTIES IN THE INCIDENT WAS NOT KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME? (Sidebar headline)

Maariv, headlines and sidebar on page 2, July 21

"היינו בשר תותחים שם"

➔ "WE WERE CANNON FODDER THERE"

Channel 2, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 27

מכה בלב ים

תת חייב את המהפכה של חיבתה... והכחיל המפיל לא נשען, כי פיתח יחידה נוספת בחיבתה... כעורר כחי ימים... תורתו נשדדה... ימים זה שני הימים והספינה כיוונו ילכו... 4 ימים

➔ BLOW AT SEA

Yedioth Ahronoth, headline on the front page, July 16

As more and more of these incidents occurred, the media clung more and more tightly to the soldiers, who expressed severe complaints against the IDF top brass and told of failures which had not enabled them, the soldiers, to vanquish the enemy. Thus, for example, an article on page 4 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on July 23, bore the headline: **THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS – “WHY DID THEY ENTER THE VILLAGE IN DAYLIGHT?”** The article itself stated:

The fighters of the Maglan and Egoz elite units yesterday criticized the poor intelligence in the battles in which seven soldiers were killed in Maroun a-Ras. Senior officers even criticized the management of the battle, in which five Egoz fighters lost their lives.

“The IDF has intelligence problems: Hezbollah improved its deployment and was prepared for our ground attack,” Egoz fighters said yesterday. “Everyone, and rightly so, is afraid to bring more massive forces in: we’re likely to pay another heavy price, due to the intelligence failures.” The fighters were totally surprised – not only by the strength of the Hezbollah resistance, but by the camouflage, the large amounts of fighting equipment and the underground bunkers within the nature reserve. “Our mission was to go up on foot into the thicket, which was a kind of fortified ‘nest’ of terrorists,” recalled the fighters. “We were surprised to see ‘military camps’ – in caves in the thickets and in the bunkers below them.”

Channel 1 correspondent Rotem Avrutzki, on August 4, hosted IDF reservists who complained about the conditions, but said – again and again – that they would do everything they could to carry out their missions:

Rotem Avrutzki: The soldiers are tense, especially the reservists... In the media, they heard reserve generals claiming that a massive ground operation should have been launched on the first day, that forces should have been parachuted deep into Lebanon, that the IDF should have surprised the Hezbollah fighters from the rear in order to settle the war quickly. Now, more than 20 days after the war broke out, the IDF is no longer capable of surprising anyone – but only of continuing to fight.

Reservist: We, as civilians, saw the pictures from Maroun a-Ras and Bint Jbail, and we know what kind of training we have, and we also know what kind of equipment we were given. All I ask is for everyone here, for everyone around this table [Minister Peretz, Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinski and other senior personages] – and a word to the wise is sufficient here – to make intelligent use of us, not to send us into all kinds of adventures which we aren’t properly equipped or trained for. We’ll do everything we can, in accordance with the training and equipment we’ve been given...

Another reservist: We feel that the equipment we were given, the equipment we were called up with, is inappropriate for the missions that we may be forced to

carry out. I'm saying this out loud, because I don't want to risk anyone's life, the life of even one of my soldiers, although we will carry out any mission assigned to us in the best possible way.

It should be noted that, at the end of the report, Avrutzki himself confronted Peretz with the following question:

People have been sitting in the shelters for three weeks, listening to the criticism by reserve generals, and they're saying: "What's going on here?! – Where is the IDF? Where is the military might of the IDF?!"

The headlines of the Channel 10 news broadcast on August 8 reported the reservists' complaints about the equipment given to them:

RESERVISTS TALK ABOUT THE WAR: "THE EQUIPMENT WE GOT AT FIRST WAS NO GOOD, AND THERE'S NO REASON WE SHOULDN'T HAVE THE BEST EQUIPMENT THAT THE IDF CAN GIVE"

The introduction to Yinon Magal's news report, on the reservists, emphasized the high motivation of the IDF reserve troops:

Despite the losses that the IDF reserve troops have begun to sustain, their motivation is still high. Our correspondent Yinon Magal was with the reserve troops in Lebanese territory today.

In the report, Magal describes criticism of the equipment and training, but adds, as if on behalf of the soldiers, that they had decided to postpone the criticism to the days after the war:

Yinon Magal: Reservists become soldiers very quickly. Coffee, naturally, making up for lost hours of sleep – almost like soldiers in compulsory service. "But the equipment we got," they tell us, "isn't good enough."

Soldier: There's lots of room for improvement. After all, the infantry are the ones who go into action, the ones who risk their lives at close range, and there's no reason we shouldn't have the best equipment that the IDF can give – like it gives all the other corps...

Yinon Magal: Off-camera, they speak much more bluntly. They use words like "disgrace" about the equipment and training; "but we'll save the worst criticism," they say, "until after the war. Then someone is going to have to give an explanation of how the IDF was prepared for this war."

From time to time, soldiers appearing in these features spoke out much more bluntly – and at times, their criticism went beyond the narrow question of the equipment. This mainly happened in *Haaretz*. Thus, for example, Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, in a commentary article at the top of the front page of *Haaretz* on July 25, under the headline **PRICE OF THE BATTLES IS REVEALED**, stated the following:

At the end of the second week of the war in Lebanon, there is an identifiable, gradual buildup of rage – suppressed, for the time being – in the field units involved in the fighting. Quite a few officers are having difficulty understanding what exactly the political echelon and the GHQ want to achieve in this war (and the goals involved are not always entirely identical), and are even casting doubt as to whether they have been given all of the tools to enable them to fulfill the task.

In a report by Itai Lansberg, in the 93rd minute of the Channel 1 news broadcast on August 4, a soldier was heard to say the following:

I’m not doing any harm to any fighting spirit. Listen, now everyone is expressing praise and admiration – but you know, the Army, this is all cover-your-ass for the Army. There were 160 of us in the outpost, in Zarit, and about 40 of our personal weapons were jammed. For two weeks, we used to trade weapons with each other. Those two Hummers that got burned were the only Hummers in the sector. And every time that they spoke with brigade headquarters: “Listen, about the weapons...” they got: “It’s not so bad, not so bad; there’ll be a truck coming on Wednesday.” Do you understand that in the Zarit outpost, we were supposed to go around with a clip in the weapon and the safety open? You have to go around with a clip in the weapon. But you’re going around with your weapon jammed, and you’re saying to your CO: “Wake up and smell the coffee! What are we supposed to do? Throw stones at them? What are we supposed to do here?” But that’s the way it was. The arrogance of today, we’re paying a heavy price for that arrogance, for all of those six years.

On August 10, the following headline appeared at the beginning of the Channel 10 news broadcast:

**SOLDIERS COME BACK FROM LEBANON, TELL OF DIFFICULTIES IN FIGHTING.
[SOLDIER:] “YOU HEAR THAT SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED, AND YOU ASK YOURSELF:
WHAT FOR?? BECAUSE IT’S NOT CLEAR WHY PEOPLE ARE GOING?”**

This is how it sounded in Shlomi Eldar’s report:

Shlomi Eldar: And this is the situation. The confusion, as we said, the way the decisions were made and the way the war has been going until now are frustrating the troops.

Soldier: Why?? Do you understand? Sometimes I'm amazed at myself for asking that question – but why do we go, do you understand? What's it good for? Let them explain that to us. If they explained it to us the right way, it would be perfect. But they don't explain. You explain to me: why do we go there? Why have so many soldiers been killed now? Why have so many civilians been killed up to now? I mean, what for?!

Another soldier: I have a feeling that they don't know what they want, they don't know what they want and they don't know where they're going. And we feel like we – like, you know – like pawns in somebody's chess game.

First soldier: You don't need us to be telling you these things. These are things that are really obvious here.

In the sixth minute of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 11, Gadi Sukenik provided information on severe criticism addressed by the senior field officers leading the fighting on the ground to the more senior echelons. The report was accompanied by the caption:

PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME: IDF TOP BRASS CRITICIZES WAR MANAGEMENT:

Aharon Barnea: Gadi, you've just come back from a week in Kiryat Shmona, and you have an interesting story for us this evening.

Gadi Sukenik: Yes, we're actually going back to the beginning of the operation, the start of the fighting. As we recall, in the first days, for about a week, there was a lot of bombing from the air. After that, they decided on sending in – I would almost say "throwing in" – small ground forces. Egoz, Maglan and other [elite units] were sent in, sent in to get hit at once, in a way that looked puzzling to many of us, even if we are not generals. There were a lot of casualties in those operations; something there looked strange. This was apparently also part of the background for – you can call it whatever you want to call it – the ouster of, or the appointment of a babysitter for, the O/C Northern Command. You have senior field officers, senior commanders, sitting behind the scenes and going crazy. They're having conniptions; they don't understand what's going on there! What kind of instruction is the senior military echelon giving to the military echelon on the ground?! One senior officer, whose letter I'll show you in a minute, started having conniptions: he tried to phone the Chief of Staff from his field headquarters... According to what I've been told, those phone calls were really severe – with raised voices, really loud. And when he didn't manage to get a meeting with the Chief of Staff, he sent a letter. Here are a few quotations from that letter. For example, he wrote:

“There was no surprise here,” he wrote to the Chief of Staff. “We were able to predict everything that’s happening now. But although everything was known in advance, the IDF,” according to that officer, “did exactly the opposite of what was necessary.”... This story is symptomatic. As far as we know now, there is a lot of criticism in the field units. ... And if anyone tells us that this is not the time to express criticism now, I’ll tell them: “That list that you just showed us [the names of the dead] is the best reason to broadcast this material now.”

All of this is definitely significant, but nothing here is out of the ordinary. These reports on the frustration of soldiers and officers on the ground joined hundreds of articles and reports on the bravery and total devotion of those same soldiers and officers; of reservists who joined up with no questions asked; on soldiers making the V-for-Victory sign while being carried out on stretchers on the way to the hospital; on wounded officers who wake up in the hospital and immediately start worrying about their troops, and all the rest of it. All these articles together create a sense of total mobilization in favor of this war, which is the soldiers’ war. The critical statements disseminated in the media were saying, in the final analysis: The war is just and right, but the decision-makers are not conducting it as they should, and that’s why we’re losing. Not one article said: There is something basically wrong with the war itself.

The Other Side (1): “The Fact that Nasrallah is Still Breathing – Is That a Fiasco for Israel?”

This sense of defeat, which arises from the coverage of the Army’s failures, was accompanied, throughout the war, by a description of the Hezbollah as a sophisticated, well-organized, highly developed organization – which was “showing us what’s what”. Here are a few examples:

ELITE UNIT FIGHTERS: WE DID NOT EXPECT SO MUCH RESISTANCE (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, headline on page 3, July 21)

NO WHITE FLAGS WILL BE RAISED

AFTER 12 DAYS OF FIGHTING, HEZBOLLAH IS STILL FUNCTIONING WELL * MOST KATYUSHA LAUNCHERS STILL OPERATIVE; TOP BRASS IN BEIRUT NOT HARMED * IDF STILL EXPECTS TO CAUSE GRAVE DAMAGE TO THE ORGANIZATION – BUT THIS FIGHT WON’T END IN A KNOCKOUT (*Maariv*, headline and subhead on page 4, July 24)

BLACK DAY FOR BROWN BRIGADE: 8 KILLED, 22 WOUNDED IN GOLANI’S LONG, DIFFICULT BATTLE IN BINT JBAIL

“IT WAS THE AMBUSH FROM HELL”

GOLANI FIGHTER: “THEY OPENED FIRE ON US FROM EVERY WINDOW, EVERY CRACK. WE FIRED BACK, WE FOUGHT LIKE MADMEN, BUT THE ENEMY FIREPOWER WAS DEADLY. THEY SET UP AN INCREDIBLE AMBUSH FOR US”

(*Yedioth Ahronoth*, top banner, main headline and teaser across pages 4-5, July 27)

FIGHTERS: “WE WERE LIKE SITTING DUCKS” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, headline on page 4, July 28)

THE OPERATION GOES AWRY: WHY IS IT HARD FOR IDF TO WIN? BECAUSE OF ANTI-TANK MISSILES, COMPLICATIONS IN RESCUING WOUNDED, AND THE AREAS FILLED WITH ENEMY FORCES (*Haaretz*, reference headline on front page, August 10)

This is how it looked in a commentary column by Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, headlined **BETTER TRAINED**, on the front page of *Haaretz* on July 21:

The partial success of the IAF and the continued firing on the North drove the IDF inside, into the southern part of what used to be the security zone. There, however, Israel found the Hezbollah more organized, more militant and better trained than it had been in previous episodes of fighting. In two days of battle, at least four soldiers from the best units the IDF has to throw into this confrontation were killed. The losses on the other side were heavier, although they were kept strictly confidential.

A division commander, formerly the CO of the Israeli casualties, drove furiously into the outpost, without his badges of rank; his face was gloomy. Deployed on the northern border road and further north is a representative sample of all of the IDF's elite units. Reservists called up by special order were deployed in the West Bank, and some of the infantry units were sent north. But officers who experienced the first two days of the war are not concealing the truth. A company commander who had served in Lebanon before the IDF pullout said: “This is a lot more complicated. They’ve got us figured out, they’ve improved their defensive capacities, and they’ve become an even bitterer enemy than they were in the past. We, on the other hand,” he added, “have lost the feel of the ground in Lebanon.”

This is how Nahum Barnea said it, in an article on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on August 10, under the headline **OLMERT, BREAK CONTACT**:

What you can see from here, deep in Southern Lebanon, unfortunately cannot be seen from there – from the generals' offices in the GHQ, from the windows of the Prime Minister's Office. We're getting lost chasing a victory that doesn't exist. [...] The question is how a handful of “Hezballoons” – that's what the soldiers call them

– can continue to drive the State of Israel crazy, notwithstanding the immediate presence of IDF troops. [...] The grinding battles between the IDF and Hezbollah remind us of the famous “Tom and Jerry” cartoon films by Hanna-Barbera. Tom is a strong, ambitious cat; Jerry is a weak and wily mouse. Jerry teases Tom. Tom fights back. In every battle between them, Jerry the mouse wins.

More than anything else, the media throughout the war were engaged in glorifying the name of the man at the head of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah. This obsessive preoccupation with Nasrallah gave him the image of an arch-enemy, larger than life, an invincible demon of a man, who succeeds in every evil plot he hatches. In the final analysis, this image transformed the elimination of Hassan Nasrallah into the number one objective of the war: If Nasrallah is wiped out all of the problems will be solved. If he manages to go on eluding us, defeat is inevitable. Below, in the following direct and simple words, Yaakov Eilon poses a question to Maj. Gen. (res.) Giora Inbar, in the Channel 10 news broadcast of July 12:

Yaakov Eilon: Giora Inbar, the fact that Nasrallah is still breathing – is that an ongoing fiasco for Israel?

And Haim Yavin, in the equivalent news broadcast in Channel 1, speaks with Maj. Gen. (res.) Yossi Peled:

Haim Yavin: Yossi Peled, listen, I was watching Hassan Nasrallah’s press conference today. We’re fighting against an elusive, sophisticated enemy, who is killing our forces – and it seems that we’re punishing the Lebanese Government, which perhaps really is helpless against this cunning enemy.

The attempts to harm Nasrallah occupied the main headlines in the first days of the war. Thus, for example, the main headline of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on July 14, stated: **THE TARGET: NASRALLAH**. On July 20, a main headline spread across pages 2-3 of the same paper:

IAF GOT DRAMATIC INFORMATION YESTERDAY: HEZBOLLAH LEADER IS HIDING IN REFUGEE CAMP IN SOUTHERN BEIRUT (top banner)

OPERATION TO WIPE OUT NASRALLAH (main headline)

On the same day, the main headline of *Haaretz* read as follows: **ATTEMPT TO WIPE OUT NASRALLAH**.

On July 13, *Maariv* published a reference headline on the first page of the daily supplement, accompanied by a picture of Nasrallah pointing a threatening finger, under

the headline: **MAN OF DESTRUCTION: PORTRAIT OF ARCH-TERRORIST (WHO AGAIN) THREATENS STABILITY OF MIDDLE EAST**. The headline over the continuation of the article, on pages 4-5, continued:

JUST BECAUSE OF POWER (main headline)

ONLY ONE TO SAY “NO” TO USA * ONLY ONE TO SUCCEED IN DRIVING IDF OUT OF LEBANON * ONLY POLITICIAN TO WORSHIP FAMILY VALUES * ONLY ONE WHO KEPT BREAD PRICES DOWN * HOW SHEIKH HASSAN NASRALLAH BECAME LEBANON’S NATIONAL HERO (subhead)

On July 16, the headline of a commentary article on the front page of *Maariv* read: **EVEN HASSAN’S NOT INVULNERABLE**.⁹ The writer, Minister of Transportation Shaul Mofaz, explained: “The world must understand: Hezbollah is al-Qaeda. Nasrallah is Bin Laden, and no less. And, this being the case, it must be clear that even Hassan is not invulnerable. Not out of revenge, but out of a sober view of reality.” A day later, the main headline of the paper proclaimed:

USA TO ISRAEL: WIPE OUT NASRALLAH

A headline on page 4 stated simply: **“WIPE HIM OUT”**. On July 19, the cover of the *Maariv* daily supplement bore a close-up shot of Nasrallah with two bent fingers raised in an “evil eye” gesture. The headline proclaimed: **INTERVIEW WITH SATAN**, and continued: **IN RARE INTERVIEW WITH AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT, SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE ENTERING BUNKER, NASRALLAH FIRST DISCLOSES WORKINGS OF HIS MIND**. The headline of the interview, on page 4, stated: **THE ARCH-NEMESIS¹⁰ SPEAKS**. The photo caption described Nasrallah as: **CLEVEREST AND MOST DANGEROUS LEADER IN ARAB WORLD**. The front page of *Maariv*, on July 21, referred to the weekend supplement. The cover page of the supplement was designed like a poster from the Wild West: a close-up shot of Nasrallah appeared in the center of the page, against a black background, with the [English] caption, in giant letters: **WANTED**. The subhead explained:

THE IRANIAN CONNECTION, THE SYRIAN SUPPORT AND THE ISRAELI MANHUNT FOR THE MAN WHO IS TRYING TO SET THE MIDDLE EAST ABLAZE

On July 16, Udi Segal explained, in the Channel 2 news broadcast:

9 In Hebrew: “no Hassan is Hassin” (invulnerable). Notice how the threat is emphasized through the similar sound of the two words.

10 In Hebrew *tzorer* – a bitter enemy of the Jewish people who sets out to destroy them, usually associated with Hitler.

There are quite a few people in Israel who say that a true change of direction in Lebanon can only take place if Nasrallah is taken down, only if he's hit, only if he's wiped out. With him around, it's not certain that there can be any true change.

And on July 20, Channel 10 anchor Miki Haimovich explained the most important question of the evening:

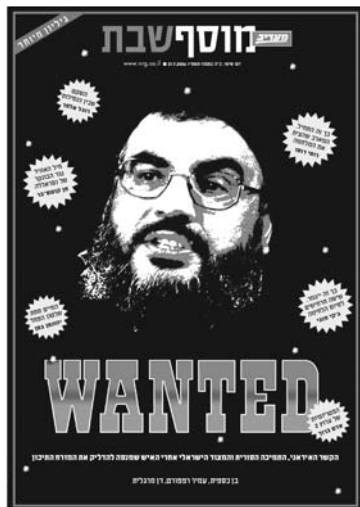
Is Nasrallah alive or dead? That's the question for tonight. There is still no definite answer. Last night, IDF fighter planes dropped 23 tons of bombs on the bunker where he was supposed to be. Hezbollah claims he wasn't there at all.

The obsessive preoccupation with Nasrallah gave him the image of an arch-enemy, larger than life, who succeeds in every evil plot he hatches.



OPERATION TO WIPE OUT NASRALLAH

Yedioth Ahronoth, main headline spread across pages 2-3, July 20



Maariv, weekend supplement cover, July 21



INTERVIEW WITH SATAN

Maariv, daily supplement cover, July 19

It should be noted that the media described Nasrallah in an almost admiring manner, even when it seemed, at times, that Israel was managing to overcome him. Note the following headline, from page 8 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 17:

NASRALLAH SENT OUT SIGN OF LIFE FROM RUINS YESTERDAY * VOICE WEAK – BUT THREATS QUITE SERIOUS (top banner)
SPOKE SOFTLY (main headline)

The headlines below, on page 9 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on August 1, refer to Israel's intelligence experts, who – as always – claimed to know exactly what was going on in the Arab leader's head:

TEAM OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND EXPERTS MONITOR BEHAVIOR OF HEZBOLLAH SECRETARY-GENERAL (top banner)
THE EXPERTS WHO GET INTO NASRALLAH'S HEAD (main headline)
ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS MONITORING HEZBOLLAH SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PRESS APPEARANCES: HE LOOKS GLOOMY; HE IS THINKING: "THIS IS NOT WHAT I PLANNED; ISRAEL SCREWED ME" * NASRALLAH LOOKS WORRIED, DISTRACTED, BUT FEELS HE HAS A FUTURE (subhead)

Another headline, on page 4 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 21, read: **ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION FAILS: HEZBOLLAH SECRETARY-GENERAL RELEASES UP-TO-DATE, THREATENING INTERVIEW** (top banner); **"YOU DIDN'T GET ME"** (main headline, in huge letters).

The Israeli intelligence experts claimed that they knew exactly what was going on in Nasrallah's head.



➔ **TEAM OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND EXPERTS MONITOR BEHAVIOR OF HEZBOLLAH SECRETARY-GENERAL** (top banner)
THE EXPERTS WHO GET INTO NASRALLAH'S HEAD (main headline)
Yedioth Ahronoth, headlines on page 9, August 1

In the supplement of the same issue, a column by Jackie Levy appeared under the headline **NASRALLAH’S SMILE**. In that column, Levy explained how Nasrallah was “driving us bonkers”:

But it won’t be possible to analyze this war, or even to name it, without mentioning the humiliation; the feeling that the most effective weapon used by Nasrallah to date is his smile; the fact that wiping off Nasrallah’s smile was one of the most prominent IAF achievements in the first days of the air strikes. Because there have already been enemies who infiltrated more deeply into Israel; but what we saw on their faces was respect. Even our most grievous foes demonstrated a certain degree of appreciation – if not for our young men’s courage, then for their professionalism, and if not for their professionalism, then for their sophistication or bravery. It was these qualities that made up the capacity for deterrence that we now seek; that capacity for deterrence disappeared with the appearance of Mr. Nasrallah, who is simply devoid of any admiration-hatred complex vis-à-vis Israel. [...] Nasrallah’s smile touches an exposed Israeli nerve. [...] Nasrallah’s smile is infuriating us. [...]

The Other Side (2): “The First Israel-Iran War”

Two additional components in the war coverage touched an exposed Israeli nerve, and were accordingly, and almost hysterically, stressed and emphasized. First of all, the media repeatedly pointed out that Hezbollah, in the final analysis, is one arm of the “Axis of Evil”; it does the bidding of Ahmadinejad and Assad, and accordingly, this war is actually being conducted against an “Iranian brigade”. Thus, for example, Amnon Dankner, in an article on the front page of *Maariv* on July 21, under the headline **THE FIRST ISRAEL-IRAN WAR**, wrote as follows:

What is happening in the North is officially referred to as a military operation or a campaign. The truth is that it’s a war, and accordingly, many people are toying with attempts to find a catchy name for it. Its proper name is: the First Israel-Iran War. The degree to which the Hezbollah was guided by Iranian instructions in fanning the flames of war is uncertain. What is entirely clear, however, is that Hezbollah is an arm of Iran, financed, directed and equipped by Tehran, and that the vast stockpiles of armaments buried in hiding places in Lebanon were placed there to await the day when the Iranians would have a distinct interest in using them against Israel.

The headline on page 3 of the same issue stated: **SENIOR IDF OFFICER: MISSILES WILL BE LAUNCHED ONLY WITH IRAN’S APPROVAL**. The subhead continued: **ESTIMATION:**

HEZBOLLAH'S "DOOMSDAY" WEAPON WILL NOT BE LAUNCHED WITHOUT EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS FROM TEHRAN * SENIOR OFFICIALS: SUCH A LAUNCH IS TANTAMOUNT TO A DECLARATION OF WAR.

And here is the main headline of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 19:

SYRIA SMUGGLING IRANIAN MISSILES TO HEZBOLLAH IN MIDST OF WAR (top banner)

ISRAEL CONVEYED GRAVE MESSAGE TO ASSAD (main headline)

WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES: IRANIAN EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS COORDINATES SMUGGLING OF WEAPONS TO HEZBOLLAH * IAF ATTACKED TWO TRUCKS LOADED WITH 220 MM ROCKETS WHICH CROSSED SYRIAN BORDER ON WAY TO LEBANON (subhead)

Pages 2-3 of the same issue bore the logo: **WAR IN NORTH; NEW FRONT?** The headline read as follows:

PM OLMERT SENDS SYRIA STRONG MESSAGE APPARENTLY WARNING IT NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN CONFLICT AND NOT TO SUPPLY HEZBOLLAH WITH ARMS (top banner)

STRONG MESSAGE TO SYRIA (main headline)

OLMERT HAD TO WARN ASSAD AGAINST PLAYING WITH FIRE AFTER DISCOVERING THAT SYRIA IS TRANSFERRING MISSILES TO HEZBOLLAH (subhead)

On pages 4-5, where the logo declared: **WAR IN NORTH; AXIS OF EVIL**, the headline told:

EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY EXPOSES: SYRIA, IRAN AND HEZBOLLAH COORDINATE MOVES IN WAR AGAINST ISRAEL (top banner)

HQ: IRANIAN EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS (main headline)

THIS IS MOST INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE OF ACTIVITY ON "AXIS OF EVIL" LINKING DAMASCUS, TEHRAN AND HEZBOLLAH * ACCORDING TO NEW INFORMATION, SYRIA HELPS COORDINATE BETWEEN HEZBOLLAH UNITS, PROVIDES TERRORISTS WITH SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHS OF ISRAEL, STORES VARIOUS MISSILES FOR THEM * IDF ATTACKED 2 TRUCKS TRANSFERRING AMMUNITION FROM SYRIA TO LEBANON YESTERDAY * PRES. BUSH: WE WON'T LET DAMASCUS INTERVENE (subhead)

The media repeatedly pointed out that Hezbollah is one arm of the "Axis of Evil", doing the bidding of Iran and Syria.

סוכנות בין אירופית חושפת: סוריה, איראן וחזבאללה מתאמות בניהן את מהלכי המלחמה נגד ישראל

המפקדה: שגרירות איראן בדמשק



אלה העדויות המכריעות על קילתו ציוו הושט המכור את רוסטם, המראן וחזבאללה • לפי המדע הרוסי מסוימת במתאם בין חירות וחזבאללה, מספקת למלכיים צולמי ימיתו של ישראל המוכנת כמרוס סוריה סוריה • מדלל תפעול המלחמה 2 משאות המכריעות המוכנת כמרוס סוריה סוריה • המכריעות המוכנת כמרוס סוריה סוריה

טוב איל דוטר
בשאר משחק באש
בשאר משחק באש... (The text continues with a detailed analysis of the conflict and the role of various actors.)

↓
EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY EXPOSES: SYRIA, IRAN AND HEZBOLLAH COORDINATE MOVES IN WAR AGAINST ISRAEL (top banner)

HQ: IRANIAN EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS (main headline)

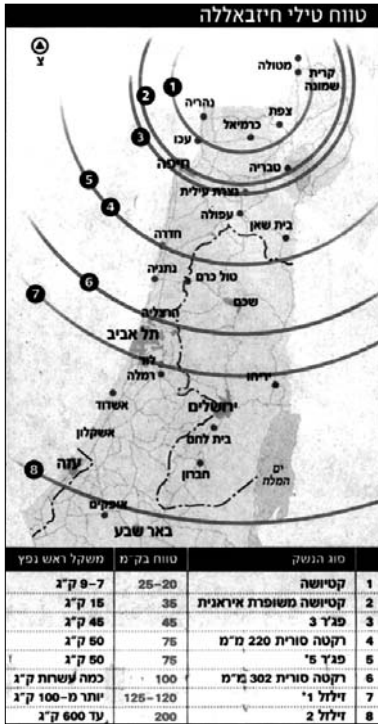
Yedioth Ahronoth, headline spread across pages 4-5, July 19



At the same time, the media repeatedly reported on new, long-range missiles, which Nasrallah might fire on central Israel. The newspapers and news broadcasts, almost every day, showed illustrations featuring maps of Israel with missile ranges marked on them. The names of the missiles appeared again and again in the reports, adding to the sense of threat. For example, correspondent Nesli Barda reported, in the Channel 10 news broadcast on August 5:

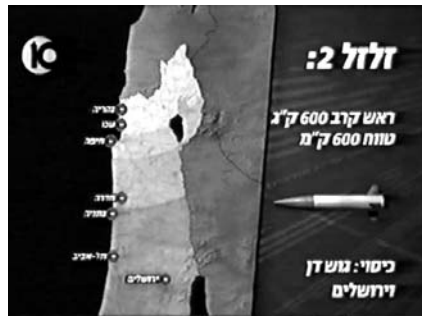
To date, what Hezbollah has fired at the cities and towns of the North, as far as Haifa and the Krayot towns, are various kinds of Katyushas – the Raad 3, with a 40 kg warhead, and the Fajjer 3. The next rocket in the Hezbollah storeroom is the Fajjer 5, which has already fallen on Afula and, yesterday, on Hadera, and which has a 70 kg warhead. The next missile in the Hezbollah stockpile is the Zilzal 1, with a range of 120 km, which can bring its 600 kg of explosives into the Tel Aviv area. The big brother of the Zilzal 1 is the Zilzal 2, with the same warhead and a 600 km range.

The media constantly reported on new, long-range missiles, which Nasrallah might fire on central Israel.



Haaretz, illustration on page 2, August 6, showing the range and other attributes of Hezbollah missiles.

Channel 10 news broadcast, August 5, from a report by Nesli Barda. A caption reading "Hezbollah's Missile Stockpile" accompanied a series of diagrams, like this one, which were shown in the report.



Voices claiming that the hysteria was overstated appeared in the coverage only rarely, as did voices which sought to explain that the hysteria itself was causing damage. The following is a passage from an article by Sever Plocker, which appeared in *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 17; a reference headline for that article, on the front page, read **BACK TO PROPORTIONS**.

We have developed a Nasrallah rite. We worship him as if he were the model of credibility, a terrorist personage who takes pains to implement every threat precisely. If Nasrallah said something was going to happen, it will happen. [...] Nasrallah's super-credibility in Israel is affected by what we ourselves consider as the deficient credibility of some of our statespersons and spokespersons. [...]

But when he appears on our TV screens, many of us lose our heads, our brakes and our sense of proportion, and fall right into the open arms of panic. Without belittling Mr. Nasrallah and his threats, [...] the time has come to free ourselves

from the stranglehold of panic and to go back to proportions. Who is the enemy facing Israel in this round of fighting? A terrorist organization with no home front, which has several thousand fighters, of whom a few hundred know how to do their job. [...] All in all, Nasrallah is a little, frightened extremist, who is being led astray and leading others astray. He sometimes lies and often boasts. The mouse that roared.

Below is a discussion featuring IDF reserve generals Amos Malka and Eitan Ben-Eliyahu, which was pushed back to the 73rd minute of the Channel 2 news broadcast on July 18:

Gadi Sukenik: This is the question of all questions; people ask me, and ask you, in the street again and again. Let's ask you first, Maj. Gen. (res.) Malka: do they still have weapons which can reach central Israel, and will they draw them?

Amos Malka: ... I think they themselves are formulating some kind of "red line" escalation levels, and holding back what they have left. Will they use it? They just might.

Gadi Sukenik: ... In other words, Eitan, you also share the opinion that they haven't yet thrown everything they've got into this campaign?

Eitan Ben-Eliyahu: ... We have to assume it exists, but, at the same time, I have a stronger and stronger feeling that it won't be used. Naturally, this kind of thing must always be said with reservations, for two reasons. We saw one of those reasons yesterday. It has to be said like this: in order to exploit the entire range, they have to take them southward; otherwise, they won't be able to reach Tel Aviv and central Israel. Accordingly, they'll have a very hard time – when we're flying above the area – taking those heavy, clumsy things into Southern Lebanon. That's one reason. The other reason is most unfortunately that because, to a certain degree, they are content, to a certain degree, with strikes on this entire area of Haifa, Afula and Tiberias – as far as they're concerned, the flame is high enough already, and so they have no reason to make such efforts.

Gadi Sukenik: They're not interested in showing their defiance by trying to fire missiles on Hadera, Netanya or Tel Aviv?

Eitan Ben-Eliyahu: When I read the situation, and when I perhaps put it together with what we've said before, that there is still some Lebanese infrastructure which we are refraining from touching – when I put these things together with the technical difficulties – both the technical difficulties and the lack of any real desire to do it – along with the fact that, if they do it, they have a great chance of failing, because we'll find them – all these things together reduce the possibility almost, I would say, to zero. But we always have to be careful; we have to be alert; it could yet happen.

Amos Malka: ... This is also a function of “red line” escalation levels. That is, if we escalate, I think they’ll escalate, too.

Gadi Sukenik: ... In other words, you actually agree that they apparently do have longer-range weapons – but that the probability of their using them is low at the moment.

Eitan Ben-Eliyahu: Very low.

Two points are worth mentioning here. Both generals, in the final analysis, believe that the probability is “very low”, but the entire news broadcast is painted in the colors of anxiety and fear of the long-range missiles. Secondly, both generals also explicitly mention our share in this war. Ben-Eliyahu speaks of the balance of threat, the Lebanese infrastructure which “we are refraining from touching,” and Malka expressly states: “If we escalate, I think they’ll escalate, too.” This is a perspective which was entirely absent from the news coverage of the war.

Deep into the Channel 10 news broadcast of July 21, in the 73rd minute, Ofer Shelah talks explicitly on the exaggerated preoccupation with Nasrallah, claiming that it was creating a false sense of existential threat:

Ofer Shelah: Hassan Nasrallah is insulting us. Hassan Nasrallah is touching us in deep places of anxiety. But this, by the way, is what always happens: the personalization of the Arab leader is a well-known phenomenon for us. As far as we’re concerned, the other side is never an entity with political wishes, whose head can be changed – it’s always Arafat, or Sheikh Yassin, or Hafez Assad, or Bashar Assad, or Hassan Nasrallah. And Nasrallah, in this sense, gets his power in the eyes of the Israeli public from us. Hassan Nasrallah does not threaten the existence of the State of Israel. He does not threaten the security of the State of Israel. He is a problem, which has to be dealt with; but turning the fate of Hassan Nasrallah into the pinpoint on which this entire operation stands is both ridiculous and damaging.

But a headline in the opening of that same news broadcast did exactly what Shelah said we shouldn’t do. It said: **ISRAEL HAS A PRICE ON NASRALLAH’S HEAD.**

In the Channel 2 news broadcast, on July 21, Amnon Abramovich said the following:

All this talk about intensive Air Force activity, a hundred aircrafts at a time, the attempt to eliminate Nasrallah or his top brass with 23 tons [of explosives] – all these things amount to glorification of Nasrallah. We’re taking an Islamic activist and glorifying him, giving him nine lives which he doesn’t have.

This kind of argument appeared here and there in op-ed articles published in the newspaper supplements. For example, an article by Zvi Barel, which appeared in Section B of *Haaretz* on August 13, under the headline **AND WHAT ABOUT KENNEDY’S ASSASSINATION**, read as follows:

In 30 days of fighting, the roar has never stopped: “Hezbollah is only the puppet of Iran and Syria. If we defeat it, we will defeat Iran and Syria.” Hezbollah has become a substitute for the gigantic war, that culture war we so much wanted to give ourselves and the “West” – that is, Texas. Hassan Nasrallah, in those 30 days, has come to resemble a voodoo doll, into which we need only to stick a pin, so that the curse of death will be passed on to the true evil ones. Because, after all, we are fighting against Islam, against the Arabs, against all the terror in the world. A small, sophisticated organization with excellent equipment is not enough for us. Because, after all, we deserve more than that: a global enemy, an “Axis of Evil”, a world-embracing struggle against anyone who isn’t democratic, who isn’t tolerant, who doesn’t believe in our God. [...] There is nothing more convenient than the definition of a threat in colossal terms, or the description of that threat as an international plot. Everything is tied up with everything else, and accordingly, it’s all easy to understand. [...] This blurring of vision which does not allow for examination of the details naturally has an ideological objective. When the enemy is so huge, so threatening and so elusive, any strike against it becomes a direct hit, and any war becomes so justified that it justifies eliminating any chance of agreements and compromises. [...] The possibility that Nasrallah “only” wanted to carry out his undertaking and return the Lebanese prisoners to Lebanon, that his massive armaments were intended to create deterrence but not to drag Israel into war, never had a chance. Everything is a plot, and not just any plot – an Iranian plot. [...] But by contrast to the broad brushstrokes which some of the experts or self-appointed experts are using to color the area, these organizations and movements are not being fed by the same food chain, and they certainly do not represent the majority of the Muslim or Arab public.

Here is what Nehemia Shtrasler had to say, in an article which appeared in Section B of *Haaretz* on August 4, under the headline **“UNPRECEDENTED ACHIEVEMENTS”**:

Even the Six Day War was dwarfed this week by the impressive spin generated by Ehud Olmert. Olmert talked about a war with “exceptionally impressive achievements, perhaps unprecedented,” and said that “it may be stated with certainty that the face of the Middle East has already changed”. And in order to elevate those achievements even further, the Government spokespersons upgraded Hezbollah from a small terrorist organization to an elite army, the

spearhead of the Iranian Army, which has come to destroy us; and if it's a question of destruction, all means are legitimate.

But these isolated voices quoted above were totally drowned out by headlines, reports, articles and commentary which continuously stoked feelings of existential anxiety. Note how this is presented by Sever Plocker in an article which appeared, under the headline **FATAL DECISION**, on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on July 13 (four days before he called on himself and all of us to put things back in proportion):

If the heads of Hezbollah and Hamas win the war they have declared against us, this will start the countdown for the entire Zionist enterprise. This isn't arm wrestling or fake macho-ism. This is a fatal decision: even if the two fanatic Islamic movements achieve only a symbolic propaganda victory – this could unleash other enemies throughout the entire Middle East. Preventing that victory is an absolute imperative; it's not open for bargaining.

Here is what Amnon Abramovitz (about two weeks after his complaint about the glorification of Nasrallah) had to say, at the beginning of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 9:

In order to understand the Cabinet decision, you have to go back to the secret security talks which preceded it. We will sum up those talks for you. Here is one quotation – we'll have more for you later: "In the absence of a victory, the hourglass of our existence will turn over." No less than that.

The next day, on August 10, Ben Caspit reinforced Abramovitz's statement, in a column published on the front page of *Maariv* under the headline **A WAR OF EXISTENCE**:

This war is as fateful as the War of Independence. As cruel as the Yom Kippur War. But then, there was no TV; the newspapers belonged to the State; the casualties did not have names (they were published much later); the families cried quietly and the cannons roared easily. The Cabinet of Israel's political and security figures sat for six hours yesterday, and its mood was depressing. From hour to hour, the list of fallen soldiers grew longer, and along with that list, the Government ministers perceived the full intensity of the fatal nature of the moment. Notwithstanding the pain, through the tears, we must not forget: in the War of Independence, Israel sacrificed 1% of its population – the equivalent of approximately 70,000 dead today. In the Yom Kippur War, we lost almost 3,000 soldiers within a brief period of time. Even in the Six Day War, more than 100 fighters were killed each day, after three weeks of nerve-wracking expectation of national annihilation.

And Alex Fishman, in a much discussed article which was published on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 31, under the heading **WE MUSTN'T STOP**, said this:

Not only must we not stop the campaign; we must not consider the events in Kafr Qana as a factor which can affect it. This is not meant to belittle human life or to disparage the distress of humankind. The State of Israel waged this war in order to achieve objectives which are vital to its existence, and it must attain those objectives; otherwise, the price which the State will go on paying through the years will be unbearable. If Israel fails in this war, it will not be possible to go on living in the Middle East.

This, in fact, was the atmosphere which prevailed among Israel's public, throughout a large part of the war: "If Israel fails in this war, it will not be possible to go on living in the Middle East." Nor is it possible to exaggerate the contribution made to this atmosphere by Israel's media.

5> ISRAEL'S HOME FRONT: JEWS "DON'T BREAK" – ARABS "BELIEVE IN NASRALLAH"

"We have found a particular deficiency in the Prime Minister's attitude toward the issue of the home front. From the beginning, the Prime Minister understood quite well that the northern home front would be exposed to rocket fire due to the planned operation, and even made sure that the ministers would understand this fact quite well. In consultations, members of the professional and political echelon commented that it would be worthwhile to improve the preparedness of the home front before the operation. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister made no preparations to enhance the shielding of the home front insofar as possible, or to take other measures to provide relief for the home front before the operation or in the first stages thereof."

Winograd Committee Interim Report, Chapter 7, Section 131

More than 2 million Israelis, about 30% of the population of the State, live in the North of Israel. About half of them are Jews and the other half are Arabs. All of them were directly exposed to the horrors of the war. Many left their homes and migrated to the center of the country. The others spent their time at home or in shelters. Many businesses, small and large, closed down. In many places, services were not provided and merchandise was not supplied. Almost 4,000 missiles landed on the cities and towns of the North in the course of the war. According to Home Front Command data, 43 civilians were killed, of whom 25 were Jewish citizens and 18 were Arab citizens of Israel. Of the 4,304 residents who were harmed, 2,774 suffered anxiety attacks, 1,388 sustained slight wounds, 68 sustained moderate wounds and 32 sustained severe wounds.

Today, following the publication of various studies on the subject, we know that Israel failed to care for the residents of the North during the war. For example, a report published by SHATIL (Training Center for Social Change Organizations in Israel) titled **CIVILIANS AT THE FRONT**, painted a grave picture of entire communities which were neglected by the Government, local municipalities that collapsed, and repeated demands by citizens which went unanswered. For example, the report stated that: "the State did not make itself available to its citizens", "the State did not arrange for suitable defensive means", and "the State did not provide its citizens with clear and sufficient vital information in view of the state of emergency; the information [...] was not readily available, from the standpoint of both content and appropriate language". In this state of affairs, which was hardly a secret even in the initial days of the war, the media might have been expected

to present a serious examination of the relevant questions, in real time, to the decision-makers: Is there a functional civil defense system? Are the shelters serviceable? What has been done to provide protection to civilians who stayed in the north? Are there instructions which tell civilians how to behave in this state of emergency? Is the State prepared to evacuate civilians if necessary? Were these data taken into account when the decision to go to war was made?

This, however, is not how the media covered the story of the home front during the war. The media chose to present their readers and viewers with a different story, a mobilized story. The suffering of civilians in the North was harnessed to support the war, and was accordingly told in two parts. One part told of Jewish civilians, who, in keeping up their day-to-day routine, were conveying a clear message to the enemy, the Government and the IDF: “They won’t break us. We are strong, and we give the Government and the IDF our backing in whatever they do.” The other part, which told of Arab civilians, was almost obsessively devoted to the question of loyalty: “Are you with us or against us?” In this state of affairs, the media coverage left almost no room to report on the actual situation of Israel’s northern citizens, their day-to-day suffering, their urgent need for help from the Government, and those among them who did not necessarily support the war.

The Jewish Home Front: “The Heroes We Hadn’t Known”

Almost 2,500 reports during the war dealt with the Jewish-Israeli home front. The overall message of the coverage was: “The civilians are demonstrating a staying power which is strengthening Israel at war.” This message was well formulated by *Maariv* on page 6 of the July 21 issue:

WAR IN THE NORTH – NO ONE’S BREAKING (logo)

NORTHERNERS UNDERSTAND THAT WAR IS HERE TO STAY AND ARE DETERMINED TO GO ON LIVING (top banner)

THE HEROES WE HADN’T KNOWN (main headline)

SHALOM HALAFLA PICKS NECTARINES IN FACE OF KATYUSHAS * MAYA AND SHLOMI GET MARRIED IN SHELTER (AND FEMALE GUESTS DON’T GIVE UP THEIR MANICURES)

*** KIBBUTZ RESIDENTS ATTEMPT TO RESCUE FAWNS FROM BURNT-OUT ODEM FOREST * 10 DAYS INTO FIGHTING, NORTHERN RESIDENTS MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO GIVE THEIR LIVES A LOOSE FRAMEWORK OF ROUTINE** (subhead)

This is the opening passage of that article, written by Mordechai Haimovich:

When the Nazis besieged Leningrad, the defenders continued to stage plays in the shelters. In Kiryat Shmona, people are getting married – and I know that, at first glance, the comparison appears far-fetched. The circumstances are not the same; the balance of forces is not the same. But the comparison is justified, because of the lust for life which it portrays.

And further in the article:

No one can beat a nation whose ladies won't give up their manicures while the Katyushas are falling.

The idea that “female guests who don't give up their manicures” are a strategic asset for Israel is also well articulated in a column by Alex Fishman, which was published on the front page of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 16 and headlined **HOME FRONT VS. HOME FRONT:**

Israel has begun to see signs of cracks in Hezbollah's endurance; but these are only cracks, and things could still change. The reason for this is that, as the fighting goes into its fourth day, the war in the North is looking more and more like “home front vs. home front”. This is a critical stage of the conflict: the stage of internal fortitude. The objectives of each side include not only the fighters, but principally the weaker links on the home front. It is neither the IAF bombs nor the rockets falling on Israel which will determine which side wins. The conflict will be settled when the home front in one of the countries blinks first.

And this is what the former IDF Spokesman, Nachman Shai, the hero of the home front in the Gulf War, wrote in *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 17:

This evening Ehud Olmert will make a speech to the nation. We have been waiting for this speech since the campaign began; it may be a bit late, but not too late. The operation is still going on. Olmert will first and foremost speak to the home front; nonetheless, as is customary today in public diplomacy, his words will echo in other circles as well, including Arab and international circles. In these times, everyone follows the statements of leaders; everyone is curious to hear what Olmert will say. The struggle for the home front is the heart of the fighting. It may be assumed that a weak home front will project onto the decision-makers and harm their ability to lead. In a democratic state, more than any other, the strength of the home front is extremely important.

This feeling was reflected, throughout the war, in thousands of articles and hundreds of headlines, many of which took over the front pages and the news broadcast headlines: “We won’t be the first to blink”. The headlines clarified in no uncertain terms that the residents of the North were fully and wholeheartedly prepared to pay any price – provided that the IDF would “go all-out” and keep striking Hezbollah until it was finally beaten. The image of the strong home front in the media, composed of stories of entire communities, and private individuals, whose efforts and actions proved the rightness of our course. Thus, for example, Israel Feldman of Haifa became a temporary war hero when he was photographed playing his piano in the ruins of his home which had been struck by a Katyusha. A headline at the opening of the Channel 2 news broadcast on July 23 stated:

THE SHOW MUST GO ON – EVEN AFTER THE KATYUSHA LANDED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LIVING ROOM

Correspondent Yossi Mizrahi, in the introduction to his report, found it hard to hold back his tears: “Today we’re going to Neshet to meet an exceptional person. Israel Feldman, who immigrated a long time ago from Argentina, with an exceptional response that left our cameraman, Shimon Levi, our soundman, Shai Shapira, and myself with tears in our eyes. Let’s see why.” *Haaretz* published a huge picture of Feldman playing the piano on the front page of its July 24 issue. The caption under the picture read: “We Must Keep On Playing: Israel Feldman of Haifa in the Living Room of his House Which Was Hit by Katyushas Yesterday.”

“The heroes we hadn’t known” changed from day to day. In *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 23, the heroine of the day was Galina Goldianka, a new immigrant who lost a foot in a Katyusha attack, but hurried to declare that “there is no country in the whole world like Israel”:

IMMIGRANT WHO LOST FOOT IN MISSILE STRIKE: I’M STAYING HERE (main headline)
FRIDAY, HAIFA: GALINA GOLDIANKA (43), WHO IMMIGRATED TO ISRAEL LAST YEAR, LOST FOOT IN KATYUSHA ATTACK * DOCTORS’ EFFORTS TO REATTACH CRUSHED FOOT FAILED * GOLDIANKA: “I WAS WOUNDED, BUT I’M NOT LEAVING. THERE IS NO COUNTRY IN THE WHOLE WORLD LIKE ISRAEL” (subhead)

In the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 5, the hero was Shlomo Lugasi, “forever young”, who refused to leave his balcony in the town of Shlomi, even at the age of 105. The report devoted to Lugasi was accompanied by a nostalgic melody from the Israeli film “Patrolman Azoulay” [about an aging policeman who refused to retire]. A headline at the opening of the broadcast stated:

NOT LEAVING TOWN OR BALCONY – EVEN AT AGE 105

In the introduction to the report, anchor Danny Kushmaro “enlists” Lugasi to the IDF:

Despite the shooting, despite the incessant attacks, Shlomo Lugasi – 105 years young – is still sitting on the balcony of his home. Yossi Mizrahi met the man who now wants to join the Golani Brigade.

In the report itself, Yossi Mizrahi comes to the conclusion that this is true Zionism:

Sometimes, during the bombings, Shlomo takes out an Israeli flag and wraps himself in it. Afterwards, Shlomo goes on to remind everyone, including those who are still here – what true Zionism is. [...] So until the war is over, Shlomo – who falsified his age in order to be able to immigrate here from Morocco – will go on walking through the streets, encouraging others.

The Channel 1 news on July 14 chose not to focus on the heroism of a single individual, but on that of the entire population of the North. A headline at the opening of the broadcast stated:

RESIDENTS OF NORTHERN BORDER CITIES AND TOWNS AT HOME: VERY CONCERNED, BUT NOT FRIGHTENED. URI GOLDSTEIN TELLS OF THE PAUSES BETWEEN THE KATYUSHA SHELLINGS – AND THE QUIET ENDURANCE OF THE RESIDENTS IN THE SECTOR BETWEEN ZARIT AND NAHARIYA

The introduction to a report on Channel 10, on August 6, spoke of the residents of Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, weaving their story into the heroic history of their kibbutz:

The people of Kibbutz Kfar Giladi are used to wars and hard struggles. The kibbutz was founded 90 years ago by members of Hashomer;¹¹ since then, it has known hard times, battles and bloodshed. In this war as well, the kibbutz members are demonstrating extraordinary endurance: most of them have refused to be evacuated.

¹¹ A Guild of Watchmen, established in 1909 as a Jewish self-defense organization against possible encroachments by neighboring Arabs. It was formally disbanded in 1920.

The overall message of the coverage was: "The civilians are demonstrating a staying power which is strengthening Israel at war."



↪ IMMIGRANT WHO LOST FOOT IN MISSILE STRIKE: I'M STAYING HERE
Yedioth Ahronoth, main headline on page 9, July 23



↪ "We Must Keep On Playing"
Haaretz, caption of photograph on front page, July 24

One story repeated itself again and again throughout the war: residents of the North, who continued celebrating and enjoying life – despite the missiles. A headline on the front page of *Maariv's* July 14 issue read: **WEDDING MOVED 3 TIMES; KATYUSHAS CHASE BRIDE AND GROOM**. The headline on page 11 added: **WEDDING BEAT KATYUSHAS**. The subhead continued:

NOT EVEN HEZBOLLAH COULD MAKE AVIHAI AND REVITAL OF HATZOR GIVE UP WEDDING * AFTER LOCATION CHANGED TWICE, THEY WERE MARRIED YESTERDAY IN BET KESHET

A week later, on July 21, a photograph on the front page of *Maariv* showed a bride and groom in their wedding attire, with the headline **BEHOLD, YOU ARE PROTECTED TO ME**.¹² The caption under the photograph read: "With 50 guests instead of 800, an improvised wedding canopy and a bomb shelter for a wedding hall, Maya and Shlomi Buskila were

¹² The Jewish wedding "Kidushin" ceremony is sealed with the groom telling his bride: "Behold you are sanctified (betrothed) to me".

married yesterday. Despite the Katyushas and the war, they decided not to give up – and the marriage was held in a ‘protected space’ [shelter].”

The article continued on page 9, where the headline read:

THEY HAVE LOVE, AND IT WILL PREVAIL:¹³ KIRYAT SHMONA COUPLE MARRIES IN SHELTER (top banner)

A SHELTER FOR THE LOVERS (main headline)

NASRALLAH COULDN'T TAKE JOY AWAY FROM MAYA LUGASI AND SHLOMI BUSKILA * “WHO CARES WHERE THE WEDDING IS?” SAYS BRIDE; “THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT I MARRIED SHLOMI” (subhead)

The wedding was covered on TV as well: a headline at the opening of the Channel 10 news broadcast on July 20 stated: **INSTEAD OF A DREAM WEDDING: IN THE SHADOW OF THE KATYUSHAS, A WEDDING TOOK PLACE IN A BOMB SHELTER THIS EVENING.** The introduction to the report stated: “Within the routine of the war, the bomb shelter and the missiles, a wedding was celebrated today – in a bomb shelter. Our correspondent, Haim Etgar, will now report from Maya and Shlomi’s wedding in Kiryat Shmona.” Within the report, the groom said: “I won’t let anyone in the world, and let alone an evil terrorist, ruin the happiest day of my life. My dream, by the way, was to have fireworks at the ceremony; wait till it gets dark, and he [Nasrallah] will take care of that.”

A headline at the opening of the Channel 1 news broadcast on August 10 stated:

DESPITE THE ALERTS AND THE SIRENS, MIRAN AND AMIR HAD A HAPPY WEDDING. “IT’S BETTER THAN ANYTHING, THAN EVERYTHING WE COULD THINK OF OR ASK FOR”

Other headlines made it clear that the residents of the North were continuing to dance, have fun and enjoy life – not only at weddings:

ON HAIFA BEACH: ALONE, BUT STILL SUNBATHING – IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING (Channel 2 news broadcast, July 22, headline at the opening of the newscast)

HAIFA BEACH: SUNSHINE, PADDLE BALL AND MISSILE ALERTS (Channel 2 news broadcast, July 25, headline at the opening of the newscast)

IN HAIFA MORALE IS HIGH—BUT THEY MISS THE GAMBLING [CAPTION:] AND THEY’RE DANCING (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 3, headline at the opening of the newscast)

13 In Hebrew a paraphrase of the song "Filled with Love".

The story that repeated itself throughout the war told of citizens of the North who continue to celebrate and enjoy life while the missiles are falling.



↓
HAIFA BEACH: SUNSHINE, PADDLE BALL AND MISSILE ALERTS
 Channel 2, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 25



↓
WEDDING BELLS – IN THE SHELTER
 Channel 1, headline at the opening of the newscast, August 10



↓
BEHOLD, YOU ARE PROTECTED TO ME
Maariv, headline on the front page, July 21



↓
WEDDING BEAT KATYUSHAS
Maariv, headline on page 11, July 14



→
INSTEAD OF A DREAM WEDDING: IN THE SHADOW OF THE KATYUSHAS, A WEDDING TOOK PLACE IN A BOMB SHELTER THIS EVENING
 Channel 10, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 20

Obviously, these residents of the North, who were featured in articles and reports as continuing to enjoy themselves, strengthened the resolve of the decision-makers to keep the fighting going for as long as necessary. A headline at the opening of the Channel 10 news broadcast on July 15 reported:

NO VACATIONERS IN NORTH [A RESIDENT:] WE HAVE TO WIPE OUT THIS PROBLEM ONCE AND FOR ALL, AND HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES – WE HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THAT, HERE IN THE NORTH

Here are a few paragraphs from *Haaretz's* editorial published on July 16 under the headline **NO SENSE OF PANIC:**

In the last few days, civilians were injured while drinking coffee in the kitchen of their home. Not even an alert was heard in the northern cities and towns, and there was no possibility of running to a protected space. The sense of security, whereby a person's home is considered to be his castle, was undermined all across the country, from South to North. The strength of the attack on Lebanon reflects the inability to accept such a basic threat against the lives of Israel's citizens under their own roofs, and the understanding that Israel will never again be able to maintain a balance of forces with Hezbollah along the border fence and to count on Hezbollah keeping the safety on its guns for reasons of expediency.

For the time being, Israel's home front is behaving calmly. The emergency services are operating as they should; the Electric Company repairs the damage quickly; there is no sense of panic, even in the cities and towns which have been hit by dozens of Katyushas. Most residents who are interviewed in the media say that they are willing to suffer now, in order to reduce the threat in the future.

[...] Frustrating the future threat posed by Hezbollah will take time, and it seems that no one understands this better than Israel's citizens, who feel that this time they are involved in a just war, and are not taking part in an unnecessary military adventure. It's easier to deal with Katyushas while protecting—not occupied territory—but “little Israel” within its recognized borders.

In the midst of the war, on August 1, *Maariv* repeated the same message. A front page headline of the paper stated that most of the public supported continuing the war and opposed a ceasefire. An additional article on page 4 added:

As if all that is not enough, even the residents of the North, peering out of their shelters, responded tartly to reports that a ceasefire is supposedly being forced on the IDF. This impression was easily gained from random conversations in Kiryat Shmona, Safed and other cities and towns. In addition, all of the Home

Front Command surveys indicate that the public is willing to continue suffering, under attack, for many more days. On the other hand, it would not be prepared to accept the possibility that, after all this suffering, Israel would not achieve the objectives of the war – that is, would not crush Hezbollah, as promised.

In other words, those residents of the North who remained in their homes proved that the home front was strong. Those who left to seek shelter in central Israel proved that the home front was “broad”: the residents of central Israel welcomed the northerners with open arms. For example, a headline at the opening of the Channel 2 news broadcast on July 28 stated as follows:

BROAD HOME FRONT. ILAN LUKACS AGAIN SPOKE WITH THE BERGER FAMILY OF RAMAT HASHARON, WHICH HAS BEEN HOSTING THE MARZI FAMILY OF NAHARIYA FOR TWO WEEKS. THE FAMILIES EVEN WENT OUT TOGETHER, TO A CONCERT GIVEN BY [FAMOUS ISRAELI SINGER] RITA

A week later, on August 4, the broadcast again – with no less excitement – showed the two families. This time, they actually met Rita:

BROAD HOME FRONT. THE BERGER FAMILY OF RAMAT HASHARON HAS BEEN HOSTING THE MARZI FAMILY OF NAHARIYA FOR THREE WEEKS. THE MEETING WAS MOVING – EVEN FOR RITA, WHO IS HERSELF HOSTING A FAMILY FROM KIRYAT SHMONA. RITA: “WE HAVE GUESTS FROM KIRYAT SHMONA...”

Here are more headlines of the same type:

NORTHERN CHILDREN COME TO CENTRAL ISRAEL FOR REST AND RELAXATION
(Channel 1 news broadcast, July 17, headline at the opening of the newscast)

WITH NORTHERN RESIDENTS IN TEL AVIV, ENJOYING THEMSELVES IN SWIMMING POOL AND THINKING OF KATYUSHAS (*Maariv*, July 23, headline on page 13)

CELEBRATION FROM NORTH MOVES TO CENTER: “WITH THIS CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY A BLESSING WILL COME FORTH FROM THE NORTH,¹⁴ WITH GOD’S HELP TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL – AMEN!” (Channel 10 news broadcast, July 31, headline at the opening of the newscast)

“KIBBUTZ SAVYON”: 120 CHILDREN FROM KIBBUTZ BET HA-EMEK LEFT KATYUSHAS BEHIND FOR A WEEK’S STAY IN SAVYON [A WEALTHY TOWN IN CENTRAL ISRAEL] * “I NEVER SAW A PRIVATE HOUSE WITH A SWIMMING POOL BEFORE”, SAID ONE CHILD
(*Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 2, headline on page 12)

14 A paraphrase of the Biblical prophecy of Jeremiah “Out of the north an evil shall break forth” (Jeremiah 1:14).

Yedioth Ahronoth, a few days after the fighting started, began to publish a long list of telephone numbers of residents of central Israel who were interested in hosting residents from the North – under headlines such as **OPENING HOMES AND HEARTS: YEDIOTH AHRONOTH FOR THE CONFLICT ZONE RESIDENTS**. On July 20, the first day of this *Yedioth Ahronoth* campaign, a headline on the paper's front page read: **OPEN HOUSE; [...] DOZENS OF FAMILIES RESPOND TO YEDIOTH AHRONOTH CAMPAIGN AND OPEN THEIR HOMES**. *Haaretz*, throughout the war, used space on its news pages to describe “pairs” of families: hosts and guests. Pictures of smiling families appeared alongside descriptions of shared routines – how the families got along; how long they had been living together; how long the guests planned to stay. It should be noted that, in addition, from time to time complaints were directed at those residents of central Israel who were detached from the northerners' suffering. The term that was used several times to describe this phenomenon was the “Tel Avivian bubble”.

At the same time, of course, articles and reports appeared on an almost daily basis, in which the decision-makers thanked the home front for its support:

As we have seen, Hezbollah is trying to create weakness in Israel's home front. The duration of the operation which is now being carried out depends on the strength and fortitude of the Israeli public. That is what Defense Minister Amir Peretz said this afternoon in a discussion of the situation (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 14, introduction to a report)

FATAL ATTACK ON HAIFA – 8 KILLED. [Olmert's voice:] **THE PUBLIC IS STRONG AND UNITED IN THIS STRUGGLE. THE FORTITUDE SHOWN BY THE CIVILIANS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE STRENGTH OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL** (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 16, headline at the opening of the newscast)

Moshe Nussbaum: The story of this campaign, says Minister Shaul Mofaz in a tour of the shelled houses, the true story – as he notes – is the strength of the civilians.

Shaul Mofaz: Israel's public, the strength it has been showing in these days, is exceptional. It is what gives us – the Government of Israel, the defense and security establishment, everyone involved in decision-making – the ability to continue doing what is necessary.

Moshe Nussbaum: And it should also be said that we found today in Karmiel, a city which has been forced into a new daily routine, we found a lot of mutual assistance among the residents, and they feel that this is the winning card. (Channel 2 news broadcast, July 17)

WAR IN THE NORTH – SPEECH TO THE NATION; [Olmert] TO NORTHERN RESIDENTS: “I’M PROUD TO BE AN ISRAELI CITIZEN TODAY. THANKS TO YOU, OUR ENEMIES ARE COMING UP AGAINST A UNITED PEOPLE FIGHTING TOGETHER. THE GOVERNMENT WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 18, logo and headline on page 4)

In the Margins of the Media Coverage (1): “We’re Already Collapsing”

Within this process of mobilization, which attempted to reflect the “strength of the home front”, there was no room for other kinds of coverage: reports on residents of the North who were less resilient, the ones who needed help and didn’t get it, and the ones who didn’t necessarily support the military operation – all these were marginalized by the media coverage. Just as marginalized was the crucial fact that the State, notwithstanding its proclamations embracing the citizens of the North, in fact abandoned them in its actions.

This marginalization was reflected most prominently in the following pattern: from time to time, when the various correspondents interviewed residents of the North, they also spoke with this or that person who did not agree to be mobilized – someone who was fed up. Statements to that effect, while they did appear in articles, were very rarely seen in the headlines. While the headlines extolled the strength of the home front, the articles themselves told quite another story. Thus, for example, the cover page of the *Maariv* daily supplement, on August 1, spoke of the determined stance of the home front. The headline read: **STANDING FIRM.**¹⁵ The subhead continued:

NORTHERN RESIDENTS DON’T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING TO THEM: HEZBOLLAH FIRES MISSILES AND GOVERNMENT DECLARES TEMPORARY CEASEFIRE * “WE WANT TO SEE OLMERT AS STRONG AS NASRALLAH,” THEY SAY IN KIRYAT SHMONA, “BECAUSE WHEN HE PROMISES SOMETHING, HE KEEPS HIS WORD, AND WE WERE PROMISED THAT THIS WAR WOULD NOT END WITHOUT RESULTS”

The headlines on page 2 continued in the same vein:

“WHY DID WE SUFFER SO MUCH? SO IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN? WE DON’T WANT A CEASEFIRE” (top banner)
DON’T STOP (main headline)

¹⁵ The Hebrew language uses the same word for neck and home front. In the Hebrew original the headline was “hardening the neck”.

KIRYAT SHMONA RESIDENTS ANGRY AT EHUD OLMERT AND CONDOLEEZZA RICE, WHO DECIDED ON A 48-HOUR CEASEFIRE YESTERDAY * YES, AFTER THREE WEEKS IN SHELTERS, THEIR CHILDREN ARE ENJOYING RUNNING AROUND ON THE GRASS IN THE (RELATIVE) QUIET; BUT THEY SAY: “WE DON’T AGREE TO ANY CEASEFIRE; WE’RE WILLING TO GO ON SITTING HERE FOR A LONG TIME AND WATCH OUR ARMY FIGHT, EVEN AT THE PRICE OF KATYUSHAS” (subhead)

But deep in the text, and in one of the teasers, we suddenly hear the voice of Remond Ben-Lulu, a resident of the city, whom the correspondent described as “one of the few voices in the city which actually support the ceasefire”:

“I want it all to be over now,” she says. “I’m thinking about my child and what is going to happen tomorrow, and I don’t want him to be left with traumas. My job isn’t to think about political impacts, but about the fact that we’ll be able to live like human beings, and not in the shelters. I know that a lot of people don’t agree with me, but I’m simply fed up with the situation, and I wish it would all end now.”

The headline on the cover page of the *Yedioth Ahronoth* daily supplement on July 20 read:

EMBATTLED VETERANS: FATAL SHOOTING INCIDENT YESTERDAY BRIDGED TWO WORLDS WITH A HISTORY OF FIRE AND TEARS: THE “MAGLAN” ELITE UNIT, WHICH HAS ALREADY LOST FOUR FIGHTERS THIS YEAR, AND THE NORTHERN COMMUNITY OF AVIVIM, WHICH IS REFUSING TO BREAK, EVEN AFTER NEARLY 40 YEARS OF TERRORISM

But even the subhead on page 6 told a slightly different story:

AVIVIM RESIDENTS THOUGHT THAT AFTER THAT TERRIBLE DAY, WHEN TERRORISTS ATTACKED THE SCHOOL BUS AND KILLED 12 CHILDREN, NOTHING COULD EVER BREAK THEM * BUT YESTERDAY, WHEN THEIR COMMUNITY BECAME A BATTLEFIELD, EVEN THEY COULDN’T TAKE IT ANYMORE * “THESE DAYS ARE ONE BIG NIGHTMARE,” SAYS ELIEZER BITON, WHO LOST TWO YOUNGER BROTHERS IN THE BUS ATTACK. “MANY RESIDENTS LOST FAMILY MEMBERS THEN, LIKE ME. NOW, GOING BACK TO THE BATTLES AND THE FEARS IS JUST IMPOSSIBLE.”

The voices inside the article were in the same vein:

“What I plan to do is start the car, take my three kids out of the house and get out of here, the faster the better.” [...] “The feeling is that this time it’s unbearable. I was nine years old in that terrorist attack, then. I was wounded in the eye and the head, and I suffered from nightmares for years. Today, I have a nine year old son, and I don’t want him living in a battlefield.”

Note the inconsistency between the headline which appeared on page 14 of *Maariv*, on August 9 – **“WE’LL STAY HERE AS LONG AS IT TAKES”** – and the text of the article: “Almost all of the residents who are still here want to be evacuated [...] Shlomo is one of the few who prefer to stay: ‘This is our home. We’re not leaving here.’”

This basic fact – that the northern residents were not busy only in demonstrating a show of “strength” – reached the news pages and the TV headlines only rarely. One example is a headline on page 12 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, at the very beginning of the war, on July 13:

RESIDENTS IN CONFRONTATION LINE COMMUNITIES RETURN TO FAMILIAR ROUTINE: HOURS IN SHELTER, FRIGHTENED CHILDREN, REPORTS OF WOUNDED * MANY OF THEM SAID: (top banner)

“WE’RE FED UP” (main headline, in huge letters)

NOT A SOUL TO BE SEEN IN KIRYAT SHMONA, SHLOMI AND CONFRONTATION LINE CITIES AND TOWNS * AT 10 PM LIFE IN NAHARIYA STANDS STILL * WHAT’S LEFT? GLOOM AND PANIC * “I WENT TO PICK UP THE KIDS FROM THE COMMUNITY CENTER, THE DAY CARE CENTER AND THE KINDERGARTEN, AND I FOUND THEM CRYING AND SCREAMING,” SAYS A MOTHER OF FOUR IN SHLOMI. “OUR HOUSE WAS SHAKING FROM THE EXPLOSIONS; IT WAS TERRIBLE” (subhead)

A headline at the opening of the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 17 told of northern residents leaving their homes:

THE NORTHERN CONFRONTATION LINE COMMUNITIES ARE QUIET. NO MISSILES ARE FALLING, BUT THE CITIES AND TOWNS ARE EMPTYING OUT. THE RESIDENTS ARE LEAVING AND GOING SOUTH.

In the report itself, Dan Semama pointed out the residents’ grave feelings:

Dan Semama: In Kiryat Shmona, with 20% of the population still living in town, a small group of people with children held a demonstration today. “No more staying in the shelters!” is what they’re shouting.

A resident of Kiryat Shmona: “We’re putting ourselves at risk even sitting in the shelter – whether emotionally or physically. As far as our mental health is concerned, we’re already collapsing.”

On August 8, again on Channel 1, a headline at the opening of the newscast stated:

RAGE INCREASING AMONG NORTHERN RESIDENTS REMAINING IN SHELTERS, ON 28TH DAY OF FIGHTING [Resident:] “I’VE GIVEN UP. I HAVE NO MORE STRENGTH, I HAVE NO MORE PHYSICAL STRENGTH; I’M WIPED OUT”

And a headline on page 3 of *Haaretz*, on August 6, read:

FOURTH WEEK IN THE SHELTERS (top banner)

PATIENCE RUNNING OUT (main headline)

But all these were individual cases, drowned in the sea of headlines which repeatedly emphasized: the home front is strong.

In the Margins of the Media Coverage (2): “The Government has No Solutions”

Approximately 80 headlines published in the media throughout the entire war dealt with the Government’s failures in caring for the home front. In the overwhelming majority of cases, these headlines were marginalized – relegated to back pages or pushed deep into the news broadcasts. In very rare instances, certain media placed such headlines higher on their agenda. In this context, *Haaretz* and Channel 1 did more impressive work than any other media outlet. Headlines dealing with failures with respect to the home front appeared five times on the front page of *Haaretz*. Here are two examples:

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS ADMITS: WAR CAUGHT US BY SURPRISE.

DISABLED ASK FOR ASSISTANCE, BUT GOVERNMENT HAS NO SOLUTIONS (*Haaretz*, August 2, top banner and main headline on the front page)

GOVERNMENT WANTS “STRONG HOME FRONT”: OFFERS NORTHERN RESIDENTS VACATION IN TIBERIAS – BUT NOT EVACUATION (*Haaretz*, August 8, headline on the front page)

The article under the latter headline stated as follows:

In view of the protracted duration of the war and the public criticism of the fact that the Government is not doing enough for the home front, the Prime Minister’s Office has decided to send approximately 17,000 northern residents for rest and relaxation, including pleasure trips around the country. At the same time, proposals for organized evacuation of the northern cities and towns were rejected. [...] Notwithstanding the news items about northern residents who were sent for R&R and refused to go home, fearing for their lives and their children’s lives, the Prime Minister’s Office has decided to focus on “refreshers” for the northern residents, rather than evacuation of those residents who wish to leave the North. This is due to fear of a flood of refugees, which will impose a heavy economic and logistical burden on the Government, as well as fear of losing the image of steadfastness of the Israeli home front.

Nine such headlines appeared on Channel 1. Here are some examples:

DOZENS OF MISSILES HAVE FALLEN ON CITY OF SAFED IN LAST 24 HOURS. THE ELDERLY AND NEEDY IN THE CITY FEEL THE SHORTAGE OF FOOD AND MEDICATIONS

(Channel 1 news broadcast, July 18, headline at the opening of the newscast)

RESIDENTS OF THE NORTH ARE FURIOUS AT THE PROPERTY TAX OFFICIALS [RESIDENT:] “I ONLY ASKED HER TO COME SEE WHAT’S HAPPENING IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD” (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 20, headline at the opening of the newscast)

IT’S QUIET HERE IN KIRYAT SHMONA, AFTER A DAY OF KATYUSHA FIRE AT THE NORTHERN CITIES AND TOWNS. THE IDF CONTINUES ARTILLERY FIRE AT LEBANON, AS WE CAN HEAR CLEARLY IN KIRYAT SHMONA. HUGE FIRES ARE RAGING IN THE HULA VALLEY AND ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS; IN SAFED, THE RESIDENTS ARE FURIOUS THAT THE STATE IS ABANDONING THEM (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 21, headline at the opening of the newscast)

NORTHERN RESIDENTS ARE FURIOUS: IF WE DON’T GET HELP, WE’LL COLLAPSE (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 25, headline at the opening of the newscast)

FAMILIES ARE FORCED TO RETURN TO THE SHELLED AREAS OF THE NORTH BECAUSE NO ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN FOUND FOR THEM. [Resident:] “WE DON’T WANT TO COME HOME TODAY AND SHOW UP IN TOMORROW’S NEWSPAPER AS PART OF THE STATISTICS – ‘ONE MORE CASUALTY OF THE WAR’” (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 6, headline at the opening of the newscast)

THE EVACUATION OF CIVILIANS FROM THE NORTH IS STUCK. TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE IN UNBEARABLE SHELTERS FOR THE FIFTH WEEK. [Caption:] STATE OF SHELTERS – STILL UNBEARABLE. [Resident:] “JUST SEE WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE. THERE IS NOTHING HERE” (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 10, headline at the opening of the newscast)

In the August 11 news broadcast, correspondent Noa Barak introduced her report with the following words:

Everybody keeps talking about the strong home front, or how sound it is and how strong it will be – so the IDF can go on operating in Lebanon. But we’ve been going around here for a month now, for several weeks already, and we keep seeing shelters that simply can’t be lived in: either there isn’t any water, or there aren’t any toilets, or there isn’t any electrical power.

In the report itself, Barak continued:

It's not clear how the State – which is the one asking the home front to go on being strong – can abandon it in such a blatant way.

It should be noted that, as early as the second day of the war, July 13, Channel 1 expressed a clear and critical attitude on this subject. Thus, for instance, anchor Haim Yavin confronted the Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, who made a guest appearance on his news broadcast:

Ms. Livni, did all of you take into account, not only the Katyusha barrages like those on Safed and Haifa today, but the endurance of the residents of the State of Israel?? You see that the residents are running away from the North, from Kiryat Shmona – actually, from the entire North. The area is neutralized!!! People are running away from there, apparently to their relatives in Tel Aviv. This is a very grave situation!!! Did you all take into account the endurance of the residents?!

Extremely rarely, headlines dealing with the Government's failures in handling the home front appeared in a prominent place in the media coverage. In this context, Haaretz and Channel 1 did more impressive work than any other media outlet. But even there, those few headlines were overwhelmed by reporting on the strength of the home front. In most cases, this subject was marginalized in the coverage.

משרד הרווחה מודה: המלחמה תפסה אותנו בהפתעה
הנכים מבקשים סיוע, אך לממשלה אין פתרונות

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS ADMITS: WAR CAUGHT US BY SURPRISE (top banner)
 DISABLED ASK FOR ASSISTANCE, BUT GOVERNMENT HAS NO SOLUTIONS (headline)
 Haaretz, headline on the front page, August 2



STATE OF SHELTERS:
 STILL UNBEARABLE
 Channel 1, headline
 at the opening of the
 newscast, August 10

But even in *Haaretz* and Channel 1, those few headlines were overwhelmed by reporting on the strength of the home front. Important, newsworthy material disappeared beneath headlines that conveyed the opposite message. Thus, for example, the headlines of the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 16 stated that: **OLMERT HAS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN BACKING**. Political correspondent Ayala Hason added: “There is definitely immense satisfaction with the international support, satisfaction with the strength of the home front.” The broadcast headlines also quoted Prime Minister Olmert saying: **THE PUBLIC IS STRONG AND UNITED IN THIS STRUGGLE. THE ENDURANCE DEMONSTRATED BY THE CIVILIANS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE STRENGTH OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL**. Only in a conversation between Dan Semama and Brig. Gen. (res.) Rafi Noy, in the 48th minute of the broadcast, did Noy state that the alarm system in Haifa, where eight people had been killed that day, had failed to work:

The event of this morning, for instance. Listen, yesterday I heard the O/C Home Front Command explaining that we were prepared for an attack on Tel Aviv, and that sirens would be heard 60 seconds before the missiles fell – and, in fact, in Haifa today, in the second barrage, and the third and the fourth barrages, that system really worked exceptionally well. It’s just a shame that it didn’t work during the morning, when 15 missiles fell there and eight people were killed.

The failure of the alarm system was not mentioned in the headlines of the broadcast.

In the Channel 10 news broadcast of July 20, where one of the headlines declared: **INSTEAD OF A DREAM WEDDING: IN THE SHADOW OF THE KATYUSHAS, A WEDDING TOOK PLACE IN A BOMB SHELTER THIS EVENING** – the 82nd minute of the broadcast featured an employee of the Israel Association of Community Centers in Kiryat Shmona, who had not been paid his salary:

I feel very disappointed. Mostly disappointed with the Government of Israel, which expects its home front to be strong and keeps praising the home front, but, on the other hand, they don’t give us the opportunity; they don’t give us our salaries, the most basic things.

Rarely, these subjects were placed a bit closer to the top of the news reporting in the other media outlets as well. In its issue of July 19, *Maariv* published a rather brief article on page 13, accompanied by a logo reading **WAR IN THE NORTH – ALONE ON THE HOME FRONT**. The headline stated:

NURSING CAREGIVERS HAVE STOPPED COMING TO MISSILE STRIKE AREAS
(top banner)

DOZENS OF ELDERLY LEFT ALONE (main headline)

MANY ELDERLY IN NEED OF NURSING CARE IN NORTH LEFT WITHOUT ASSISTANCE DUE TO SECURITY SITUATION * CHAIR OF SOCIAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION: "THERE MAY BE DEATHS" (subhead)

On July 24, a headline on page 8 of *Maariv* stated:

PATIENCE CRACKING IN KIRYAT SHMONA (top banner)

10 FAMILY MEMBERS, ONLY 3 MATTRESSES (main headline)

NO ROOM, NO FOOD, NO TOILETS * PUBLIC SHELTER LOCKED * VAKNIN FAMILY FED UP: "WE'LL BE STRONG, BUT THEY SHOULD TREAT US PROPERLY" *CITY HALL: WE'LL PROVIDE ASSISTANCE (subhead)

The text of the article read:

In a small, crowded store room in Kiryat Shmona, with only three mattresses in it, more than 10 members of the Vaknin family are packed in together. Behind their house is a large public shelter, but its doors are locked because it's being used for storage. Yesterday the Vaknins broke down and decided to "revolt". "We have no problem being strong for the IDF, but they should at least treat us properly," they said furiously.

When members of the family hear the politicians and the officers talking about the "praiseworthy staying power of the residents patiently sitting in the shelters," they smile bitterly. After all, they are the residents who have been sitting for many days, doing nothing, and listening to senior officials talking about them – but they themselves feel neither powerful nor patient. "We're crammed in here like mice, terribly crowded, sleeping on only three mattresses, and we don't believe that this is what our life's been like for so many days. There isn't any food, there is no toilet, and we can't go on like this anymore."

Channel 10 and Channel 2 devoted only a few headlines to the subject. In *Maariv*, the subject appeared only once on the front page, on August 9 – in a reference to a column by Yehonatan Geffen on page 13. The reference headline was: **BLOT ON SOCIETY**. The referring text ran as follows:

A heartless Government is insisting on showing us a strong home front, and Kiryat Shmona is the terrible price of that fake image. There is no military victory which can wipe out that self-satisfied Government, which, for a long time now, hasn't done all it could to rescue and assist those humiliated, hungry people, stuck between the missiles and the falling walls, some of which still somehow bear proud stickers reading "Kiryat Shmona Is Strong". Dear ministers and generals, did you ever try to eat a sticker?

It should be noted that *Maariv* itself produced stickers in this war: “Israel Is Strong” and “We’re Going to Win”. The former appeared as a logo on the front page of most issues throughout the war. Geffen’s strong statements, then, should have been read not only by the Government, but by the editors of the paper for which he himself wrote.

The logo appearing on the front page of most *Maariv* issues throughout the war, was also handed out to *Maariv* readers as a sticker.



➔ **FOR MAARIV SUBSCRIBERS:
STICKER ATTACHED
ISRAEL IS STRONG**
Maariv, large headline on the front page, July 19

Haaretz ran op-ed articles similar to Geffen’s several times. One such article, on July 21, was given a reference headline on the first page, which read: **THE FALSE MYTH OF THE HOME FRONT ENDURANCE**. In the article itself, Benny Ziffer wrote:

But this is one of the lying tricks of the continuous TV broadcasting in the last few days: to present the situation of the Israelis on the firing line as a humanitarian catastrophe equal to the suffering of the Lebanese civilians, is utterly untrue. Nonetheless, as stated above: nuances are not in fashion these days.

The late Ehud Asheri, in his column **PLAY ON WORDS**, which appeared on the same day in Section B of *Haaretz*, under the headline **SECOND LEBANON WAR DICTIONARY**, wrote:

Soundness of the home front: a delicate way to say “Keep suffering in silence”. A term coined by the Chief of Staff at the beginning of the IDF operation, as a counterweight to Nasrallah’s “spider webs”. Synonyms: “endurance”, “staying power”, “determination”, “backing”. Concealed behind all these terms is the interest in obtaining from the public an unconditional mandate to continue the “pounding” (see this item) even at the price of civilian losses. Accordingly, the admiration of the “soundness of the home front” arose long before the home front understood what was happening to it. Two things about this popular cliché are upsetting: it delegitimizes any manifestation of civil distress, and it imposes the responsibility for “victory” on the population, instead of on the politicians and the generals.

Lily Galili, on August 1, in Section B of *Haaretz*, wrote a column under the headline **SICK OF THE COMPLIMENTS**. Galili's column stated:

The Government ministers and IDF officers praise the “home front”, extol its staying power, tell of its heroism. Sometimes, at the end of a tour of the northern communities, they repeat the worn-out words, “We came to strengthen, and we left strengthened”. Our leaders’ veneration of the people knows no bounds. At first glance, this would seem to be a heart-warming phenomenon in these difficult times.

But to tell the truth, we’re sick of it. We’re sick of hearing how strong we are, what heroes we are, how much we can take. There is a growing feeling that these words of praise are nothing more than foisting off responsibility onto the “people”, which is being manipulated.

All of this speechifying is no more than manipulation by the leaders, in order to gain more support, to obtain more consent for leading the people in whatever direction the leaders choose. Who can refuse a proposal that comes from those who gave us so many compliments? Just out of mere politeness we couldn’t say “No”.

The Arab Home Front: “Listening to Nasrallah”

By contrast to the approximately 2,500 articles and reports which dealt with the Jewish-Israeli home front, only about 430 discussed the Arab-Israeli home front. The nature of that coverage was drastically different. The Jewish-Israeli home front, as we have seen, was presented as withstanding its suffering bravely and giving full support to the war. The coverage of the Arab-Israeli home front, on the other hand, focused, in the overwhelming majority of cases, on an attempt to find out whether Israel’s Arab citizens were “with us” or “against us”.

The nature of this coverage is clearly and forcefully expressed in a report by Ben Shani, which was broadcast on Channel 10 on July 21. The report, which lasted about 12 minutes, was almost entirely devoted to the strong Jewish home front. Thus, for example, the beginning of the report featured a conversation between Ben Shani and a Jewish civilian from Haifa, who described one of the female residents of Haifa with total admiration:

(Jewish) civilian: Yesterday it hit some lady’s, it hit her house, I mean; it wrecked half the house. And she said: “No, I will not, I will not move from Haifa, no way. me?! What for? I’m not moving from Haifa! I’ll go to a hotel, I’ll go stay with someone – but I’m not leaving Haifa!” I’m in love with that lady!

Ben Shani: Why is that?

Civilian: Because she's some kind of a Churchill, because she's – the Nazis are shelling London, all of London is collapsing, and she's not going anywhere. She goes down into the underground. I respect people like that!

Immediately afterward, Shani interviewed an Arab civilian, a resident of Deir al-Assad. Shani confronted him:

Ben Shani: You people here have a real problem!

(Arab) civilian: What problem do you think we have?

Ben Shani: Because there's a war here, basically between Jews and Shi'ites in Lebanon, and you're caught in the middle – you have to take sides!

Civilian: The good side, whoever does good, I'm with them, I say they're right.

Shani, not satisfied, asked again, more directly this time:

Ben Shani: It's very simple – are you with Israel or with Hezbollah?!

Civilian: No, I can't answer you about that at all.

At that point, a Jewish civilian woman intervened, asking emphatically: “Why can't you answer the question he asked you!?” and that's how it ended. Shani then returned to the strong, brave Jewish home front: a taxi driver who said that the IDF should “finish off Hezbollah”; the brave residents of Margaliot, who weren't deserting their homes; a group of women from Haifa who made the V-for-Victory sign to each other, from one balcony to the next, every time a Katyusha fell; a Jew from the United States who came to Israel especially to give out food in shelters in the North; women settlers from Samaria who came to reinforce Haifa; and a former officer in an elite unit, now the security officer of a hotel in the north, who said that, if they were to introduce his (former) unit into Lebanon, it would do a good job.

Many headlines which reported the death of Arab civilians in Katyusha barrages actually focused on the questionable loyalty of those very civilians. The headline shown below, which appeared in *Haaretz* on August 6, after a weekend in which six Arab civilians were killed, dealt with the rage of the “Arab sector” against Israel:

6 CIVILIANS KILLED OVER WEEKEND – ALL ARABS; EACH ADDITIONAL DEATH IN KATYUSHA ATTACKS INCREASES RAGE AGAINST ISRAEL IN ARAB SECTOR

The text, which continued on page 3, stated:

The rage among the Arab public is growing as the war goes on and the number of Arab casualties rises. [...] The TV remote controls are being overused these days. In every Arab home in the Galilee, the television is on all the time these days. On al-Jazeera or the Lebanese stations, reality looks different. "The longer it goes on, the more the rage grows. You can't ignore the pictures, the sounds. What do you mean, who are we angry at? Obviously, at Israel," says a resident of Deir al-Assad. According to him, anyone who sees the pictures on the Arab channels receives an image different from that broadcast on the Israeli channels. While Israel's channels show a war which is severe but just, the Arab satellite channels provide a picture of incessant strikes on civilians. The quantities of Lebanese corpses shown on the screen from hour to hour have a considerable effect on the prevailing mood in the Arab sector.

A headline published on July 6, on page 8 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, read:

DAWA, 15, KILLED IN HER ROOM, A BOOK IN HER HAND (main headline)
WHILE KATYUSHA BARRAGE STRUCK MAGHAR VILLAGE, GIRL'S UNCLE WAS IN JERUSALEM DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE WAR IN LEBANON (subhead)

A headline at the opening of the Channel 10 news broadcast, on July 20, stated:

HIS CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY A KATYUSHA ROCKET, BUT THE FATHER SUPPORTS HEZBOLLAH [Father:] **I BELIEVE HEZBOLLAH DID NOT MEAN TO HARM CIVILIANS**

Anchor Miki Haimovich introduced the report in the following words:

In Nazareth, 3-year-old Rabi'a Taluzi and his 7-year-old brother Mahmoud Taluzi, both of Nazareth, who were killed yesterday by a Katyusha rocket, were laid to rest tonight. People in Nazareth are sure that the missile was probably launched by mistake. The father of the two dead boys says that he is not angry at Nasrallah, but rather, blames Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

The complexity of the situation, which was ignored here, was only brought up later, by correspondent Shlomi Eldar: "The death of the children, Rabi'a and Mahmoud, who were killed by a Hezbollah Katyusha, intensifies even further the great frustration of Israeli Arabs at their discrimination, their split identity, and the accusations raised against them by the Israeli public."

The coverage of the Arab-Israeli home front focused in the overwhelming majority of cases on the question of loyalty.



➔ DAWA, 15, KILLED IN HER ROOM, A BOOK IN HER HAND (main headline).

WHILE KATYUSHA BARRAGE STRUCK MAGHAR VILLAGE, GIRL'S UNCLE WAS IN JERUSALEM DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE WAR IN LEBANON (subhead)

Yedioth Ahronoth, headline on page 8, July 26



➔ HIS CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY A KATYUSHA ROCKET, BUT THE FATHER SUPPORTS HEZBOLLAH

Channel 10, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 20

This state of affairs was described again and again in many scores of headlines throughout the war. Thus, for example, a headline on the front page of *Haaretz*, on July 26, stated: **ISRAELI ARABS DON'T KNOW WHO IS TO BLAME – OLMERT OR NASRALLAH.**

The article, by Yoav Stern, continued to probe the question of the loyalty of Israeli Arab citizens:

When the four-year-old daughter of Dukhul Safdi of Nazareth told her father that Hassan Nasrallah was a bad man, he kept silent. He didn't know how to explain to her that reality is much more complex. Like a million other people in Israel, Safdi has been living for the past two weeks in a state of constant confusion, feeling caught between a rock and a hard place. "I tried to explain to her that this is war, that bad people on both sides were fighting each other. And then she asked me why Nasrallah was firing at us. What could I answer to that?" [...] "Who's to blame for the situation? We have the impatience of the Government of Israel and the arrogance of Nasrallah. And I have no idea who's to blame. If I blame Nasrallah, then I'm not okay, and I'm not going to blame him; and if I blame Olmert, I'm not okay, either." [...] Although the family of the two boys who were killed refused to

condemn Nasrallah, Awad's family blamed him and said he was responsible for the crisis. These two conflicting opinions illustrate the varying range of positions among the Arab public, and the great confusion which prevails in it.

Only toward the end does the article quote a different Arab interviewee, who is angry at the media – because they “don’t respect the complexity in which we live”:

“Why do you have to come and ask those questions at all? To check whether we show loyalty to the State of Israel?” he asks, “If you take a person and put him in a corner and force him [to condemn Nasrallah] – he won’t condemn him, just for spite. I thought we were already past that stage. You don’t respect the complexity in which we live. I feel the Arabs will pay a price for any position they express.”

As we have seen, the editor of *Haaretz* chose to emphasize, in his headline, precisely the same question that the interviewee asked the media not to try and force him to answer.

This is how the situation looked in two articles, which appeared in a two-page spread on pages 6-7 of *Maariv*, on July 21. The articles dealt with the two parts of the home front – heroes on one side, complainers on the other. Page 6, which was already discussed in the beginning of this chapter, showed the Jewish heroes, who won’t be broken and won’t abandon their posts. The headlines read:



WAR IN THE NORTH – NO ONE’S BREAKING (logo)

NORTHERNERS UNDERSTAND THAT WAR IS HERE TO STAY AND ARE DETERMINED TO GO ON LIVING (top banner)

THE HEROES WE HADN’T KNOWN (main headline)

SHALOM HALAFLA PICKS NECTARINES IN FACE OF KATYUSHAS * MAYA AND SHLOMI GET MARRIED IN SHELTER (AND FEMALE GUESTS DON’T GIVE UP THEIR MANICURES) * KIBBUTZ RESIDENTS ATTEMPT TO RESCUE FAWNS FROM BURNT-OUT ODEM FOREST * 10 DAYS INTO FIGHTING, NORTHERN RESIDENTS MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO GIVE THEIR LIVES A LOOSE FRAMEWORK OF ROUTINE (subhead)

Under the byline, the caption read: **WITH THE RESIDENTS WHO DIDN'T DESERT THEIR HOMES.** The text of the article continued:

When the Nazis besieged Leningrad, the defenders continued to stage plays in the shelters. In Kiryat Shmona, people are getting married – and I know that, at first glance, the comparison appears far-fetched. The circumstances are not the same; the balance of forces is not the same. But the comparison is justified, because of the lust for life which it portrays. [...]

No one can beat a nation whose ladies won't give up their manicures while the Katyushas are falling.

Opposite page 7, showed the “crushed” Arab residents. Note the differences in attitude which are expressed everywhere: in the headlines, the logo and the texts. The headlines read:



WAR IN THE NORTH – SHOCK IN NAZARETH (logo)

DAY AFTER KATYUSHAS ON NAZARETH: RESIDENTS STRUGGLE TO GRASP AND COMPLAIN OF DISCRIMINATION (banner headline)

DESPONDENT AND DISBELIEVING (main headline)

THE KATYUSHAS IN NAZARETH, IT TURNS OUT, DO NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN JEWS AND ARABS * YESTERDAY, BOYS RABI'A AND MAHMOUD TALUZI, STRUCK BY A KATYUSHA WHILE PLAYING IN THEIR YARD, WERE LAID TO REST * ANOTHER RESIDENT CAME TO PICK UP A NEW CAR HE HAD BOUGHT, BUT THE MOMENT HE RECEIVED THE KEYS A MISSILE LANDED ON THE ROOF OF THE SHINY VEHICLE, DAMAGING THE OLD ONE AS WELL * WHOEVER THOUGHT PROTECTION WOULD BE NEEDED HERE FROM THE BROTHERS ACROSS THE BORDER? (subhead)

The article continued:

Nazareth, a major city to Israeli Arabs, was a nervous place yesterday. A center of Arab nationalism that sacrificed its sons in confrontations with the Israeli Police appeared yesterday, perhaps for the first time, to be a genuine part of the Israeli experience. People are despondent, not believing that this time they are at the center of the security agony of the homeland of the Jews.

In the Taluzi family's mourning tent, even the baklava awaiting consoling visitors cannot diminish the taste of confusion. A rocket fired by Arabs killed 7 year-old Rabi'a and 3 year-old Mahmoud. This time a Jewish finger did not pull the trigger. Beneath the roar of passing planes on their way to hunt down those who fired the Katyusha, the anger finds a little outlet in complaints about the lack of a civil defense system in the Arab sector. Quietly, people tell how in new buildings, built under a code that requires construction of a security room, they prefer to build a normal room. After all, whoever thought protection would be needed here from the brothers across the border?

Below is another example of how it appeared: In a two-page spread, this time on pages 2-3 of the daily supplement of *Maariv*, on July 17:

WAR IN THE NORTH – COEXISTENCE PUT TO TEST (logo)

GUARANTORS FOR EACH OTHER¹⁶ (main headline, in huge letters)

ANYONE WHO THINKS THE MISSILE BARRAGES ON HAIFA WILL MAKE ITS ARAB RESIDENTS VOTE FOR OLMERT IS WRONG * THEY ACCUSE ISRAEL OF AGGRESSION, PITY THEIR BROTHERS IN LEBANON, AND SOME OF THEM UNDERSTAND NASRALLAH * FORMER MK MUHAMMAD MIARI, HAIFA RESIDENT: "MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN ISRAEL BELIEVE NASRALLAH; YOU DON'T CALL A PERSON LIKE THAT A TERRORIST"

(subhead)

In contrast with the accusatory tone of the headline, in the article itself, the interviewees primarily express identification with the suffering of both sides and hope that the war will end. The editors chose not to reflect this message in the headline:

"[...] We have to focus on the negotiations and the dialogue. I'm not defending Lebanon or Hezbollah; I'm defending the poor civilians. Nasrallah doesn't represent me, and I don't agree with his views. In my opinion, he's acting rashly, and his actions have brought the Middle East back to a place I thought we'd gotten light-years away from. I identify with all civilians, wherever they are, and with all human beings. I don't distinguish between one blood and another, and I

16 A paraphrase of an expression from the Jewish tradition: "All Israel are guarantors for each other". In Hebrew the words Arabs and guarantors are spelled the same way. Thus, the huge headline emphasized in red associates Israeli Arabs with the Arabs in Lebanon, who are, at the moment, fighting against Israel.

don't show any understanding for anything that harms innocent civilians, in Israel or in Lebanon.”

“The minute the missiles fell, I called all my friends, Jews and Arabs, to see if they were all right. It's hard for me to deal with these new feelings; I'm not familiar with them and don't know how to cope with them; but the hardest thing of all for me is the human suffering that's happening now on both sides. I'm an Israeli citizen and an Arab, and as such, I feel that I'm between a rock and a hard place. Here I am in Haifa, worrying about everyone I know, but also thinking about my relatives in Lebanon and the residents there, and identify with their suffering.”

“[...] I want all the soldiers to come home, because when there is war, everyone gets hurt and pays a heavy price, and when there is peace, everyone profits by it.”

Maariv, two-page spread, pages 2-3 of daily supplement, July 17. In contrast with the accusatory tone of the headline, in the article itself the interviewees primarily express identification with the suffering of both sides and hope that the war will end. The editors chose not to reflect this message in the headline.



ערבים זה לזה

GUARANTORS FOR EACH OTHER (main headline, in huge letters)
ANYONE WHO THINKS THE MISSILE BARRAGES ON HAIFA WILL MAKE ITS ARAB RESIDENTS VOTE FOR OLMERT IS WRONG * THEY ACCUSE ISRAEL OF AGGRESSION, PITY THEIR BROTHERS IN LEBANON, AND SOME OF THEM UNDERSTAND NASRALLAH * FORMER MK MUHAMMAD MIARI, HAIFA RESIDENT: "MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN ISRAEL BELIEVE NASRALLAH; YOU DON'T CALL A PERSON LIKE THAT A TERRORIST" (subhead)

WAR IN THE NORTH – COEXISTENCE PUT TO TEST (logo)

"The minute the missiles fell, I called all my friends, Jews and Arabs, to see if they were all right. It's hard for me to deal with these new feelings; I'm not familiar with them and don't know how to cope with them; but the hardest thing of all for me is the human suffering that's happening now on both sides. I'm an Israeli citizen and an Arab, and as such, I feel that I'm between a rock and a hard place. Here I am in Haifa, worrying about everyone I know, but also thinking about my relatives in Lebanon and the residents there, and identify with their suffering."

From the text of the article

In a few specific cases, Arab citizens volunteered to make declarations of loyalty and support of Israel in the media – where upon they immediately received a “certificate of approval” and their suffering suddenly looked more human. Thus, for example, a headline at the opening of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 4 reported:

WOMAN KILLED THIS EVENING IN MAGHAR; 2 KILLED TODAY IN MAJD AL-KRUM. DEMONSTRATIONS IN MAJD AL-KRUM, AND MORE AND MORE VOICES, INCLUDING MUSLIMS, SPEAK OUT AGAINST HEZBOLLAH, AGAINST NASRALLAH, AND EXPRESS SUPPORT OF OLMERT, PERETZ AND THE IDF TROOPS

A headline at the opening of the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 25 was accompanied by a caption: **NEW TARGET: MAGHAR. COST: 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL KILLED.** The headline stated as follows:

A 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL WAS KILLED, AND SEVERAL PEOPLE WERE WOUNDED, BY A MISSILE WHICH FELL ON MAGHAR VILLAGE. A VILLAGE RESIDENT: “I LIVE HERE IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL, BUT I HOPE FOR PEACE FOR ALL PEOPLE AND ALL COUNTRIES”

A headline on page 19 of *Maariv*'s August 10 issue declared:

DOZENS OF HAIFA ARABS WANT TO ENLIST IN IDF

The origin of this story is made clear in the text of the article:

The head of the group, Fuad Nassar, wrote to Minister Peretz that: “We are proud of the State and its just struggle. We will serve wherever they ask us to and carry out any task assigned to us in the best possible way.” [...] “We’re Israelis for all intents and purposes,” he says. “We are all adamantly opposed to Hezbollah and Hassan Nasrallah.”

As mentioned, when the media told stories of Jewish civilians who left the North, the stories were portrayed as additional proof of the strength of the home front – the “broad home front” of central and southern Israel, assisting the northern residents. When the Arab residents of the North, on the other hand, sought shelter from the Katyushas, the media told the story in an entirely different way: the Arab civilians were simply “listening to Nasrallah”. He had proposed that they leave their homes during the war – and they were acceding to his request. For example, a headline published on page 7 of *Maariv* on August 11 stated:

LISTENING TO NASRALLAH (top banner)

100 HAIFA ARABS WANT TO LEAVE TO JORDAN (main headline)

The text read as follows: “One day after Hassan Nasrallah appealed to Haifa’s Arab residents to leave town, approximately 100 of them reported to the Population Registry Office and filed urgent applications for passports.” The last paragraph of the article, however, puts things a bit differently:

Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav clarified yesterday that he is not familiar with any mass migration of residents to Jordan: “There are some [Arabs] who are leaving, but it’s exactly like the Jews. The Arab residents of the city are politically and economically involved in it, and no Hassan Nasrallah is going to make them leave.”

A very similar headline appeared on the same day, on page 6 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*:

AFTER NASRALLAH’S SPEECH: 100 HAIFA ARABS ARE LEAVING FOR JORDAN

In this case, Yahav’s clarification appeared in the subhead:

**FILED URGENT APPLICATIONS FOR PASSPORTS TO STAY IN JORDAN DURING WAR
* HAIFA MAYOR: “NO HASSAN AND NO NASRALLAH WILL SUCCEED IN UPROOTING
HAIFA’S ARAB RESIDENTS”**

Deep in the text, however, the story is revealed as entirely different: the Arab Haifa residents are not leaving because of Nasrallah’s request, but actually because the State left them without shelters or means of protection:

Members of the Arab public point out that the families’ departure, in most cases, is not related to Nasrallah’s speech. People in the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood, where two residents were killed in a missile attack, stated that some of the people leaving decided to do so due to the lack of shelters and for fear of additional missile attacks.

And this is how it looked in the Channel 1 news broadcast on August 10. The caption displayed at the opening of the broadcast asked: **HAIFA ARABS – LEAVING OR STAYING?** And the headline answered: **PEOPLE IN WADI NISNAS BELIEVE NASRALLAH: SOME ARE CLOSING BUSINESSES, SOME ARE LEAVING.**

Further in the report, however, different voices were heard:

Reporter Michal Wasserman: Many people are afraid; a few of them left the neighborhood even before Nasrallah's speech. Some of them have decided to leave the Wadi not because of Nasrallah, but because Israel didn't provide them with shelters. But there are other voices as well:

Civilian: I'm part of the State; there is nothing to be done. Anyone who doesn't admit that this is the situation shouldn't be living here.

From time to time, the media coverage repeated the following statement: "Nasrallah and his Katyushas don't distinguish between one blood and another; he's even killing his own people." On July 19, for example, Mahmoud and Rabi'a Taluzi, the two children from Nazareth, were killed by a Katyusha rocket. The next day's headlines screamed:

NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN ONE BLOOD AND ANOTHER (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 20, headline on the front page)

INDISCRIMINATE KATYUSHAS: MISSILE FIRE HIT NAZARETH YESTERDAY * BROTHERS RABI'A AND MAHMOUD TALUZI, PLAYING OUTSIDE THEIR HOUSE, PAID WITH THEIR LIVES (*Maariv*, July 20, headline on the front page)

Gadi Sukenik, shortly after the start of the Channel 2 news broadcast on July 25, reported as follows:

We mentioned Maghar. A 15-year-old girl was killed there, when a Hezbollah missile landed right next to the town mosque, and that girl was a Muslim. Once again, the missiles did not distinguish between one human being and another. The Druze in Maghar want Nasrallah's head – and they're probably not the only ones.

The Minister of Transport, Shaul Mofaz, speaking in the same report, expressed himself in similar words:

First of all, I came to express my sorrow at the killing of the 15-year-old girl. Those Katyushas do not distinguish between Muslims, Jews and Christians. And this Axis of Evil, this Axis of Murder, starts in Iran and runs through Damascus and down to Hezbollah.

When the media told stories of Jewish civilians who left the North, the stories were portrayed as additional proof of the strength of the home front – the “broad home front” of central and southern Israel, assisting the northern residents. When the Arab residents of the North, on the other hand, sought shelter from the Katyushas, the media told the story in an entirely different way: the Arab civilians were simply “listening to Nasrallah”.



➔ *Maariv*, page 7, August 11. the story that the editor chose to tell in the headline: **LISTENING TO NASRALLAH; 100 HAIFA ARABS WANT TO LEAVE TO JORDAN**, was very different from the one in the last paragraph of the article:

Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav clarified yesterday that he is not familiar with any mass migration of residents to Jordan: “There are some [Arabs] who are leaving, but it’s exactly like the Jews. The Arab residents of the city are politically and economically involved in it, and no Hassan Nasrallah is going to make them leave.”



➔ Channel 1, August 10. The caption displayed at the opening of the broadcast asked: **HAIFA’S ARABS – LEAVING OR STAYING?** And the headline answered: **PEOPLE IN WADI NISNAS BELIEVE NASRALLAH: SOME ARE CLOSING BUSINESSES, SOME ARE LEAVING.**

Only rarely did the media present fair and sensible coverage of the suffering of Israel's Arab citizens – without making that coverage contingent upon a declaration of loyalty and without mobilizing that suffering for the benefit of the war against Hezbollah. For example, the main headline of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 5 stated as follows:

GOOD EVENING TO YOU ALL. TODAY IS THE 25TH DAY OF THE FIGHTING, AND THESE ARE THE DAY'S EVENTS: THREE WOMEN FROM ONE FAMILY WERE KILLED BY A KATYUSHA MISSILE ON THE BEDOUIN VILLAGE OF ARAB AL-ARAMSHE.

The report itself presented a clean description of the suffering of the Arab civilians:

For three weeks now, the residents here have been living in the “security rooms” which they built after Operation Grapes of Wrath¹⁷. The village has no warning siren system, and the residents are suffering. Today they also paid a heavy price. For the last three days, most of the casualties have been Israeli Arabs. The day before yesterday, three were killed in Tarshiha; yesterday, three in Maghar and Majd al-Krum; and today, three women from one family in Arab al-Aramshe.

Extremely rarely, reports crossed the separating line between the Jewish home front and the Arab home front, and suddenly “discovered” that both groups of civilians lived in the same places and were suffering to the same degree. Thus, for example, Haim Yavin introduced a report in the 32nd minute of the Channel 1 news broadcast, on July 20:

We're still in Haifa. I don't want to open my mouth too soon, but the city had a bit of quiet today. A different kind of quiet is growing between Jews and Arabs, deep under the ground, inside the shelters.

The introduction to the report was accompanied by a caption: **COEXISTENCE DEEP UNDER THE GROUND**. Michal Wasserman started the report with the words: “In Haifa, where Jews and Arabs live together, quite a few shelters are shared by both groups. Having to stay together for long periods of time, is, at least, good for coexistence.”

The following headline appeared on the pages 12-13 spread of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on August 7:

DEADLY DAY IN HAIFA: KATYUSHA ATTACK HITS SYMBOL OF COEXISTENCE, WADI NISNAS, AND CLAIMS 3 LIVES (top banner)

ALLIANCE MADE IN BLOOD (main headline, in large letters)

RESIDENTS OF JEWISH-ARAB NEIGHBORHOOD, SUBJECT OF BOOK “A TRUMPET IN THE WADI”, WERE HIT HARD YESTERDAY * BLEEDING ARABS AND JEWS WERE EVACUATED TO CITY'S 3 HOSPITALS * MILAD QANBURA, ARAB RESIDENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD: “WE ARE VICTIMS, JUST LIKE THE JEWS” (subhead)

17 Name of IDF two week operation in April 1996, which attempted to end Hezbollah's shelling of Northern Israel.

Only once in the entire war was appropriately prominent placement given to an article which reflected the feelings of the Arab civilians and allowed them to claim that the Jews were stirring up provocation about them in the course of the war. The article, which appeared in *Haaretz* on August 2, had a reference headline on the first page. The headline of the article itself, on page 7, read: **ARABS DEMAND DEMOCRATIC TOLERANCE “EVEN IN CRISIS”; “THIS IS OPEN SEASON ON US”, COMPLAIN ARAB MKS.** The text of the article stated as follows:

It seems that the fortitude of Israeli democracy is now being put to the test. On the one hand, a war is going on which demands all of the resources in the North. On the other hand, tolerance for other opinions has declined. The media are allowing themselves to demand that the Arab public and its representatives in the Knesset demonstrate their loyalty to the State. And the declarations by Arab Members of Knesset, in this regard, are indeed grave. [...] Members of the Arab public claim that it is unthinkable for a true democracy not to be tolerant of statements and opinions that deviate from the consensus, even when the State is in crisis. They claim that the role of an opposition is to express opinions which are opposed to those of the coalition. In the case before us, the opposition attacking from the left is almost entirely made up of Arabs.

And please note the following report, by Zion Nanus, which was broadcast in the 98th(!) minute of the Channel 2 news broadcast on July 23. Gadi Sukenik introduced the report as follows:

Yes, we promised to show you what’s happening behind the scenes in Haifa, after 12 days of fighting, with plenty of alerts, missiles and strikes. Zion Nanus went to Haifa, and he found people who are fed up with this façade that everything is fine, and “We’ll show them”, they want something else.

The report itself focused on three residents of Haifa – a hairdresser and two café owners. Two of them were Arabs; the third was Jewish. All had been hit by Katyushas; therefore, as Nanus pointed out, they felt they were allowed to speak a bit differently. Nanus himself said: “It’s not easy to voice exceptional opinions these days.” Here are excerpts from statements by the three residents:

Ibrahim Ashaq: And let’s suppose you bring us Nasrallah’s head. What will that give us? There was Abbas Mussawi, you eliminated him, and now there’s Nasrallah, you’ll eliminate him – and it won’t end. I haven’t made a single shekel in 10 days. If it takes a month – one more month, we in Haifa won’t be able to last. There is a solution!

Azam Shweiqi: There is a solution! The only solution is for each side to give up a bit of its ego, and then they'll be able to talk together.

Ronen Knafi: After they fight, and go to war, and kill and kill and kill, then they say "Now let's sit down and talk." First they have to discharge their anger, and after that – when they've let it all out, then they sit down and talk.

After the three civilians spoke, another siren was heard. The participants took improvised shelter under the doorframes of their business premises, and Nanus closed the report with the following words:

Nanus: If it were up to Ronen, Ibrahim and Azam, peace could be achieved very quickly. But what can we do if Hezbollah thinks differently.

This is a fascinating combination of ideas. Nanus' report accepts the Arab civilians as equals, shows Haifa's Arab and Jewish residents next to each other, lets the audience hear their voices – but then, at the end, clarifies: if it was up to us, Jews and Arabs, it would be possible to make peace. "But what can we do if Hezbollah thinks differently." Even this exceptional report, then, eventually leads to a justification of the war.

The Government's Failures: "Nasrallah Apologizes"

As we have seen, the Government's failures in caring for the Jewish home front were generally marginalized in the media coverage, but did appear occasionally in headlines. The Government's failures in caring for the Arab home front were not treated the same way. The subject was mentioned only extremely rarely, about 70 times throughout the entire war. In the absolute majority of cases, these mentions occurred deep inside the articles or reports – whereas the headlines, time after time, dealt with the question of loyalty. Thus, for example, the following information appeared in a small article, which was published on page 19 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 23:

The Arab cities and towns in the North are being hit by just as many Katyushas as the Jewish ones, but only a few Arab cities and towns have warning systems. Yesterday, too, several missiles fell in the open fields next to Arab communities in the Galilee. There were no casualties. The police announced the attack over the loudspeaker systems in the mosques – but the towns and villages feel abandoned. "This is contempt for our lives," said Jamal Mahmoud of Kafr Kana. According to his statement, a kibbutz was established near his village several years ago. Even though only a few families live there, it was hooked up to a warning system – but the Arab village, with its 20,000 residents, still has not been hooked up.

The headline of the article, however, said something entirely different:

NASRALLAH APOLOGIZES: “CHILDREN FROM NAZARETH ARE MARTYRS”

The subject reached the headlines only rarely. Thus, for example, a headline on the front page of *Haaretz* on July 20 read (and note how the article links the warning system fiasco to the question of loyalty):

**NAZARETH DECLARES ITS LOYALTY TO ISRAEL WHILE DEFENDING NASRALLAH;
HOME FRONT COMMAND DID NOT CONNECT NAZARETH TO WARNING SYSTEM;
KATYUSHA KILLS 2 CHILDREN**

A headline on page 8 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on July 21, stated: **NO SHELTER IN VILLAGE; RESIDENTS FLEE TO CAVES**. The subhead added: **RESIDENTS OF BEDOUIN VILLAGE ARAB AL-NAIM ARE FURIOUS: WE’RE ONLY GOOD FOR ARMY SERVICE AND RESERVE DUTY**. The headline of a small item on page 6 of *Haaretz* on August 4 stated: **COMPENSATION FORMS IN HEBREW ONLY**. Channel 2 correspondent Moshe Nussbaum, in the news broadcast on July 19, made the following statement:

And possibly, possibly, maybe, if there had been shelters and protected spaces in Nazareth, and if there had been a warning system in Nazareth, perhaps this tragedy could have been avoided. That’s what we’ve been hearing, ever since it happened, from all of the residents.

The following brief conversation took place that same evening, in the Channel 10 studio, between Miki Haimovich and correspondent Nesli Barda, in Nazareth:

Miki Haimovich: Nesli Barda, you’re in Nazareth this evening. That city today experienced a really awful incident, a catastrophic strike on two small children. I understand there are a lot of complaints in the city about not having sirens or means of protection?

Nesli Barda: ... And here in Nazareth, beyond the great shock caused by the explosions, which wounded nearly 100 people, who were evacuated from the city as casualties of the recoil from the two rockets which landed here – beyond that shock and aside from the wounded, there are a lot of complaints about the fact that there are no shelters here. No one explained to the local residents – not in Arabic, and not in any other language – what they should be doing. The Home Front Command was never even here. No sirens are heard here. People are talking about the fact that they are in the line of fire, and this – what happened here this afternoon – is living proof of that fact. But no one bothers to give them any help, any assistance.

These drastic differences between the coverage of the Jewish and the Arab home front were in the nature of an open secret throughout the entire war. Some people even wrote about them explicitly, but this criticism, in the overwhelming majority of cases, was extremely marginalized. It never appeared in news headlines, only deep inside the texts of op-ed articles and commentaries – mostly in *Haaretz*. On August 4, for example, a piece was published in Section B of the paper, under the headline: **DON'T ARABS DESERVE HUGS, TOO?** The article, written by Daniel Ben Simon, stated as follows:

They've seen the blue-and-white signs: "Israel Is Strong" and "We're Going to Win". They've seen the trucks sent out by banks, food plants and other factories, piling love onto the IDF troops and embracing the northern residents cowering in the shelters.

"No one has embraced the Arab cities and towns," says accountant Ala Agrabiya in a low voice, trying to conceal his distress. "What's the matter? Am I not good enough to get a hug, too? Has anyone embraced the residents of Majd al-Krum or Nazareth? Of Me'iliya or Tarshiha? No one has even mentioned them. Not Bank Hapoalim, not Tnuva, and not the media. The entire State is embracing the North, but not the Arab communities. As if the Arabs weren't part of the State. Go to Gaydamak's vacation camp¹⁸ and count how many Arab children are being hosted there. I doubt you'll find even one."

In an op-ed article published in Section B of *Haaretz* on August 10, under the headline **MARTYRS AGAINST THEIR WILL**, Karam Munir, a teacher and doctoral student of history, said the following:

But the Israeli media, written and electronic alike, is not capable of change. It has to, it just has to, ask the victims' relatives about their political opinions and about Nasrallah. After all, Arab-Israeli victims in this war are hot news. They can't just talk about the human tragedy which has befallen the families and stop there. Every Arab casualty becomes merchandise. For some, the casualties symbolize coexistence and prove the statement, which has become so overused in the last weeks that "the missiles don't distinguish between Jews and Arabs". For others, they constitute a tool for reproving Israeli Arabs, in the style of "Maybe now you'll stop being a fifth column and start supporting your State". At times, they are used in the struggle against the Government, as proof of "decades of discrimination against Arabs by the various Governments of Israel".

18 An Israeli billionaire of Russian descent who privately funded a camp for Northern residents fleeing their homes.

In *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on page 21 of the July 28 weekend supplement, Gideon Maron and Oded Shalom, in an article entitled **DEATH OF THE BEAUTIFUL**, wrote the following:

Two weeks of incessant firing have not overlooked the Arab cities and towns in the Galilee. Four Arab civilians have already been killed. Each time a missile falls on an Arab community, the correspondents come and ask the residents what they think of Hezbollah and Nasrallah now.

This is the duality in which they live: on the one hand, they are hit just like the Jews; on the other hand, they are considered to be sympathizers of the other side. Even without our asking the question, Osama, a cousin of one of the victims, protests: “Why are all these correspondents coming and asking us what we think about Nasrallah? When a missile hits Nahariya, do they ask the residents for their opinion of Hezbollah? Ask us about Olmert. What do we care about Nasrallah?”

The Government’s failures in handling the Arab home front were mentioned only extremely rarely. In the absolute majority of cases, these mentions occurred deep inside the articles or reports – whereas the headlines, time after time, dealt with the question of loyalty.



➔ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 23. A tiny article on page 19 reported on the subject. The article itself contained extremely important information – only a few of the Arab communities in the north have warning systems. Yet the newspaper editors chose to emphasize in the headline the last sentence of the article: **NASRALLAH APOLOGIZES: “THE CHILDREN FROM NAZARETH ARE MARTYRS”.**

The full text of the article ↓

The Arab cities and towns in the North are being hit by just as many Katyushas as the Jewish ones, but only a few Arab cities and towns have warning systems. Yesterday, too, several missiles fell in the open fields next to Arab community in the Galilee. There were no casualties. The police announced the attack over the loudspeaker systems in the mosques – but the towns and villages feel abandoned. “This is contempt for our lives,” said Jamal Mahmoud of Kafr Kana. According to his statement, a kibbutz was established near his village several years ago. Even though only a few families live there, it was hooked up to a warning system – but the Arab village, with its 20,000 residents, still has not been hooked up. As it happened, Nasrallah apologized to the Taluza family of Nazareth whose children were killed by a Katyusha that fell in their neighborhood. “The two boys are martyrs,” he declared.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the media also published op-ed articles of quite a different type – which expressed positions that crossed the line of racism. On August 1, for example, *Maariv* chose to publish an article by Ben Caspit on its front page – under the headline **A LETTER TO AHMAD TIBI:**

Now the Katyushas are falling on you, too, but the penny hasn't dropped yet. They're killing your people, too, but they don't interfere with your program. Who can be blamed for the fact that Abed Taluzi, the unfortunate father who lost his two sons in Nazareth, doesn't even know that everything began with a murderous, baseless attack by "Brother" Nasrallah on Israel? You, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Dr. Ahmad Tibi, are ostensibly a source of great pride. In reality? A severe problem. I'm trying to imagine what would have happened in the Parliament of one of the countries which are dear to you, if the hoodlum Mohammad Barakeh [an Arab MK] had appeared there and announced that the Government had deliberately slaughtered women and children – as he lashed-out against the Government of Israel. After all, in any normal country, that man would have already been sent to prison. [...] Or Taleb el-Sana [an Arab MK], that miserable man, screaming himself to death. [...] And Azmi Bishara [an Arab MK]? He takes the cake. The man hardly ever appears in the Knesset. Only in our unfortunate country can such a fifth column continue to serve in the legislature. He boycotts the institution on a regular basis, but continues to earn his salary from it and use it to fuel his struggle for the end of the Jewish State. Who knows? Maybe he went to visit Comrade Assad in Damascus yesterday, to exchange views. Or to "Brother" Nasrallah in Beirut, to make plans. You can never know with him. One day he's spying here on their behalf; the next day he's spying there on ours. [...] Only an alienated, scandalous, insane decision by the Supreme Court allowed that man to run for the Knesset again this time. [...] Israeli democracy, Ahmad, will not be able to go on swallowing this venom much longer. Eventually, you will all be vomited up and driven out. When a Jew living in New York decides that his loyalty to the Jewish State is greater than his loyalty to his homeland, he gets up one morning and immigrates to Israel. It's time for all of you to decide as well – where you are, on whose side are you on. Do you want to stay here? Be brave enough to declare your loyalty. You don't want to? Emigrate to Palestine. Go off to Syria. Move to Amman. I believe in the loyalty and decency of the great majority of the Israeli Arabs. I know that hundreds of thousands of them are loyal citizens. [...] It's time to weigh the factors and make the decision. It's not too late. You can still change direction. We can still stay together. But for that, you all have to make the decision. To stay here, with us, for better or for worse, or switch sides, to them, for better or for worse. I want to see you all screaming at Ismail Haniyeh at the Ramallah Parliament. Or attacking Abu Samhadana in his offices in Rafah. You'll miss us, Ahmad. I'm not sure we'll miss you.

6> THE DAMAGE IN LEBANON: “AS IF IT HAD BEEN HIT BY AN EARTHQUAKE”

The evidence shows a severe failure in the work of the Winograd Commission: it almost entirely ignored the ethical aspects of the war. They did not have even one question, even a hint, about the decision to harm Lebanese citizens.

Aluf Benn, *Haaretz*, May 11, 2007

The civilian population of Southern Lebanon and Beirut were extremely hard hit during the war – much harder, in fact, than civilians in Israel. According to various reports, the Israel Air Force attacks on Lebanon were responsible for the death of some 1,100 people, about one-third of whom were children. More than 4,000 people were injured. About 1,000,000 civilians fled northward and became refugees. Many were forced to remain in their villages, during the severe bombings, because the grave damage to infrastructure, roads and bridges, and the shelling of vehicles traveling on the roads to Southern Lebanon, prevented the civilians from fleeing. The heavy IDF bombings caused severe damage to buildings and infrastructures in cities and villages throughout Southern Lebanon. The Israel Air Force bombed airports, seaports, power stations, water infrastructures and sewage processing plants, factories, apartment buildings – and even the Tyre Hospital. More than 30,000 residences throughout Lebanon, including the South, were destroyed; more than 25 gas stations, 900 business centers, at least 80 bridges and 94 roads were hit. The damage to the Lebanese economy is estimated in the billions of dollars. Obviously, the majority of Lebanese civilians killed and injured, and most infrastructures had nothing at all to do with Hezbollah.

Coverage of this massive damage in Lebanon reveals a fascinating pattern. Before the Israel Air Force bombing of Kafr Qana, on July 30, in which dozens of civilians were killed, the media, in the vast majority of cases, operated according to a principle which we, in this report, have termed the “separation principle”. The suffering of Lebanese civilians was given rather broad, and sometimes even empathic coverage – but it was almost entirely separated, by all possible editing means, from the IDF operations which caused the suffering in question. The IDF was described as being busy fighting Hezbollah, harming only the terror infrastructures, and taking pains not to harm the civilian population. The Lebanese suffering was described separately, as a disaster which befell the citizens of Lebanon out of nowhere – as if the sky had fallen in on them.

Beirut, for example, was described in those articles and reports, in the words of one correspondent, as looking “as if it had been hit by an earthquake”. The combination of these two descriptions broke the chain of causality between the IDF operations and their results on the ground. This pattern was combined with enthusiastic coverage of the international support for Israel. After the strike on Kafr Qana, almost all of the media were mobilized on behalf of the IDF propaganda mission, and made an effort to explain, time after time, that only Hezbollah was at fault for the Lebanese deaths. At that point, when public opinion worldwide was already condemning Israel for its operations in Lebanon, this mobilization was supplemented by the old, familiar adage: “The whole world is against us.”

Before Kafr Qana: “The IAF Has Already Attacked 500 Objectives in Lebanon”

Prior to Kafr Qana, all of the media, almost without exception, reported the events in Lebanon in a manner that was in keeping with the “separation principle”. Issue after issue, broadcast after broadcast, first covered the massive, precise IAF attacks on defined Hezbollah targets. Only thereafter, separately, and with a certain degree of sympathy, did the coverage describe the suffering of Lebanese citizens whose world had been destroyed. The result was total denial of the IDF’s glaring responsibility for this Lebanese suffering. The separation principle enabled the media to continue to describe the IDF operations, which were aimed at Hezbollah, as justified, necessary, and dictated by reality – irrespective of the results of those operations.

Thus, for example, the main headline of *Maariv*, on July 16, read: **SIGNS OF BREAKING IN LEBANON**. The background showed a huge picture of Lebanon in flames, with the caption (framed in a rifle sight): **BEIRUT – 96 HOURS OF BOMBING**. The subhead added:

HEAVY OFFENSIVE ON BEIRUT STARTING TO SHOW RESULTS * IAF RAINS HUNDREDS OF BOMBS ON CITY, WIPES OUT HEZBOLLAH HQ

A headline on page 6 of the paper stated: **TRAGIC ERROR: 9 CHILDREN KILLED IN IAF BOMBING**. In the article itself, we learn that the bombing in question, which was described on the front page in almost festive terms, caused the death of 21 people. On page 21 of the issue, next to a picture of a bombed apartment building, was a small article by Jackie Hugi, headlined **RESIDENTS STORING FOOD; FOREIGNERS FLEEING**.

The article indicated that the death of those children and civilians was only a small part of what had taken place in Lebanon that day:

Bridges destroyed, fuel tanks burning, tourism frozen from one day to the next, and even the Prime Minister begging for help. That's how Lebanon looks today, four days after the kidnapping operation which killed eight IDF troops. Following the bombing of the Beirut Airport runways, all air traffic into and out of Lebanon has ceased. Many tourists, most from the Gulf States, are stuck in Lebanon, unable to leave, because the IDF also attacked the Beirut-Damascus road and the coastal road into Syria.

The coverage in *Yedioth Ahronoth* on July 17 was similar. A picture on the front page of the paper showed entirely destroyed buildings in Beirut. The headline read: **ARAB COALITION AGAINST NASRALLAH**. The caption beneath the picture stated:

This was his home. The ruins of the building in which Nasrallah lived, in Beirut.

In other words, the front page clearly stated that only Nasrallah's home and its environs were harmed by the bombing (and that an Arab coalition was supporting Israel in its struggle against the Hezbollah). At the bottom of page 8 of that issue, however, an article appeared with the following headline:

"GET US OUT OF HERE; WE CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE" (main headline)

500,000 LIVED IN SOUTHERN BEIRUT, WHERE HEZBOLLAH HQ WAS LOCATED

*** IAF ATTACKED NEIGHBORHOOD AGAIN AND AGAIN; VAST DESTRUCTION**

*** "TAKE US OUT OF THIS HELL," SURVIVORS SAY TO JOURNALISTS; "IT**

DOESN'T MATTER WHERE" (subhead)

The picture accompanying the article showed frightened civilians fleeing the horror of the bombing with their children. It was suddenly made clear that the targets included not only the Hezbollah leader and the members of his organization, but half a million people living in the southern quarter of Beirut.

Yedioth Ahronoth, July 17. The front page clearly stated that only Nasrallah’s home and its environs were harmed by the bombing. But at the bottom of page 8 of the issue, it is suddenly made clear that the targets included not only the Hezbollah leader and the members of his organization, but half a million people living in the southern quarter of Beirut.



➔ Photograph on the front page. Note the caption appearing on the photograph and the circle marked on it (which appeared in the original): “This was his home. The ruins of the building in which Nasrallah lived in Beirut.”



➔ “GET US OUT OF HERE; WE CAN’T TAKE ANY MORE” (main headline)
500,000 LIVED IN SOUTHERN BEIRUT, WHERE HEZBOLLAH HQ WAS LOCATED * IAF ATTACKED NEIGHBORHOOD AGAIN AND AGAIN; VAST DESTRUCTION
 * “TAKE US OUT OF THIS HELL,” SURVIVORS SAY TO JOURNALISTS; “IT DOESN’T MATTER WHERE” (subhead)

Article at bottom of page 8

The main headline of *Haaretz*, that same day, announced: **FEAR OF MISSILE FIRE ON TEL AVIV AND SOUTHWARD; IDF DESTROYS HEZBOLLAH NEIGHBORHOOD IN BEIRUT**. Only on page 6 did an article describe the suffering of the Lebanese people, which was caused

by the IDF attack. The headline of one of the articles stated: **80 ATTACKS CARRIED OUT IN LEBANON; SCORES KILLED**. The text of that article included the following passage:

The IAF yesterday attacked dozens of targets throughout Lebanon. Many of the attacks focused on the Dahiya neighborhood, the Shi'ite quarter in southern Beirut, where the Hezbollah headquarters were located. Scores of Lebanese, including many civilians, were killed in the bombing. The IDF appealed to the residents of villages in Southern Lebanon to leave their homes, because it was about to attack those areas. Tens of thousands fled to the north. Nine people were killed in the IAF attack on the civil defense building in Tyre. The casualty count yesterday was approximately 30. It should be noted that there are no precise data on the number of people killed each day in all of the IDF attacks.

This is how the situation looked in the TV news broadcasts as well. On July 16, for example, Channel 10 gave relatively extensive coverage to the events in Beirut. This is how correspondent Zvi Yehezkeli described the events:

Zvi Yehezkeli: This is the southern part of Beirut, after the Israeli strike: ruins, destruction, as if the neighborhood had been hit by an earthquake. There is not a living soul in the place which, until a few days ago, had been the Hezbollah stronghold... Today, civilians who had left before the IAF started attacking the city came back. They have just discovered how the neighborhood where they used to live now looks.

Lebanese citizen: We came back and this is what we found. I hope Allah protected the people who were here.

Second Lebanese citizen: There is nothing. No one is doing anything. People talk to us about peace. What peace? What peace are they talking about? You can't do things like that. Nobody cares about the houses which were destroyed and the Muslims who are being killed.

Zvi Yehezkeli: The southern neighborhood of Beirut is under attack by the Israel Air Force for the third straight day. Mushroom clouds of smoke are constantly rising over the city. Thousands of kilograms of explosives pounded the Hezbollah stronghold here, and many civilians found themselves homeless... To date, from the beginning of the offensive, 130 Lebanese have been killed and 400 wounded. The hospitals of Southern Lebanon are short of blood.

But when anchor Miki Haimovich introduced a report by Yinon Magal, "summing up the IDF activity today", in the very same news broadcast, this is what she said (while totally ignoring everything which had been said on the results of that activity in Lebanon):

The IAF has already attacked 500 objectives in Lebanon, from Beirut in the West through Baalbek in the East to Nabatiye in the South. Our correspondent, Yinon Magal, will now sum up the IDF activity today.

And this is how Magal himself described the IDF operations:

The artillery of the Dragon Battalion has been booming all day. The barrels are turned toward Lebanon. The soldiers never stop loading the shells and firing the guns... Today, the IDF is expanding its air and ground attacks on Lebanon. To date, more than 500 objectives in Lebanon have been attacked. In the Dahiya neighborhood of Beirut alone, approximately 40 targets were attacked: warehouses, offices, infrastructure. Most of the artillery fire was directed at Katyusha launchers... Care is being taken so that the fire will be precisely on target and will not harm civilians.

The headlines of the broadcast did not mention even one word of what was happening in Lebanon. This is how Haim Yavin and Yoav Limor sounded, in the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 13, in their coverage of the IDF operations:

Haim Yavin: Here is an overview of the IDF in this operation, “Proper Payment”... Hundreds of objectives have been attacked. Our military correspondent, Yoav Limor, will now describe the blitz of the last 24 hours.

Yoav Limor: This was one of the most intense days the IDF has known in recent years. Since last night, a massive, continuous offensive against a profusion of targets in Lebanese territory has been going on. Immediately after the Cabinet session, the IDF launched Operation “Proper Payment”. During the night, the IAF destroyed all of the bridges and roads connecting Southern and Northern Lebanon. The objective: to prevent terrorists from escaping northward and weapons from being transferred to the South... At the same time, according to plans and intelligence prepared in the six years since the IDF withdrawal from Southern Lebanon, scores of Hezbollah objectives were attacked: weapons and ammunition bases, training facilities and headquarters, outposts and command vehicles. The IDF estimates that dozens of terrorists were killed and wounded. Reports from Lebanon tell of a large number of civilian casualties.

And here is Oded Granot’s report on the events in Beirut, later in the same broadcast:

Oded Granot: Panic in the streets of Beirut following the IAF strike on the Hezbollah TV station. People are fleeing in all directions, but the station is still broadcasting via satellite... Residents of southern Beirut found out this morning

that both runways of the international airport had been bombed... and, in addition to the TV station and the airports, all of the bridges connecting the South and the North were bombed as well. The bridges over the Litani, Zahrani and Awali Rivers were hit; the northernmost bridge in Damur, just south of Beirut, was also bombed. Automobile traffic came to a halt.

Lebanese civilian: At 12:30 at night I passed by here, and the bridge had been bombed out at 12:15. I had to sleep here, next to the bridge. We're not afraid; why should I be afraid? We're still alive.

Oded Granot: Israel's appeal to the residents of southern Beirut, where the Hezbollah headquarters and Nasrallah's home are located, asking them to evacuate the area, gave rise to panic and forced the Hezbollah to create an immediate "price tag", in order to deter Israel and try to stop the residents from fleeing.

The following caption appeared on the screen as Granot spoke: **TAKING HITS – AND STILL FIRING**. That caption, of course, equates the civilians who were absorbing the bombings with the Hezbollah terrorists who were firing the Katyushas. The meaning is clear: "The harm to the civilian population of Beirut has nothing to do with us. It is a direct consequence of the fact that Hezbollah is still firing."

It should be noted that, alongside the coverage described above, some of the media headlines did not ignore the causal connection between the IDF operations and the Lebanese suffering. Rather, they boasted of it, and called for even harder strikes against the Lebanese. Here is a sample of those headlines:

FOR EVERY HIT ON HAIFA – THE IDF DESTROYS 10 HOUSES IN BEIRUT (*Maariv*, July 26, headline on the front page)

SENIOR IDF OFFICER: WE'LL WIPE OUT VILLAGES WHICH LAUNCH MISSILES (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 27, front page, main headline of the issue)

"LEBANON WILL PAY A HEAVY PRICE" (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 7, front page, main headline of the issue)

ISRAEL HAS DECIDED TO SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND ITS ACTIVITY IN LEBANON [Olmert to IDF:] **"THE STRONGER THE BLOW YOU STRIKE – THE BETTER THE CONDITIONS WILL BE FOR AN ARRANGEMENT IN THE FUTURE"** (Channel 2 news broadcast, August 7, headline at the opening of the newscast)

Some of the headlines didn't ignore the causal connection between the IDF operation and the Lebanese suffering, but rather called for even harder strikes against the Lebanese.



➔ **SENIOR IDF OFFICER: WE'LL WIPE OUT VILLAGES WHICH LAUNCH MISSILES**
Yedioth Ahronoth, front page, main headline of July 27 issue



➔ **FOR EVERY HIT ON HAIFA - THE IDF DESTROYS 10 HOUSES IN BEIRUT** (main headline)
IAF IMPLEMENTED YESTERDAY FOR THE FIRST TIME THE COMMAND GIVEN BY CHIEF OF STAFF HALUTZ (subhead)
Maariv, headline on the front page, July 26

Another type of headline which appeared from time to time explained that Israel was actually helping the suffering Lebanese. The following headline, for example, appeared on page 12 of *Maariv* on July 23:

DESPITE THE WAR: (top banner)

WOUNDED LEBANESE WOMAN CARED FOR IN ISRAEL (main headline)

Only deep in the article could it be read that the woman “had been shot by IDF soldiers in the town of Maroun a-Ras”. Two additional headlines on this subject appeared in the same issue:

DEAD IN TYRE BURIED IN MASS GRAVE; HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN LEBANON GROWING WORSE; IDF ESTABLISHES “OPERATIONS ROOM” FOR ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTS (*Maariv*, July 23, headline and subhead, page 17)

MAROUN A-RAS: 2 FAMILIES STAYING; IDF LOOKING AFTER THEM (*Maariv*, July 23, top banner and main headline, page 17)

Yedioth Ahronoth's issue of the same day also mentioned the IDF, in the context of the Lebanese population, only as offering aid and assistance: **ISRAEL APPROVES HUMANITARIAN CORRIDOR** (page 11); **WOUNDED WOMAN FROM LEBANON CARED FOR IN SAFED** (page 16).

In the Margins of the Media Coverage: “Aren’t Anyone’s Hands Trembling There?”

Voices seeking to present, and to criticize, the causal connection between the Lebanese suffering and the IDF bombings appeared only rarely in the media, and were almost always marginalized. The subject appeared high on the agenda of the media only a few times. Thus, for example, a headline on the front page of *Haaretz*, on July 25, asked:

WHERE IS IT BETTER TO BE HIT BY A MISSILE: IN A VILLAGE, OR RUNNING AWAY FROM IT? (top banner)

LEBANESE FAMILY, ATTEMPTING TO FLEE, HIT BY MISSILE (main headline)

The article told the story of the Shiatu family:

This was the scenario which the Shiatu family had feared most of all. Afraid of the Israeli bombs, the family had remained in their village for days – they were afraid of the bombs, but more afraid of what would happen if they tried to leave. The day before yesterday, they gave in. [...] Within a few minutes, the entire family fell victims to the Israeli bombing of Southern Lebanon.

In *Maariv*, the subject reached the front page twice, but in a much more ambiguous manner. On August 2, the paper published a headline on the front page which read:

SOLDIER REFUSES TO BOMB IN LEBANON (main headline)

RESERVE GUNNER LEAVES BATTERY (subhead)

The article itself, on page 6, stated:

Nine days ago, the battery was given an order to fire approximately 150 shells on the village of Majdara in the eastern sector, when it became clear that Katyusha rockets had been fired on Israel from the village. Fighters in the battery noted that this amount of fire was exceptionally heavy. Even before the shelling began, 1st Sgt. Zeid was seen to pick up his personal kit, with which he had reported for reserve duty, and was heard to tell his friends: “I’m not prepared to be part of an army which fires on innocent villages and civilians.”

The next day, on August 3, a large headline on the front page of the paper read: **BATTALION COMMANDER TO TROOPS: “RAZE BOTH VILLAGES”**. The subhead “clarified”: **NORTHERN COMMAND LATER EXPLAINED: OVER-ENTHUSIASM BY A FIELD OFFICER**. The article itself, on page 13, showed that what had happened was not exactly over-enthusiasm by a single person:

Hundreds of soldiers sat in the dark yesterday, listening to the voice of the battalion commander. “We’re going to wipe two Lebanese villages, Shihin and Rajamin, off the face of the earth,” said reservist battalion commander Roni [...] In preparation for the destruction of the two villages, the troops prepared 500 mines and 10 D-9 bulldozers. Senior officers in the Northern Command, however, explained the statement by the battalion commander as an incident of over-enthusiasm by a field officer, and clarified that “no village is slated for destruction.” According to the troops serving under Lt. Col. Roni, this was not an exaggeration, but an assigned mission for all intents and purposes. “It’s clear to us why the villages have to be destroyed,” said one of the fighters. “The destruction of the villages is intended to put distance between the Hezbollah threat and the border zone.” Another soldier added: “If we’re already talking about it, you should be asking why only two villages are being destroyed.”

In both cases, *Maariv* tells the story of the person in question – the objector and the officer – as if the cases involved were exceptions, which simply proves the rule. In the final analysis, according to the headlines which *Maariv* preferred to emphasize, the great majority of IDF troops behaved properly: they did not refuse to carry out their duties, nor were they engaged in obliterating villages.

A similar pattern appeared on Channel 10 on July 14. A headline at the opening of the news broadcast stated, in completely mobilized terms:

BEN SHANI ACCOMPANIED IAF PILOTS TODAY. WAR AFTER WAR, THEY’RE THE ONES WHO REALLY ACCOMPLISH THINGS IN THIS CONFLICT.

In the course of Ben Shani’s report, the question of harm to civilians arose. The pilots demonstrated sensitivity to the subject – and the final conclusion was that, when harm is likely to be done to civilians, the operation is canceled.

Ben Shani: In the IAF today, nobody talks about “a little tap on the aircraft wing”.¹⁹ The people we met there are very concerned about the implications that their strikes may have... Do you have room for discretion? Can you say, “We won’t attack that specific target with that specific bomb?”

Capt. N.: No problem. When we’re in the air, if we get approval – even if the situation is very hot – if we get approval to attack, and it looks to us like a target where

19 An expression used by Dan Halutz, Chief of Staff during the Second Lebanon War. In 2002, the IAF assassinated Salah Shehadeh, the founder and commander of the military wing of Hamas, the bomb also killed 15 civilians, many of whom were children, and injured dozens. In an interview following that IAF bombing, Halutz, then the IAF Commander, said that when dropping a bomb, all he feels is “a light tap on the aircraft wing”.

we see people who aren't involved, or if it seems to us that we won't succeed in hitting the target with maximum precision, we just cancel the attack and tell the controller that we can't attack that target. It's an acceptable response.

Ben Shani: Have there been situations like that?

Capt. N.: Yes, there have been situations like that. It happened a few times in my squadron since Tuesday.

Ben Shani: To what extent do you express concern, in conversations between yourselves, about the damage caused by your hits?

Capt. N.: We're concerned about it; we talk about it rather often. Especially if we don't hit the target really precisely, we discuss it a lot. But we think more about the kidnapped soldiers at this stage.

Maariv, August 3. The subhead on the first page "clarified" that this was a case of over-enthusiasm by a field officer. The article itself, deep inside the paper, showed that what had happened was not merely a case of over-enthusiasm by a single person.



➔ Large headline on the front page of the paper:
BATTALION COMMANDER TO TROOPS:
"RAZE BOTH VILLAGES" (main headline)
NORTHERN COMMAND LATER EXPLAINED:
OVER-ENTHUSIASM BY A FIELD OFFICER
 (subhead)

From the text of the article on page 13:

Hundreds of soldiers sat in the dark yesterday, listening to the voice of the battalion commander. "We're going to wipe two Lebanese villages, Shihin and Rajamin, off the face of the earth," said reservist battalion commander Roni. Shortly after that, the fighters of the Alexandroni Brigade were part of a long column entering Lebanon by foot – thus becoming the first reserve unit called into action behind enemy lines. In preparation for the destruction of the two villages, the troops prepared 500 mines and 10 D-9 bulldozers. Senior officers in the Northern Command, however, explained the statement by the battalion commander as an incident of over-enthusiasm by a field officer, and clarified that "no village is slated for destruction". According to the troops serving under Lt. Col. Roni, this was not an exaggeration, but an assigned mission for all intents and purposes. "It's clear to us why the villages have to be destroyed," said one of the fighters. "The destruction of the villages is intended to put distance between the Hezbollah threat and the border zone." Another soldier added: "If we're already talking about it, you should be asking why only two villages are being destroyed."

More material complaints about the way the IDF was conducting the operation were marginalized in the media coverage. For example, this is how it looked in the July 20 issue of *Maariv*. The main headline of the issue expressed pride in the very large-scale strikes in the heart of Beirut:

23 TONS OF BOMBS ON HEZBOLLAH COMMAND BUNKER (main headline)
IN AN ATTEMPT TO WIPE OUT HEZBOLLAH TOP BRASS, FIGHTER PLANES WITH POWERFUL BOMBS ATTACKED YESTERDAY A HIDDEN LOCATION IN BURJ AL-BARAJNEH NEIGHBORHOOD OF CENTRAL BEIRUT * TOWARD MORNING, NOT YET CLEAR IF NASRALLAH WAS HIT (subhead)

The top banner added:

IDF HOPES: HARD BLOW TO HEZBOLLAH TOP BRASS

An extremely small article by Felix Frisch was published on page 11 of the same issue, under the headline:

UNDER FIRE (top banner)
CRITICISM WITHIN IDF ON FIGHTING IN NORTH (main headline)

Even that headline, of course, did not disclose the nature of the criticism in question. Only within the article did it become clear that sources within the IDF were expressing their criticism of the massive strikes against Lebanese civilians:

Beneath the surface, junior staff officers have begun to express a trickle of criticism with regard to the IDF's conduct during the fighting in Lebanon. Officers in the intermediate ranks are criticizing the trigger-happy fingers, as they put it, of the IAF pilots who cause the deaths of dozens of Lebanese civilians, who are not involved in the fighting.

An article published by Ben Caspit in the July 30 issue of *Maariv* includes the following information:

[...] [Haim Ramon] thinks, for example, that Bint Jbail should have been leveled a long time ago. Turned into dust. The same thing for Baalbek. "They're putting civilians inside houses and firing Katyushas from them," says Ramon. "So every house like that has got to go. Why do they have electricity? Why do they have water?" Ramon argues with defense and security officials who claim that Hezbollah terrorists lock civilians up in their houses with Katyushas, and that there are a lot

of old and sick people who can't run away. "That's not what's supposed to concern us now," says Ramon, who believes that any state which attacks Israel's home front should have to pay dearly. [...] By the way, the IDF approach is not that far from Ramon's approach. The Mossad and the General Security Services think differently. They also look at the interests of the Lebanese Government, at the day after the war, at the international implications. Political figures say that we can't just destroy an entire city and expect that indictments won't be served from The Hague.

This is a story of supreme importance: the differences of opinion between the IDF, on the one hand, and the General Security Services and the Mossad, on the other, concerning the massive strikes on civilians. The subject, however, stayed within the realm of commentary and did not become a news item.

In *Haaretz*, a small article appeared on page 6 of the July 16 issue, under the headline:

HOW DECISION TO ATTACK HEZBOLLAH HQ WAS MADE (top banner)

LIVNI, DICHTER OBJECTED TO THE BOMBING IN BEIRUT (main headline)

Only within the text did it become clear that the objection was based on fear of harming civilians:

The Hezbollah headquarters in Beirut was presented as a possible target for attack as early as Wednesday evening. The bombing was rejected, for fear of harming civilians. The idea arose again, and was rejected again, on Thursday. The IDF began to prepare for the bombing operation and dropped leaflets calling on civilians to leave the area so as not to be harmed. [...] At the meeting, the plan was presented and a discussion developed on two of its aspects: the fear of harming civilians, and the fear of unnecessary escalation. [...] Army Intelligence estimated there were no more civilians left in the area intended for attack. [...] The opponents of the bombing [...] cast doubt on the estimate that the area was free of civilians.

Obviously, this information concerning debates between the various security entities cast a very heavy shadow on the IDF's repeated claims that it "had not known" about the civilians in various places which were bombed. It turns out that the question was explicitly raised in defense and security meetings. It is hard to imagine journalistic material more deserving of main headlines.

Material complaints about how the IDF was conducting the operation were marginalized in the media coverage. In the July 20 issue of *Maariv*, the main headline of the issue expresses pride in the very large-scale strikes in the heart of Beirut. Only in a small article on page 11 did it become clear that sources within the IDF were expressing their criticism of the massive strikes against Lebanese civilians. Even the headline of that article did not reflect that fact.



➔ Front page, main headline of the issue:

IDF HOPES: HARD BLOW TO HEZBOLLAH
TOP BRASS (top banner)

23 TONS OF BOMBS ON HEZBOLLAH
COMMAND BUNKER (main headline)



The article on page 11

UNDER FIRE
CRITICISM WITHIN IDF ON
FIGHTING IN NORTH

Beneath the surface, junior staff officers have begun to express a trickle of criticism with regard to the IDF's conduct during the fighting in Lebanon. Officers in the intermediate ranks are criticizing the trigger-happy fingers, as they put it, of the IAF pilots who cause the deaths of dozens of Lebanese civilians, who are not involved in the fighting

The translated article

The overwhelming majority of critical voices in this context appeared in op-ed articles and on inside pages. A total of 30 such articles appeared in *Haaretz*, and about 10 in each of the other two papers. For example, here is a section of an article written by Ze'ev Maoz, which appeared in Section B of *Haaretz* on July 24, under the headline **WHAT WERE WE THINKING: CONSENSUS AROUND WAR BASED ON DOUBLE STANDARD:**

[...] What exactly is the difference between launching Katyushas at civilian population centers in Israel and using the IAF to bomb population centers in southern Beirut, Tyre, Sidon and Tripoli? The IDF used thousands of shells

against villages in Southern Lebanon, claiming that Hezbollah terrorists were hiding among the civilian population. To date, about 25 Israeli civilians have been killed by Katyusha fire. The number of casualties in Lebanon – the overwhelming majority of which were civilians who had nothing whatsoever to do with Hezbollah – is over 300. Even worse: the damage to infrastructure targets such as power stations, bridges and other civilian facilities is transforming all of Lebanon’s civilian population into victims and hostages, even if we do not harm the civilians physically. [...]

In *Maariv*, Jackie Hugi expressed similar criticism, in an article published on page 8 of the July 20 issue and headlined **5 QUESTIONS**. This is the fifth question:

5. THE HAND THAT ROCKS. The IDF says that our aircraft and our missile boats are attacking private homes because the heads of the families are Hezbollah terrorists, and if that’s the case, they’ll have to pay. According to the IDF, 50 Hezbollah terrorists have been killed so far. However, since the outbreak of the fighting, 300 Lebanese have lost their lives. This means that all of the others were civilians, including many children. Is Hezbollah the only one to blame for their deaths? Or, in other words: aren’t anyone’s hands trembling over there?

Gideon Levi, in an article in Section B of *Haaretz* on July 30, asked:

The destruction that we are sowing in Lebanon concerns hardly anyone; moreover, most of it has not been exposed to Israeli eyes. Anyone who wants to know what Tyre looks like now has to switch to foreign channels. The BBC correspondents are showing horrifying pictures from there, of the kind you won’t see here. How can we not be shocked at the terrible suffering of others, which we inflicted, even if our own North is suffering?

And B. Michael, in the weekend supplement of *Yedioth Ahronoth*, on July 21, said:

Israeli news consumers, the ones who get all their information from official and unofficial spokespersons, are convinced that the Dahiya quarter, the ‘stronghold of the Hezbollah’, is some kind of terrorist barracks surrounded by walls, saturated with missile stockpiles, arsenals, senior commanders’ apartments, and terrorists with hair on their teeth.

Here are the facts: the Dahiya quarter is where hundreds of thousands of civilians live. Simple, ordinary people, who have now become refugees in their own country. [...] This is why the military explanations to the effect that the hundreds of thousands of people living in that quarter were terrorists, or were hiding missiles under their beds, and that it is therefore permissible to bomb the quarter to dust and ashes, are deserving of the necessary skepticism and ridicule.

The World is With Us: “The State of Israel is Right”

This coverage pattern, which continued throughout the first part of the war, was reinforced by the feeling, which took over the media in those days, that the entire world supported Israel and did not condemn it for its operations in Lebanon. The general feeling was one of “If the outside world does not reprove us, we needn’t reprove ourselves. We can continue to use force.” The following sample of headlines represents that view:

Haim Yavin: **AND OREN NAHARI IS HERE IN THE STUDIO. THE G-8 PRESENTED A SURPRISE, A BIG SURPRISE.**

Oren Nahari: **THE GREAT POWERS OF THE WORLD ACCEPT THE ISRAELI POSITION. THEY SAY: “FIRST, RELEASE THE KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS ALIVE AND WELL AND STOP THE ATTACKS ON ISRAEL; AND THEN – AND ONLY THEN – ISRAEL MUST CEASE ITS MILITARY OPERATION. ANGELA MERKEL SAID THAT – AND ALL OF THE G-8 AGREED WITH IT, OF COURSE. THEY ARE ALSO CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE IN GAZA AND LEBANON. AND EVEN CHIRAC SAYS ALL OF THE LEBANESE MILITIAS MUST BE DISARMED NOW, FOR THE SAKE OF ISRAEL’S SECURITY** (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 16, headline at the opening of the newscast)

WORLD LEADERS DECLARE: STATE OF ISRAEL IS RIGHT (*Maariv*, July 17, top banner on the front page)

ISRAEL IS SATISFIED: GREAT POWERS JUSTIFY IDF ACTIVITY

WORLD LEADERS: ISRAEL IS ENTITLED TO DEFEND ITSELF (*Maariv*, July 17, top banner and main headline on page 7)

BUSH OPPOSES CEASEFIRE

G-8 LEADERS DECLARE: ISRAEL HAS EVERY RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 17, main headline and subhead on page 11)

WORLD GIVING MORE TIME (*Haaretz*, July 18, headline on the front page)

ARAB LEADER’S MESSAGE TO PM: “I FELT NEED TO ENCOURAGE YOU” (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 20, headline on page 2).

A commentary column by Aluf Benn, which appeared on page 3 of *Haaretz* on July 19 under the headline **RARE AGREEMENT WITH UN**, stated the following:

A UN delegation came to Jerusalem yesterday – not to investigate Israel’s actions and censure IDF operations in Beirut and Gaza, but to hold discussions with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister concerning the new border arrangements

between Israel and Lebanon. Instead of the historic conflict between Israel and the United Nations,²⁰ yesterday was characterized by a rare agreement on the principles of the arrangement [...] For Israelis, who are accustomed to consider the UN as a hostile organization which collaborates with the enemy, the sudden change is hard to understand. Kofi Annan's emissaries did not criticize the IAF bombing in Lebanon, but agreed with their Israeli hosts that "what was in the past, will not be in the future", and that the situation which preceded the present conflict must not recur. They said, at their own initiative, that an immediate ceasefire, before the new arrangement is finalized, is not on the agenda.

The feeling that took over the media during the early stages of the war was that the entire world supported Israel and did not condemn it for its actions in Lebanon.



➔ **WORLD LEADERS DECLARE: STATE OF ISRAEL IS RIGHT** (top banner)

U.S. TO ISRAEL: WIPE OUT NASRALLAH (main headline)

Maariv, front page, main headline of the issue, July 17



➔ **OPERATION "PROPER PAYMENT" WORLD LEADERS BLAME HEZBOLLAH**

Channel 1, headline at the opening of the newscast, July 16

Under the influence of this unexpected sense of encouragement from the outside world, the media suppressed the fact that, even in the first half of the war, there were those who criticized Israel for the way it was acting in Lebanon. Thus, for example, on July 16th the readers of *Yedioth Ahronoth* had to go as far as page 16 to read a top banner and a sub

²⁰ In Hebrew the expression used can be translated as: "United Nothings", coined by Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion.

headline that reported a worldwide censure of Israel, and even then, the main headline reported that the Security Council did not censure Israel:

FROM VENEZUELA TO VATICAN: WAVE OF PROTESTS AGAINST ISRAEL'S RESPONSE

(top banner)

SECURITY COUNCIL DOES NOT CENSURE ISRAEL (main headline)

**URGENT UN DELIBERATIONS END WITH NO RESOLUTION OR DECLARATION *
MEANWHILE, ALMOST ENTIRE WORLD HOLDS UNITED POSITION: IDF OPERATION
EXAGGERATED * HEZBOLLAH AND HAMAS ALSO CRITICIZED BY WORLD LEADERS**

(subhead)

After Kafr Qana: “They were Firing Katyushas from There”

This is the way things looked before the incident in Kafr Qana, but after that incident, everything changed. In the IAF bombing of a residential building in the village, scores of civilians, including many children, were killed. Similar incidents had occurred earlier in the war, but this one rose to the top of the international and Israeli agendas – among other reasons, because more than 100 civilians had been killed by Israeli shelling in the same village in 1996. The incident brought Israel back to the old, familiar view which holds that “the entire world is against us”. From that moment on, the absolute majority of the media rallied in an attempt to prove, in various ways, that Israel was not to blame for the killing in Kafr Qana. The coverage, more than anything else, reflected the defensive propaganda adopted in official civilian and military circles in Israel following the incident. As the headline on page 4 of *Maariv*'s July 31 issue stated, the bomb that killed the civilians in Kafr Qana was only **THE BOMB THAT GOT ISRAEL IN TROUBLE**. International reproof of Israel was depicted as anti-Israeli propaganda, and the coverage focused on the familiar arguments: “The IDF is the most moral army in the world; it does everything it can to avoid harming civilians; Hezbollah is the one using people as a human shield.”

The Channel 1 news broadcast, on July 30, had two consecutive headlines. The first stated: **ABOUT 60 CIVILIANS, INCLUDING MANY CHILDREN, WERE KILLED IN AN IAF BOMBING IN QANA**, and added a quote by a Lebanese witness: **MAY ALLAH DESTROY THE COLLABORATORS, AND MAY HE DESTROY AMERICA**. The second headline hastened to explain that we were not at fault: **IDF DOCUMENTED AND PROVED HOW MISSILES WERE FIRED FROM QANA AT NORTHERN ISRAEL**. An IDF officer was later heard to say: **I THINK THE TERRORISTS MAKE CYNICAL USE OF UNINVOLVED PEOPLE AS HUMAN SHIELDS. THE TERRORISTS LIVE AMONG THEM AND ATTACK CIVILIANS FROM AMONG THEM**.

In the ninth minute of the broadcast, anchor Haim Yavin said, in an amazingly cynical tone of voice:

Israel has a hard job to do in the coming hours. People are trying to explain to the entire world, including through the use of photographs, that hundreds of Katyushas were being incessantly fired at us from there, and that the local residents were warned in advance that they should leave the site, because the IDF was about to attack.

The caption which accompanied the report introduced by Yavin again clarified: They Were Firing Katyushas from There.

Commentator Yoav Limor continued in the same vein:

I think the explanations aren't simple; we didn't get a full answer, either. We'll hear the explanations in a moment, in the report. The best explanation the IDF has to offer is the films it showed at the press briefing before, which we saw a short while ago in the Kirya [IDF GHQ / Ministry of Defense compound in Tel Aviv]. Because at that briefing, the films clearly showed that the Katyushas were being fired from inside Qana. Trucks with Katyushas on them were hiding between the houses. And this, in effect, is the answer to everyone who censures us: a village from which fighting is carried out cannot be an uninvolved village, and an involved village is a battlefield for all intents and purposes. This is the IDF's response, and I think that the visual response is the best response. But, Haim, the results of the Qana operation can be understood from the next headline, which we are about to hear this evening from a senior officer: "The IDF says: Sorry – but we're continuing".

In an additional report in the same broadcast, Ayala Hason conveyed precisely the same message:

The Prime Minister expresses his profound sorrow, and immediately presents Israel's position: When Israel harms civilians, the world knows that this is an abnormal act. At the same time, Olmert adds, the whole world knows that when Hezbollah fires at Israel, it has only one objective – to kill civilians. Olmert continues: Hundreds of Katyushas were fired at Israel from Qana and its surroundings. He urges the Head of Military Intelligence to publish as much intelligence material as possible which shows the village of Qana as the launching point for missiles. The verbal arguments, justified as they may be, will have a hard time standing up to the difficult pictures.

On Channel 2, the statements are almost identical. Pay attention to how the phrasing expresses sorrow for the injured Lebanese, yet blames only Hezbollah for their deaths, without mentioning that an IAF bombing is what killed them. The opening headline of the broadcast stated as follows:

GOOD EVENING TO YOU ALL. THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH IS CONTINUING TO TAKE A HEAVY TOLL. TODAY, THAT TOLL IS BEING PRIMARILY PAID BY LEBANESE VILLAGERS, WHO ARE BEING USED AS A LIVING SHIELD FOR THE KATYUSHA LAUNCHERS. HERE IS A SUMMARY OF TODAY'S EVENTS.

Nir Dvori's report “explained”:

Gadi Sukenik: In Israel, they're saying that Hezbollah activists used the building that was hit for firing Katyushas on Israel, that the village had already been bombed many times, and that the villagers had been warned to flee the area.

Nir Dvori: Throughout all of last week, the IDF identified Hezbollah terrorists firing from Kafr Qana. Look here, at these pictures which the IAF is showing us this evening: members of the organization placed the launchers close to the residents' homes, only a few dozen meters away, and immediately ran inside to take shelter. ... Before the bombing, leaflets were dropped from aircrafts, calling on the residents to leave the village so as not to be harmed. ... UAVs were used to monitor what was happening in the village for days; they saw the missile squads working around that building which was bombed. How could the IAF intelligence experts not have seen that there were also dozens of civilians here?

Chief of Staff Halutz: Unfortunately, what apparently happened is that the people who were concentrated in a certain building – and we didn't know that they were there – were hit. And as I said before, we are very sorry that it happened.

Nir Dvori: How did it happen? This is what the IDF is investigating now – a single error that could change the entire picture of the campaign.

The broadcast went on to the pictures brought by the Head of the Air Division, Brig. Gen. Amir Eshel, to prove the arguments of Katyusha fire. Eshel stated:

I'll go on with this film, just to understand the method, just to understand the method. I'll go on to a very similar scenario of a launcher which, after the launch, after it has completed its launch – this is not in Kafr Qana – went into an entirely innocent house. This is a civilian home; [the launcher goes] into the lower floor and is parked there. We have a very large number of films like these. Launcher crews escape into a distinctly civilian environment, leave the weapon there and run away.

This is how it looks. We have another film here which is rather similar; we have quite a few such films here. The cynical exploitation of a civilian environment for the protection of their assets, so that they can go on using them and launching them against the State of Israel.

The anchor, Yonit Levi, attempts to raise a slightly critical question, but is blocked by commentator Roni Daniel:

Yonit Levi: Roni Daniel, you're with us on the northern border. So the IDF has explained and has apologized. Nonetheless, Roni, after such a massive strike on innocent civilians, doesn't anyone stop a moment and think it over?

Roni Daniel: No. If the question is meant to ask whether the operation will go on, then the operation will go on. People stop a moment and think it over, but it seems to me that the real "bomb" which Amir Eshel, Head of the Air Division in the Israel Air Force, dropped today has to do with something else. Eshel found that the attack on the building took place at about 12:00 or 12:30 at night. The collapse of the building and the explosion took place toward morning. There is a gap of seven hours, he said, between the attack on the building and its collapse. And he raised the hypothesis that perhaps it was ammunition inside the building which blew up, for whatever reason, and that, in the final analysis, is what caused the explosion. That's what he said. There is no proof of anything, but this is the hypothesis being heard tonight. Anyway, I've been hearing some kind of idea from the IDF top brass for redefinition of the term "uninvolved". The idea is that any village from which missiles are being fired will no longer be able to claim that it is uninvolved, because it's giving shelter to the launchers.

In other words, Roni Daniel was trying to "sell" an IDF argument which even the other Israeli media did not accept that day – that there was an unexplained gap of seven hours between the bombing and the fall of the building, and accordingly, it might have been ammunition that blew up inside the building. By contrast to Daniel, Channel 10's military commentator, Alon Ben-David, responds to that argument as follows:

Miki Haimovich: Alon Ben-David, our military commentator, what can we understand from the fact that the IDF doesn't understand what happened there?

Alon Ben-David: It's hard to understand. There is some kind of attempt to raise questions here, which depends entirely on the time the building collapsed. ... By the way, there were eyewitnesses who said that the building was attacked while they were asleep. In other words, they said that the attack on the building was at night – so I don't know, there is some kind of attempt to raise questions here ... It

should be said that, in the morning, a senior Air Force officer admitted the attack on the building; he also said they hadn't known that they were civilians there, and he said the building was attacked because Katyushas were launched from somewhere around it. Today, we saw Brig. Gen. Eshel presenting all kinds of films of Katyushas being launched from Kafr Qana. Let's look at some of them. – We can see that the built-up area was being used; that's nothing new. Hezbollah has introduced almost all of its Katyusha launchers into the built-up areas. It's trying to find shelter ... I would say that the questions which have been raised till now are not enough to give rise to any real suspicion that it wasn't Israel which caused the building to collapse.

And here is an additional conversation on the subject, between anchor Yaakov Eilon and correspondent Zvi Yehezkeli:

Yaakov Eilon: You know what, let's talk about the time – when did it happen? Does anyone even know when the building collapsed?

Zvi Yehezkeli: There are eyewitnesses who say that it happened between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m. All of the testimony given by eyewitnesses this morning talked about midnight. We got our first information in the morning, and an hour or two after that, we already had the pictures. How can I tell you what happened in those seven hours? It could be related to the fact that the South is cut off from the infrastructure, the fact that it's impossible to communicate with the South by sending correspondents from Beirut, and even the rescue forces in Beirut and in the South are not functioning at their best, they're not at their best. It could be that people dragged their feet and wasted time in some way – but you can't depend on that. You can't state that the Hezbollah actually initiated the event in the morning, and that the bombing at 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. took place somewhere else, as the Air Force may be claiming.

Yaakov Eilon: Not at 1:00 a.m. The bombing in that place was at 2:00 a.m.

Zvi Yehezkeli: In that place, yes, but that wasn't what caused it. [Returns to his former statements] And that's why you can't rely on those eight hours, and if, if Hezbollah did something sophisticated here then it was too sophisticated for journalists to be able to solve it.

It should be noted that in the same broadcast, in a manner which sounded entirely unrelated to all this, Dan Margalit adopted Brig. Gen. Eshel's version and claimed that Israel made a mistake by hastening to apologize for the incident:

Even today, in my opinion, it [the Government of Israel] was too hasty: Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni went too fast, and perhaps the Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz,

also went too fast – and that’s the most surprising, because he really had the ability to check the films. There are people who saw the films and say: That film that... – Eshel promised that it was being processed, and so forth and so on. There are people who saw it and say: Listen, it’s very hard to see it, it’s dark, but the results are results. I’m only talking about people who saw it, I didn’t see it, but the results are that it’s not entirely clear that there wasn’t some kind of process there that caused the building to explode within a few hours. After all, it’s not conceivable that it collapsed – that is, that it was hit at 1:00 a.m. and didn’t collapse till 8:00. How is it that in all of Kafr Qana there wasn’t a single ambulance that could save a single person? How is it that people kept on living in a house that was burning up until 8:00 p.m. – sorry, 8:00 a.m.? It’s not conceivable. And in this regard, the Government of Israel also failed because it was hasty. “Fools rush in.” It was a mistake. [...]

The next morning’s newspapers continued in the same vein, each in its own style. The main headline of *Yedioth Ahronoth* read: **FOLLOWING KAFR QANA INCIDENT: ISRAEL GIVES IN TO US PRESSURE TO FREEZE AIR STRIKES; ISRAEL AGREES TO LIMITED 48-HOUR CEASEFIRE**. At the bottom of the page were three commentaries: one by Nahum Barnea, entitled **QANA AND PERETZ** (to which we will return later on); one by Sima Kadmon, entitled **SORRY, BUT**; and one by Alex Fishman, entitled **WE MUSTN’T STOP**. Following are select paragraphs:

Not only must we not stop the campaign; we must not consider the events in Kafr Qana as a factor which can affect it. This is not meant to belittle human life or to disparage the human distress. The State of Israel waged this war in order to achieve objectives which are vital to its existence, and it must attain those objectives; otherwise, the price which the State will go on paying through the years will be unbearable. If Israel fails in this war, it will not be possible to go on living in the Middle East. (Alex Fishman)

Hassan Nasrallah recorded his greatest achievement of this war yesterday. This is not a military achievement, or an ethical achievement. It is an image achievement – and he hoped and prayed for exactly this achievement: the pictures of the dead children, the demonstrations, the shock around the world; the responses, the explanations and especially the stammering. All this, including the location and the scenery, are the customized answer to his prayers. So much so that, if it hadn’t happened, he would have had to invent it himself. This is not embarrassment at a military failure. This is image embarrassment and ethical embarrassment. It is precisely this embarrassment which we feared: a bombing which would cause the deaths of many civilians. From this point of view, it’s hard to imagine a more

embarrassing event: dozens of casualties, most of them children, some of them disabled. Even if we looked for it with a magnifying glass, we wouldn't have found a more problematic target than that one. [...] Since yesterday, great pressure has been exerted on the Government of Israel. In terms of international backing and support, Kafr Qana will constitute a turning point, this time as well. But it must not be our turning point; because, with all of the embarrassment, the sorrow and the sense of discomfort, this war must not end until it is in Israel's interests to do so. And that's not the case. Not now. Because, of all the bad scenarios for the end of the war, a scenario like this one is the worst of all: a scenario which will establish the aggression of Israel, and not the aggression of Hezbollah, in the collective awareness. (Sima Kadmon)

The headline over the two-page spread on pages 4-5 proclaimed: **DEATH TRAP IN LEBANESE SHELTER**. The subhead added:

TEN YEARS LATER, IDF AGAIN MAKES TRAGIC ERROR IN QANA, SOUTHERN LEBANON * IAF AIRCRAFT BOMBED HEZBOLLAH TARGETS IN VILLAGE, BUT BOMBS ALSO DESTROYED A RESIDENTIAL BUILDING * 3 STOREYS COLLAPSED ON 57 LEBANESE REFUGEES HIDING IN SHELTER * MAN STANDING IN RUBBLE, WHO LOST ENTIRE FAMILY, SOBS: “WHO WILL BRING MY CHILDREN BACK?”

An additional headline, on page 5, explained:

**IDF: EXPLOSIVES HIDDEN IN BUILDING MAY HAVE CAUSED ITS COLLAPSE
IDF DEBRIEFING AFTER QANA DISASTER RAISES QUESTIONS * IAF: STRANGE THAT BUILDING COLLAPSED 7 HOURS AFTER BOMBING**

A commentary column by Nachman Shai appeared on page 7. Under the headline **BETWEEN HASTE AND CREDIBILITY**, Shai wrote:

That evening, two officers, Maj. Gen Gadi Eisenkot and Brig. Gen. Amir Eshel, came and explained the events. The events, in my estimation, gave rise to an understanding among the Israeli public, which is a very important target group in the present conflict. The public wants to know – and it got an answer: the IAF and the IDF operate carefully, and only against operations identified with Hezbollah. Here too, though, the international element is missing: in other languages and with a broad distribution for foreign audiences.

Israel's public diplomacy is an ongoing effort, engaged in by good, professional people; it must not stop even at this difficult point. Tomorrow is a new day, and the

battle for the TV screens and the written press will resume. In that battle, as in the war between a regular army and primitive terrorism, there are no winners, there are only day-to-day achievements.

The main headline of *Haaretz* read: **USA: ISRAEL WILL SUSPEND IAF ATTACKS**. At the bottom of the page was a reference headline, referring to a commentary column by Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, headlined **PERFECT TIMING FOR NASRALLAH**:

On the Lebanese side, the death of the eight soldiers in Bint Jbail last week reinforced the position of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in the Arab world. At the same time, it did not succeed in undermining Israel's position in the international arena, as did the bombing of Kafr Qana and the killing of 57 civilians. From that point of view, Hezbollah could not have hoped for better timing: the explosion took place precisely one day before the Security Council debate on the establishment of a multinational force which is to operate in Lebanon, and on the day of Condoleezza Rice's visit to Israel.

The headline on page 3 stated: **IDF: WE DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE CIVILIANS IN BOMBED BUILDING**. Three teasers on the same page added:

BOMBED BUILDING: ACCORDING TO ONE IDF HYPOTHESIS, BUILDING HOUSED HEZBOLLAH WEAPON WHICH CAUSED EXPLOSION

REASON FOR ATTACK: IDF SHOWED FILM YESTERDAY (SEE PHOTO) SHOWING PREVIOUS KATYUSHA LAUNCHING FROM KAFR QANA

KILLING OF CIVILIANS: CHIEF OF STAFF EXPRESSES GREAT SORROW AT KILLING.

SENIOR OFFICIALS: IDF DID NOT KNOW CIVILIANS WERE PRESENT IN BUILDING

The main headline in *Maariv* read: **OLMERT: OPERATION WILL GO ON**. The subhead on the front page added:

56 LEBANESE CIVILIANS KILLED YESTERDAY IN BOMBING OF KAFR QANA * WORLD CONDEMNS, CALLS FOR CEASEFIRE * ISRAEL, LAST NIGHT: "WE'LL STOP OFFENSIVE AIR ACTIVITY FOR 2 DAYS, BUT IF FIGHTING RESUMES, WE'LL TAKE ACTION" * OLMERT CLARIFIES: OPERATION STILL FAR FROM END

The headline over the two-page spread on pages 4-5 stated: **THE BOMB THAT GOT ISRAEL IN TROUBLE**. The subhead continued:

IDF BELIEVED BUILDING IN KAFR QANA WAS USED BY HEZBOLLAH TERRORISTS * NEVER SUSPECTED CIVILIANS WERE HIDING INSIDE * AFTER THE FIRST BOMB,

**SEVERAL SUCCEEDED IN ESCAPING * SECOND BOMB LEFT OTHERS NO CHANCE;
DOZENS BURIED UNDER COLLAPSED BUILDING**

An additional headline read: **REASON FOR ATTACK – IDF: HEZBOLLAH FIRED 150 KATYUSHAS FROM VILLAGE**. Arik Bachar’s commentary column was headlined **WE MUSTN’T BLINK**. On the other hand, the headline of Nadav Eyal’s commentary column declared: **HOW PREDICTABLE**. A headline on page 7 clarified that the worldwide censure of Israel attested to a double standard: **THEY DIDN’T CENSURE THEN – 2,000 CIVILIANS KILLED IN NATO BOMBING OF KOSOVO**.

And on the front page of the paper, Ben Caspit wrote no less than a **PROPOSAL FOR PRIME MINISTER’S SPEECH**, headlined **WE WON’T BUCKLE**:

Gentlemen, leaders of the world: I, Prime Minister of Israel, am speaking to you from Jerusalem, against the backdrop of the terrible pictures from Kafr Qana. Any human heart, anywhere in the world, must cringe at the sight of those pictures. There are no words which can give comfort in light of the enormity of this disaster. And still, I look you in the eye and say out loud: the State of Israel will continue the military operation in Lebanon.

The IDF will continue to attack targets from which missiles and Katyusha rockets are being fired into hospitals, old-age homes and kindergartens in Israel. I have instructed the defense and security establishment, and the IDF, to continue hunting for Katyusha stockpiles, launching sites and launchers, with which those savages are shelling the State of Israel.

[...] Gentlemen, it is time for you to understand: the Jewish State will no longer be trampled on. We will no longer allow anyone to exploit population centers for the purpose of bombing our civilians. No one will be able to hide behind women and children in order to kill our women and our children. That lawlessness is over. You may condemn us, you may boycott us, you are invited not to visit us, and if necessary, we will stop visiting you.

[...] So I, here and now, am putting an end to this parade of hypocrisy. I do not remember such a wave of response to the 100 civilians who are murdered every day in Iraq. Sunnis murder Shiites, who murder Sunnis, and all of them kill Americans, and the world is silent. And it is hard for me to recall a similar response when the Russians wiped out entire villages, burned large cities, in order to put down the revolt in Chechnya. And when NATO bombed Kosovo for nearly 3 months, and crushed the civilian population – then, too, you did not make a sound. What is it about us, the Jews, the few, the oppressed, that arouses the glands of cosmic justice in you all? What do we have that all the rest do not?

Starting from the Qana incident, the absolute majority of the media rallied in an attempt to prove, in various and sundry ways, that Israel was not to blame for the killing in Kafr Qana. The coverage, more than anything else, reflected the defensive propaganda adopted in civilian and military official circles in Israel following the incident. It focused on the familiar arguments: "The IDF is the most moral army in the world; it does everything it can to avoid harming civilians; Hezbollah is the one using people as a human shield."



OLMERT: OPERATION WILL GO ON WE WON'T BUCKLE (headline of circled article)
 Maariv, front page, main headline of the issue, July 31

The translated article by Ben Caspit from the front page

WE WON'T BUCKLE
"A Proposal for Prime Minister's Speech:
 Gentlemen, leaders of the world: I, Prime Minister of Israel, am speaking to you from Jerusalem, against the backdrop of the terrible pictures from Kafr Qana. Any human heart, anywhere in the world, must cringe at the sight of those pictures. There are no words which can give comfort, in light of the enormity of this disaster. And still, I look you in the eye and say out loud: the State of Israel will continue the military operation in Lebanon. The IDF will continue to attack targets from which missiles and Katyusha rockets are being fired into hospitals, old-age homes and kindergartens in Israel. [...]"



IDF PROVES: KATYUSHA ROCKETS WERE FIRED FROM KAFR QANA
 Channel 1, July 30, headline at the opening of the newscast



THE LAUNCHER FLEES INTO THE VILLAGE OF KAFR QANA AFTER LAUNCHING ROCKETS AGAINST THE CITIZENS OF ISRAEL
 Channel 2 news broadcast, image from a report, July 30

בצהל העריכו כי הבנין קנא משמש את ארגון חיזבאללה
■ אבל לא שיערו כי מסתתרים בחוכו אזרחים ■ אחרי הפיצצה הראשונה, הצליחו כמה מהם להימלט ■ הפיצצה השנייה לא השאירה לאזרחים סיכוי, ועשרות נקברו מתחת למבנה שקרס

הסיבה לתקיפה
צה"ל: חיזבאללה ידה מהכפר 150 קטייטשות

↓
Maariv, headline of two-page spread, pages 4-5, July 31
56 CIVILIANS, MOSTLY CHILDREN, WERE KILLED BY IAF STRIKE IN KAFR QANA (top banner)
THE BOMB THAT GOT ISRAEL IN TROUBLE (main headline)
IDF BELIEVED BUILDING IN KAFR QANA WAS USED BY HEZBOLLAH TERRORISTS * NEVER SUSPECTED CIVILIANS WERE HIDING INSIDE (subhead)
REASON FOR STRIKE (top banner of article on left hand side)
REASON FOR ATTACK; IDF: HEZBOLLAH LAUNCHED 150 KATYUSHAS FROM THE VILLAGE (headline of article on left hand side)

In the Margins of the Media Coverage: “Peretz Released the IDF from Restrictions on Harming Civilian Populations”

One more thing to note: a day after the event, it turned out that there were no focused intelligence reports regarding the building that was attacked. Out of the tangled web of excuses woven by the IDF in order to shake off responsibility for the incident, extremely newsworthy information arose concerning the way in which the IDF selects its targets in Lebanon. Channel 10 took this information seriously. This is what Shai Hazkani said in the 25th minute of the July 31 news broadcast:

Yaakov Eilon: And what was the target in that building?

Shai Hazkani: Well, what they're saying to us is that the building was not incriminated by intelligence; it was not a target of the Israeli intelligence. In the IAF, there's some kind of – the moment they see that a Katyusha was fired from a certain area, they mark a circle with a radius of a few dozen meters around

the place. And in that circle – they call it the “ovum”; that’s the name for it in the intelligence jargon – and in that area, they shell everything that’s there. It generally includes five to seven large buildings, and they are what become the target at that moment. In other words, no intelligence information on the site itself, but the fact that it was close to an area from which Katyushas were fired.

In other words, the IDF strike on the building which collapsed and buried its residents alive was not carried out in error: the selected targets had been defined, in a broad and unfocused manner, and they included all of the residential buildings within the targeted area.

Note how Yoav Limor of Channel 1 presented the situation that same evening. Limor spoke of the instruction given to the troops in the field by the military aide to the Minister of Defense, Eitan Danguit:

Yes, Haim, let’s be very precise in choosing our words. We will now give you the instruction given to the Army by the military aide to the Minister of Defense, Eitan Danguit, according to which the Army has been acting since 2:00 a.m. last night. Here is the instruction – you see it in writing: For the next 48 hours, starting at 2:00 a.m., it is prohibited to strike against – now let’s go on; these are the details of what cannot be included in strikes – infrastructures, roads, bridges, and suspicious buildings in which a target that threatens to harm Israel has not been identified – that is, any target which does not include weapons, Hezbollah forces or other headquarters.

Limor reads the instruction, but does not dwell on its meaning. Until the instruction was issued by Danguit, Israel had been firing at “suspicious buildings in which a target that threatens to harm Israel has not been identified – that is, any target which does not include weapons, Hezbollah forces or other headquarters”. These are unprecedented firing orders. This fact expressly appears again in Nahum Barnea’s commentary column on July 31, under the headline **QANA AND PERETZ:**

[...] I heard the Minister of Defense, Amir Peretz, saying with pride that he had released the Army from restrictions against harming civilian populations living alongside Hezbollah personnel. Harming civilians by mistake is understandable in battle. A sweeping instruction concerning all of the civilian population of Southern Lebanon and the Shi’ite neighborhoods of Beirut is a rash, impetuous act and invites disaster.

Minister Peretz, then, “released the Army from restrictions against harming civilian populations” – but this vital fact never reached the news headlines.

“Fatal Error – Probability: Moderate”

Eleven days before the incident in Kafr Qana, on July 19, Itamar Eichner published a commentary column on page 3 of *Yedioth Ahronoth*. The headlines of the column read:

WHAT NEXT? (top banner)

CEASEFIRE OR ALL-OUT WAR (main headline)

**HOW WILL CONFLICT WITH HEZBOLLAH END? WHO HAS MORE TO GAIN;
WHO HAS LESS? FOLLOWING ARE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS** (subhead)

One of the scenarios raised by Eichner was this one:

FATAL ERROR: an Israeli fighter aircraft drops a one-ton bomb on a building in Southern Lebanon which, according to intelligence reports, is being used as an arsenal. A few minutes later, it turns out that the information was wrong: the building served as a school, and dozens of students are killed in the bombing. The horrifying pictures are broadcast all over the world. Israel loses international legitimization for further action and is forced to agree to a ceasefire under less convenient conditions: in order to release the hostages, Israel is forced to release hundreds of terrorists. Nasrallah comes out as the great winner in this conflict. Probability:

MODERATE. [Emphasis in the original]

Eichner was correct in almost every detail. We could have known from the beginning of the war that this was likely to happen: the IDF's trigger finger was lighter than ever. But the media preferred to ignore the possibility and marginalize fears of this type in their coverage.

7> THE DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS: “WE WON’T CALL A CEASEFIRE NOW”

“In matters related to national security, including the use of military force, it is vital for decisions to be made on the basis of a broad strategic view of a set of defense and security considerations, alongside political and diplomatic ones [...] This is certainly necessary when some of the objectives of the action are supposed to be attained by means of international activity, and when the implications of the actions project not only on the State of Israel, but on the regional and worldwide balance of forces. This gives rise to the necessity for complete and ongoing integration among the various arms of the Government which are involved in the matter, while ensuring a balance between security considerations and political considerations.”

Winograd Committee Interim Report, Chapter 8, Section 11

This mode of coverage, in all its various components, had a decisive effect on the way in which the media covered the various diplomatic attempts to reach a ceasefire and bring the war to an end. Throughout the war, various actors made various proposals for diplomatic solutions. A number of ideas for compromise were raised at a summit conference of the eight industrialized states which met in St. Petersburg in mid-July; at the Rome Summit at the end of that month; and throughout the entire period, by the President of Lebanon, the United States Secretary of State, the United Nations and the European Union. Israel's official spokespersons – Prime Minister Olmert, Defense Minister Peretz and the IDF commanders – overtly and extravagantly derided those proposals throughout most of that time. Eventually, however, when the ceasefire went into effect on August 14, quite a few persons within and outside the governmental establishment estimated that Israel could have attained greater diplomatic achievements if it had listened more carefully to those proposals, in the opening stages of the war and thereafter. Such a listening attitude could obviously also have saved many lives on both sides. Today, following the publication of the Winograd Committee report, we know the extent to which the decision-makers were caught up in the fury of the war, which they had waged without really knowing what its goals were – and, accordingly, without knowing under what conditions it could and should be stopped.

How, then, did the media cover the diplomatic option during the war? In the absolute majority of cases, the media clearly and explicitly reflected the derision expressed by the decision-makers with regard to the diplomatic ideas. With the exception of a few cases, which we will discuss below, the coverage of the diplomatic option appeared in the inside pages of the newspapers and deep inside the news broadcasts – and was buried in a

mass of headlines, which were mobilized with a patriotic fervor on behalf of the war effort on the ground. Muffling those voices which held that a diplomatic solution was in Israel's best interests, including the voice of Israel's Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, unequivocally showed that the Israeli media preferred a military victory over a diplomatic solution – even as significant diplomatic processes developed in the course of the war and showed real potential for ending the fighting. At certain times, when it seemed that the negotiations behind the scenes were achieving results, the diplomatic option was more prominently covered – a few times, it even reached the main headlines. But even then, for the most part, the coverage primarily reflected the IDF's fear that a diplomatic arrangement would only keep the IDF from “finishing the job”.

The growing frustration at the IDF's performance on the ground, in the second half of the war, the multiple casualties in Bint-Jbail and in Kfar Giladi, and the dozens of Lebanese civilians killed in Kafr Qana only increased opposition to efforts toward a diplomatic arrangement. In the first part of the war, the message was: “Now is not the time to talk; now is the time to strike.” The message in the second half of the war was: “Now, when we're being accused of war crimes, or when the weakness of the IDF is showing – we have to strike even harder.” In the end, when a formula was found which enabled the fighting to be stopped, the media received it with an overall feeling of defeat. Now, when the war is over, the media suddenly started to feature voices saying: “We should have accepted the original diplomatic proposals, from the beginning of the war.”

Thousands of reports, articles and other texts dealing with the military moves on the ground were published in the media during the war. Almost 1,000 headlines were mobilized with a patriotic fervor on behalf of the war effort. On the other hand, just over 1,000 articles mentioned diplomatic moves – and only about 40 (!) of them were significantly emphasized. In the remaining cases, the diplomatic option was mentioned in a disparaging manner, in the margins of the media coverage.

Throughout the entire war, and especially toward its end, the following pattern recurred: within the articles and items, the diplomatic option was mentioned and covered with the appropriate weight – but in the headlines, this option appeared, time after time, only as a scenario that would likely prevent the IDF from finishing the job and attaining the military goals. The diplomatic option was presented, literally, as a threat, as the “ticking clock” for the IDF. This is how it looked in the headlines:

RACE AGAINST TIME; “Obviously, before the operation is over, we need to accomplish as much as possible: destroying, exploding, teaching lessons. But in order for the IDF to achieve the goals of the operation – not just removing Hezbollah from the border, but crushing the vast array of rockets which has been

holding Israel by the sensitive parts for six years – at least another week, or week and a half of attacks will be necessary.” (*Maariv*, July 16, headline and reference to commentary column on the front page)

The IDF is increasing the rate of its air strikes, in order to have time to attack as many targets as possible before the ceasefire is attained. Pilots who have been bombing in Lebanon told the Minister of Defense today that if Israel had reacted in Gaza, after the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit, the way it is reacting in Lebanon, the Hezbollah would never have dared to kidnap more soldiers. (Channel 2 news broadcast, July 18, introduction to a report)

IDF: WE NEED TWO MORE WEEKS (*Haaretz*, July 19, front page, main headline of the issue)

DIPLOMATIC ARRANGEMENT – THIS IS HOW THE IDF NOW CALLS WHAT IS EXPECTED AT END OF OPERATION * TIMING OF ARRANGEMENT IS STILL OPEN * “I NEED AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE”, SAYS BRIG. GEN. GAL HIRSCH, LEADER OF HUGE CAMPAIGN TO DISMANTLE VAST ARRAY OF MATERIEL SET UP BY HEZBOLLAH * MEANWHILE, FEAR IN STREETS IS GROWING (*Maariv*, July 19, subhead under headline **NO END IN SIGHT** on page 2)

USA GRANTS LIMITED TIME FOR OPERATION; DESPITE FEELING OF UNLIMITED TIME, IDF BELIEVES IT DOES NOT HAVE MUCH TIME FOR SIGNIFICANT MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS (*Haaretz*, July 23, reference on the front page to a commentary column on page 2)

SOURCES CLOSE TO CONDOLEEZZA RICE: NO TIMETABLE SET FOR YOU TO END FIGHTING; TAKE YOUR TIME (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 25, front page, top banner and huge main headline of the issue)

GOOD EVENING TO YOU ALL. WILL THIS GRAVE INCIDENT TODAY IN QANA BECOME A TURNING POINT IN THIS WAR? WILL IT SLOW IT DOWN AND PERHAPS LEAD TO A CEASEFIRE BEFORE THE IDF MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED? (Channel 1 newcast, July 30, opening headline)

In other words, the IDF’s plans in Lebanon are coordinated with a diplomatic window – which may be long or short, but will hopefully be long enough to complete the operations. That’s what Defense Minister Amir Peretz said today. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert noted that the war with which we are responding to Hezbollah will change the entire Middle East. Will we have the time to do that? (Channel 1 news broadcast, two days later – August 1, Yaakov Ahimeir)

DIPLOMATIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR ISRAEL AT EU CONFERENCE; FOREIGN MINISTERS OPPOSE PROPOSAL TO CALL FOR IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON (*Maariv*, August 2, main headline and subhead on page 11)

ISRAELI SOURCES AT UN SKEPTICAL ABOUT ACCELERATED TIMETABLE, BELIEVE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION WILL ONLY BE ADOPTED NEXT WEEK * ISRAEL HOPES WORDING OF RESOLUTION WILL LET FIGHTING GO ON TILL INTERNATIONAL FORCE ARRIVES * BUT FRANCE INSISTS: DEPLOYMENT ONLY AFTER LONG CEASEFIRE (*Maariv*, August 4, subhead on page 8)

The diplomatic option appeared in the headlines time after time only as a threat, a "ticking clock" that would likely prevent the IDF from finishing the job and attaining the military goals.



→ IDF: WE NEED TWO MORE WEEKS
Haaretz, main headline of July 19 issue



→ SOURCES CLOSE TO CONDOLEEZZA RICE: NO TIMETABLE SET FOR YOU TO END FIGHTING (top banner) TAKE YOUR TIME (huge main headline)
Yedioth Ahronoth, main headline of July 25 issue

Among the headlines which nonetheless acknowledged the importance of a diplomatic arrangement, many reflected the most significant IDF argument: “Of course a diplomatic arrangement is important, but in order to achieve it – you have to win first.” That argument explicitly appeared in no less than 200 headlines. Here are a few examples:

SECTIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN ARRANGEMENT FOR END OF WAR: PUSH HEZBOLLAH NORTH OF LITANI AND DEPLOY LEBANESE ARMY FORCES; RETURN THE 3 KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS; STOP SHELLING ISRAEL; STOP ISRAELI ACTIVITY AND WITHDRAW FROM GAZA; RELEASE PALESTINIAN MINISTERS, MP'S * IN ORDER TO ATTAIN ARRANGEMENT, AS OF TODAY FIGHTING TO CONCENTRATE ON 2 DIRECTIONS: STRIKES AT HEZBOLLAH TOP BRASS; TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF

HEZBOLLAH INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 18, subhead under huge headline “**WE WILL WIN**” on the front page)

ISRAEL HAS DECIDED TO SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND ITS ACTIVITY IN LEBANON [Olmert to IDF:] “**THE STRONGER THE BLOW YOU STRIKE – THE BETTER THE CONDITIONS WILL BE FOR AN ARRANGEMENT IN THE FUTURE**” (Channel 2 news broadcast, August 7, headline at the opening of the newscast)

CABINET APPROVES EXTENSIVE MILITARY MOVES IN LEBANON; OLMERT: IF THERE'S NO WAY TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES BY DIPLOMATIC ARRANGEMENT – WE'LL ACT WITH FORCE, EVEN AT THE COST OF LIVES

WAITING FOR THE ORDER (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 10, front page, top banner and main headline of the issue)

THE CHIEF OF STAFF CALLS TO LET IDF CONTINUE THE MILITARY OPERATION, IN ORDER TO PREPARE A BETTER FOUNDATION FOR THE DIPLOMATIC MOVE (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 11, opening headline)

Among headlines which acknowledged the importance of a diplomatic agreement, many stressed that in order to achieve it, we first had to win in the battlefield.



Yedioth Ahronoth, main headline of August 10 issue:

CABINET APPROVES EXTENSIVE MILITARY MOVES IN LEBANON; OLMERT: IF THERE'S NO WAY TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES BY DIPLOMATIC ARRANGEMENT – WE'LL ACT WITH FORCE, EVEN AT THE COST OF LIVES (top banner)
WAITING FOR THE ORDER (main headline)



ISRAEL HAS DECIDED TO SIGNIFICANTLY EXPAND ITS ACTIVITY IN LEBANON

Channel 2, headline at the opening of the newscast, August 7. Olmert is heard saying: “The stronger the blow you strike – the better the conditions will be for the future arrangement”.

Other voices, which sought to shed a slightly different light on the connection between the military move and the diplomatic move, were very much marginalized in the media coverage. Those voices attempted to claim, for example, that overly aggressive military action might actually be harmful to future diplomatic moves, and that it would be worthwhile to check and see whether it was better to go on striking, or perhaps actually to stop, think, and check things out. During the war, these voices were heard only about 40 (!) times – and almost always on the back pages, in small print, and in the margins of the news broadcasts. For example, we see below a section of a commentary column by Aluf Benn, which started with a reference headline on the front page of *Haaretz*, on July 26, and continued on page 4:

The American Government gave Israel a long “rope” – enough time to complete the operation – and rejected the proposals for an immediate ceasefire. The question is whether Israel is hanging itself with the American rope, and will be dragged into a large-scale ground operation with numerous casualties, instead of announcing the completion of the campaign and waiting for a diplomatic arrangement.

And here is an additional text, by the late Ehud Asheri, which was published in *Haaretz* – this time, on page 3 of Section B, on July 28, under the headline **PLAY ON WORDS – WAR DICTIONARY, SUPPLEMENTS:**

Time – the number of days / weeks / months required for a “victory”. For some reason, the assumption is that it works in our favor. “Take your time”, says Condoleezza Rice, with the generosity of those whose work is done by others; “you have time”, says the Government to the Army, in an attempt to prove that it is now “letting the IDF win”; “it takes time”, says the IDF, in order to explain why the missiles are still being launched. Because no one knows what a “victory” is, there will never be enough “time”.

The Diplomatic Proposals: “Signs of Breaking in Lebanon”

How, then, did the media cover the concrete proposals for a diplomatic solution which were raised during the war? When the compromise proposal was raised by the G-8 leaders in St. Petersburg, the media coverage left no room for doubt: the proposal is a good one; it proves the world is on our side – and therefore we have to go on fighting with all our might. This, for example, was the main headline of *Maariv*'s July 17 issue, regarding the decision by the G-8 leaders in St. Petersburg:

WORLD LEADERS DECLARE: STATE OF ISRAEL IS RIGHT (top banner)

USA TO ISRAEL: WIPE OUT NASRALLAH (main headline)

USA OFFICIALS CONVEYED UNOFFICIAL MESSAGES: TIME TO KILL HEZBOLLAH

LEADER * TO DATE, IDF HAS DESTROYED 1/3 OF HEZBOLLAH OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND 1/2 OF ITS FAJER MISSILES AND LAUNCHERS (subhead)

The headlines on page 7 said:

ISRAEL IS SATISFIED: GREAT POWERS JUSTIFY IDF ACTIVITY (top banner)

WORLD LEADERS: ISRAEL IS ENTITLED TO DEFEND ITSELF (main headline)

G-8 HEADS PUBLISH DECLARATION PLACING RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRESENT CONFLICT ON HEZBOLLAH * LEADERS CALL ON ORGANIZATION TO RELEASE KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS AT ONCE, STOP FIRING MISSILES ON ISRAEL * BRITISH PM: WE MUST STAND WITH THE MODERATES (subhead)

Please note: the headlines focus on international support and do not even mention the proposed agreement. The details of the agreement appear only in the text:

In the press release, the leaders censure the activity of the Hezbollah organization, and point out three necessary steps for resolving the crisis. The first step includes the release of the three kidnapped soldiers, in Lebanon and in Gaza. The second step calls for Hezbollah to stop launching missiles against Israel. Only in the third step, after the implementation of the previous two steps, will Israel be called upon to stop its military operations.

Yedioth Ahronoth conveyed a similar message in the headline of the article which was published on page 11 of its July 17 issue:

BUSH OBJECTS TO CEASEFIRE (main headline)

US PRESIDENT TAKES ISRAEL'S SIDE, DETERMINED TO IMPEDE ANY ATTEMPT AT CEASEFIRE BY UN OR G-8 CONFERENCE * G-8 LEADERS DECLARE: ISRAEL HAS EVERY RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF (subhead)

The proposal by Siniora, which arose at the time, to deploy the Lebanese Army in Southern Lebanon, was not even covered by the media as a diplomatic proposal – but rather, as “signs of breaking” by the Lebanese government. According to the media, the very fact that the proposal had been raised meant that the IDF had to go on fighting. Thus, for example, *Yedioth Ahronoth* mentioned Siniora’s proposal, in a small reference headline on the front page of the paper on July 16: **LEBANESE PM: “WE’LL DEPLOY ARMY AT BORDER”; EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA SUPPORT DRAMATIC INITIATIVE, INTENDED TO REMOVE HEZBOLLAH FROM THE SOUTH**

The main headline of the same issue, however, leaves no room for doubt – Siniora’s proposal had no practical significance. The fighting would go on, at full strength:

COMMANDOS DEEP INSIDE LEBANON (main headline)

**FIGHTERS FROM IDF ELITE UNITS START TARGETED GROUND OPERATIONS
* OLMERT, PERETZ FOLLOWING MILITARY ATTACKS FROM FORWARD COMMAND
POST IN NORTH * PM: WHOLE WORLD WATCHING US NOW TO SEE IF WE
BUCKLE – AND THAT WON’T HAPPEN ON MY WATCH * NASRALLAH HOLED UP
IN UNDERGROUND BUNKER * LARGE PART OF HEZBOLLAH NEIGHBORHOOD IN
BEIRUT DESTROYED IN IAF BOMBING** (subhead)

Further into the paper, Siniora’s proposal receives derisory treatment:

“LEBANESE ARMY TO DEPLOY AT BORDER” (main headline on page 3)

**IN ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE CEASEFIRE, LEBANESE PM AGREES TO REMOVE
HEZBOLLAH FROM NORTHERN BORDER AS ISRAEL DEMANDS * PM’S OFFICE:
INSTEAD OF TALKING – HE SHOULD ACT * OLMERT REFUSES TO MEET WITH
MEDIATORS SENT BY UN SECRETARY-GENERAL** (subhead on page 3)

Of course, the deployment of the Lebanese Army on the border was actually one of the declared goals of this war. The writers of the item which appears under the above headline, **INSTEAD OF TALKING – HE SHOULD ACT**, mention this fact: “The Lebanese Prime Minister announced that he was prepared to send his army to the South [...] In so doing, Siniora acceded to one of the preconditions posed by Israel for the ceasefire.” But then they go on, in the same breath: “Israel was surprised by the declaration at such an early stage of the fighting. The IDF, now in the midst of the campaign, is interested in continuing to strike at Hezbollah.”

Maariv’s response to the Lebanese proposal was similar. The main headline of the July 16 issue screamed:

ISRAEL REJECTS LEBANESE GOVT’S CALL FOR CEASEFIRE (top banner)

SIGNS OF BREAKING IN LEBANON (main headline)

The news broadcasts on all three TV channels on July 15 and 16, the days in which the proposal was discussed, did not even mention the subject in their headlines. In the 64th minute of the news broadcast on July 15, Channel 2’s military commentator, Roni Daniel, referred to Siniora’s proposal dismissively. In his opinion, the proposal could not actually bring about a ceasefire:

Roni Daniel: ... Either way, it’s really a good idea to take a very deep breath. This isn’t something that’s going to end, unless international pressure forces Israel to stop – and I very much hope it won’t, because not one of the goals of this operation has been achieved so far, and Siniora’s general comments aren’t making things any better, either.

Yonit Levi: So let's go into this in greater depth: the precise goals which the IDF is setting, and how they can be reconciled with what the Lebanese Prime Minister said this evening. Can Israel stop the operation, or not?

Roni Daniel: I don't think so. Not if it wants to achieve its goals, because it hasn't achieved its goals thus far. We're talking about stopping terrorism – the goal of severe damage to Hezbollah, which hasn't happened yet; the return of the captives, which hasn't happened yet; and motivating the Lebanese Government to send its army down to the South. None of these goals has yet been fully accomplished, and accordingly, I think international pressure aimed at stopping the IDF operation now will bring us back, within a short time, to the situation we had on the northern border before this operation began.

The voices which called for serious consideration for Sinora's proposal were few. On July 17, for example, Ben Dror Yemini wrote an op-ed column, which was published on page 7 of the daily supplement in *Maariv*, under the headline **SMOKE OF WAR**. Yemini wrote that it was ridiculous to claim, on the one hand, that the goal was deployment of the Lebanese Army in the South, and, on the other, to oppose the proposal when it was given:

[...] What we are talking about is the proposal by the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Fuad Siniora, to take over Southern Lebanon. The proposal was scornfully rejected in official circles. Thus, for example, Haim Ramon clarified that it was an idle proposal, because the Government of Lebanon is incapable of taking over Southern Lebanon. Excuse me?? The goal of this war was to impose Lebanese sovereignty on Southern Lebanon. So how exactly is it possible to claim that this is the goal, and when the Prime Minister of Lebanon makes an official public announcement that he shares the same goal, Israel tells him that it was just talk – that we didn't really mean it?

Maj. Gen. (res.) Amos Malka, who made a guest appearance in the Channel 2 studios on July 16, said the following in the 57th minute of the broadcast:

I think we have to start looking for the exit point – how to get out of this stage, in the direction of ending this operation with achievements... I wouldn't rule out what Fuad Siniora said; I think that rejecting it out of hand was a mistake. I think we have to take that statement and develop it. Not to stop fighting in order to talk, but to talk in order to find a way to stop fighting.

And Jackie Hugi, in a commentary article published on page 21 of *Maariv* on July 16 (with a reference from the front page), said the following:

The pictures coming from Lebanon are hard to look at. Corpses and wounded people, shattered bridges and tourists with nowhere to run to. But it is in the nature of the military not to observe things through the al-Jazeera TV screen, but through rifle sights. And in this area, the Air Force and the GHQ are certainly satisfied. Work of professionals. [...] But precisely at this time, it's worthwhile to remember what we're dealing with: a country which devours its conquerors. [...] We must not wait for the blow to come. Now is the time to stop and freshen up, to review the situation, maybe even to terminate the operation. The Lebanese Prime Minister, in his emotional declaration yesterday, reached out a hand to Israel, to help us come out of the corner we've painted ourselves into – and come out winning.

The proposal by the Prime Minister of Lebanon to deploy the Lebanese Army in Southern Lebanon, was not even covered by the media as a diplomatic proposal – but rather, as ‘signs of breaking’ by the Lebanese government: the very fact that the proposal had been raised meant that the IDF had to go on fighting.



↓
Yedioth Ahronoth, July 16, front page. The Lebanese Prime Minister's proposal is mentioned in a small reference at the top of the front page. The main headline of the same issue, however, leaves no room for doubt – Siniora's proposal had no practical significance. The fighting would go on, at full strength: **COMMANDOS DEEP INSIDE LEBANON** (main headline) **LEBANESE PM: "WE'LL DEPLOY ARMY AT BORDER"** (small reference headline circled)
 Further into the paper, Siniora's proposal received derisory treatment.



↓
Maariv, front page, main headline of July 16 issue: **ISRAEL REJECTS LEBANESE GOVT'S CALL FOR CEASEFIRE; SIGNS OF BREAKING IN LEBANON**

In the overwhelming majority of cases, nothing of all this reached the headlines. However, starting from the middle of the war, and primarily toward its end, the media began to voice criticism of the fact that Israel had not had the sense to listen to these proposals at the very beginning, and stop the fighting at an earlier stage. Those voices held that had Israel done so, its position would have been better than that in which it actually found itself.

This, of course, was “too little, too late”; the claims were voiced after the opportunities had been suppressed by the media, and missed. Below are the repentant voices of Nehemia Shtrasler (in Section B of *Haaretz*, August 1), Amnon Abramovich (Channel 2 news broadcast, August 11), and Yael Paz Melamed (daily supplement, *Maariv*, July 27):

There was one moment in the war when we had the upper hand. The moment when Israel had managed to strike Hezbollah with great and surprising force, Haifa was still at peace, and the number of casualties was small. That was the right moment to stop the war, declare victory and move on to the diplomatic field. That opportunity came at the time of the G-8 conference on July 14, two days after the battles broke out. The G-8 formulated a four-stage plan, which could not have been better for Israel. [...] But Olmert and Amir Peretz did not know how to stop in time. They wanted to show the public that precisely they, the “civilians”, were braver than their predecessors, Ehud Barak and Ariel Sharon. Accordingly, they kept fighting, in order to achieve goals which, from the very beginning, were unattainable. [...] Israel did not succeed in collapsing Hezbollah; even worse – it caused the strengthening of its status in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world, which saw how a small guerrilla organization managed to stand up against the IDF and even cause heavy losses among Israel’s civilians. [...] We will soon begin to miss the good agreement which the G-8 proposed at the beginning of the war. Today, such an agreement cannot be achieved. (Nehemia Shtrasler)

... What I’ve been saying ever since the first day, not to dismiss the small achievements, and to go for a reasonable, realistic arrangement – why? I am afraid that our future investment in the coming weeks, in human lives and resources, resources and human lives, will not yield any greater returns than those we had on the third day of the war. (Amnon Abramovich)

The Government of Lebanon, under Fuad Siniora, understood our message, and so did the entire world. It would have been possible to start the diplomatic stage, the stage of negotiations. It would have been possible to achieve a ceasefire – which is the only thing that will stop the Katyusha fire on the northern cities and towns. But we wanted more. We wanted to defeat Hezbollah, to disarm it, to destroy the thousands of Katyushas. And that’s where everything started to go wrong. (Yael Paz Melamed)

At the very end of the war, some of the media outlets – again, in retrospect – reported that there were also voices in the political and even the military establishment which had thought, at the time, that it would have been better to end the war in its first days. Thus, for example, Aluf Benn wrote in his column, which was published in the August 11 issue of *Haaretz*:

[...] Livni objected to continuing the military action, which she believed had exhausted its potential in the first two days. She voted against bombing the Hezbollah headquarters in the Dahiya neighborhood of Beirut, for fear of escalation. Since then, she has voted in favor of resolutions, but has kept a low public profile. [...]

This was what appeared in a parallel article, on page 2 of *Yedioth Ahronoth* on the same day:

She [Livni] also believes that the Second Lebanon War exhausted its potential three days after it began. Even then, Livni thinks, it would have been possible to arrive at a diplomatic arrangement. In private conversations, she has hinted that Olmert made the same mistake as stockbrokers do: they don't know when to stop gambling and when to turn the achievement into a reasonable profit.

At the same time, it is important to note that, even at this point, when this newsworthy material had already begun to appear in articles, the headlines and references on the front page chose to focus on the personal power struggles between Olmert and Livni. Observe the following reference headline from *Haaretz*:

OLMERT FORBADE LIVNI TO GO TO UN HQ – JERUSALEM BEGAN TO PREPARE TO “SELL” THE AGREEMENT, AND THEN CRISIS BETWEEN PM AND FOREIGN MINISTER BROKE OUT

This is the headline in *Yedioth Ahronoth*:

AT LAST MOMENT: OLMERT CANCELS LIVNI'S TRIP TO UN

Only on August 15, the day after the ceasefire entered into force, could the readers discover that not only the Foreign Minister, but even senior IDF officers, thought it would have been better to end the operation after the G-8 conference and Siniora's proposal. This is what Akiva Eldar wrote in an article which was published on page 3 of Section B in *Haaretz*:

A short time after the ceasefire entered into force, an extremely senior IDF officer took the time to direct the rage of the reserve troops coming home with a kitbag full of complaints to the political echelon. [...] “When Secretary of State Rice came to Israel, and later to the Rome Summit, and perhaps even before that, as early as the G-8 conference, we could have stopped the fighting. At that point, we could have had achievements on several levels, without bringing in the ground forces. At that stage, Nasrallah was surprised and Siniora was asking for a ceasefire. If we had been more

modest and had paid more attention, we wouldn't have had to go through what happened later. But our people turned the concept of time into something fluid, and we missed the opportunity to fully exploit the achievements of the air operation. Nor did we ensure that a diplomatic operation would begin alongside the military one. We should have created a worldwide understanding that it was necessary to handle Iran and Syria from the diplomatic point of view; we should have enlisted the support of the free world for Siniora to oppose Hezbollah.”

At the very end of the war, some of the media outlets – in retrospect – reported that there were also voices in the political and even the military establishment which had thought, at the time, that it would have been better to end the war in its first days. Even at that point, when newsworthy material had already begun to appear in articles, the headlines and references on the front page chose to focus on the personal power struggles between Olmert and Livni.

**אולמרט אסר
על לבני לצאת
למרכז האו"ם**
בירושלים החלו בהכנות
לשיווק ההסכם, ואז
התמוצץ המשבר בין
רה"מ לשרת החוץ
אלוף בן, עמ' 2

↓
Haaretz, reference headline
on the front page, August 11:

**OLMERT FORBADE LIVNI TO
GO TO UN HQ**

[...] Livni objected to continuing the military action, which she believed had exhausted its potential in the first two days. She voted against bombing the Hezbollah headquarters in the Dahiya neighborhood of Beirut, for fear of escalation. Since then, she has voted in favor of resolutions, but has kept a low public profile. [...]

↓
From the text of the commentary column, page 2

The Diplomatic Option Appears and Disappears: “Flee or Fight”

This is how it looked in the first stages of the war. Afterward, more complex political moves began to develop, with the participation of the United States Secretary of State, the EU and the UN. The coverage of these moves reveals a fascinating pattern: the nature of the coverage was not determined by the diplomatic news, but actually, by the news from the military arena. On the days when it appeared, from a mobilized point of view, that the military operation was proceeding properly – the reports on the diplomatic efforts moved closer to the main headlines. On less convenient days, when the IDF suffered various kinds of “image damage”, the diplomatic reports were shoved into a corner, even

when, from the standpoint of newsworthiness, they deserved main headlines. Thus it happened, time after time, that the media reported a promising diplomatic development on a certain day – and that development suddenly disappeared the next day, when the coverage concentrated on the feeling of hurt and insult. With each disclosure of the IDF's failures, the media again began to belittle the diplomatic option. This is one of the most profound signs of the overall worldview that the media provided to their consumers, as if to say: "Admittedly, there is a clear diplomatic horizon, which is likely to stop the bloodshed on both sides – but they struck us yesterday, so today we have to strike them harder. The end of the war can wait."

This is how things looked before and after the Kafr Qana incident, before and after the battle in Avivim, the battle in Bint Jbail – and the grave incident in Kfar Giladi, on August 6, when 12 IDF reserve troops were killed by a direct hit from a Katyusha. Before the incident in Kfar Giladi, all of the media reported on the upcoming ceasefire agreement as an agreement in which Israel "got what it wanted". This is how it sounded at the beginning of the Channel 1 news broadcast on August 5:

IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA: FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE AGREED ON A DRAFT RESOLUTION, WHICH WILL STOP THE FIGHTING, THOUGH NOT IMMEDIATELY (opening headline)

Yaakov Ahimeir: ... Let's first go to the French-American draft resolution regarding a ceasefire – a resolution which will be brought before the Security Council for discussion, and a ceasefire which will not be immediate. Oren Nahari, let's have your updates.

Oren Nahari: ... The proposal calls for complete cessation of hostilities ... based on immediate cessation of all offensive activity by Hezbollah. In other words, Hezbollah is the one at fault, the one responsible. The resolution states that Israel will be allowed to respond to firing by Hezbollah. ... This proposal, according to the concept being finalized throughout the world, is a clear victory for the American-Israeli line – we should wait and see – if it is adopted, of course, and, of course, if it is implemented.

It looked the same way in *Maariv*. The main headline of the August 6 issue stated:

COMPROMISE PROPOSAL FOR END OF WAR

The details of the American-French proposal were listed next to the headlines. One of the top banners said: **ISRAEL BELIEVES FIGHTING WILL END THIS WEEK**. The subhead declared:

**UN SECURITY COUNCIL TO DISCUSS FRENCH-AMERICAN PROPOSAL THIS WEEK *
ISRAEL SATISFIED: PROPOSAL GOOD FOR US**

Ben Caspit wrote as follows, in the central article on page 3 of the issue, under the headline **LEARNING THE LIMITS OF POWER:**

The French-American draft resolution, which was completed yesterday in New York, will be brought back to the Security Council in mid-week. The Americans, as the representatives of Israel, and the French, as the representatives of Lebanon, have reached a formula which, as far as Israel is concerned, is reasonable.

The next day, following the Kfar Giladi incident, and after the strike on Haifa in which three civilians were killed, all this disappeared. The media marginalized the coverage of the proposed arrangement, devoted their main headlines to rage and frustration, called almost explicitly for settling accounts with Hezbollah – and suddenly found quite a few faults in the draft resolution which, only the day before, had been “good for Israel”. For example, Yoav Limor said, at the opening of the Channel 1 news broadcast on the evening after the incident:

Yoav Limor: ... The IDF sees these pictures, just as we do – and they’re thinking it over now, they’re thinking it over. Because, until today, there was an understanding that we might well be at the end of the military move and the beginning of the diplomatic move – but then came this difficult day, with 12 reserve soldiers killed in Kfar Giladi by that fatal barrage this afternoon, and now another fatal barrage on Haifa, just when we thought that Haifa might already be out of range of the Katyushas.

The discussion of this subject was resumed in the 34th minute of the broadcast, with Haim Yavin:

Yoav Limor: ... The Government of Israel is sitting in Israel; it’s not sitting in Washington. And then, there’s the voice of the people, too, and the people have a bellyful of rage. Yes, decisions should be made with the head, but after a day like today, everyone definitely has a bellyful of rage – and the feeling is that Israel has to do something itself, and not just rely on the international community – and, Haim, certainly not in an agreement which leaves a lot of open questions. I’ll give you a brief summary of just a few of those questions: When will the multinational force arrive? What soldiers will be in it? Where will the demilitarized zone be? Will Hezbollah really be disarmed? Who will make sure that no arms come in from Syria? What will happen with the Shebaa Farms?²¹ When will the IDF leave

21 A small area of land with disputed ownership, located on the border between Lebanon, Israel and Syria.

the area? What will happen during the interim period? And these are just the questions on the tip of my tongue. There are many more...

Haim Yavin: I want to add that we won't fall into the UNIFIL trap again. We've had enough; we've had enough trouble from it.

The difference in the general tone of the conversation, relative to the previous day, is clear and obvious. *Maariv*, on the following day, did not even mention the draft resolution on the front page. The main headline of the issue threatened:

“IF SYRIA INTERVENES, IT WILL PAY DEARLY”

The draft resolution was mentioned, in small print, only on page 14. There, too, the headline expressed reservations: **RICE: PLAN IS NOT INTENDED TO STOP VIOLENCE.**

And Ben Caspit, who had written only the previous day about the “reasonable formula” for Israel, now wrote the following words:

So what do we do now? The dilemma is simple: flee, or fight. There is no other choice; there is no third way. People everywhere are looking at us now; all eyes are turned to Zion. If Israel goes down on its knees, surrenders to the Katyusha missiles and crawls home, the attacks will continue. The countdown for the next conflict, the next war, the next conflagration will begin. The day will come when we will miss the Katyushas.

A similar pattern appeared in the media before and after the air attack on Kafr Qana. The day before that grave incident, the diplomatic negotiations were given extensive – and largely sympathetic – coverage. After the incident and the “image damage” sustained by Israel as a result, the media adopted the official Israeli stance: “We're going on fighting”. The political proposals, which had looked promising only the day before, were pushed aside. Thus, for example, the evening before the Kafr Qana incident, the developing political moves were headlined in the Channel 2 news broadcast. The headline stated:

THE US SECRETARY OF STATE LANDED IN ISRAEL AGAIN THIS EVENING – THE COMPOSITION OF THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE IS NOW BEING FINALIZED AS THE CEASEFIRE APPROACHES

Rina Matzliah, who reported on the diplomatic developments throughout the broadcast, expressed herself in rather positive terms:

One thing is clear: it will be an effective multinational force, not just observers. That is, a force which will not be holding binoculars, but submachine guns. In

other words, this is a force which will be able to enforce the ceasefire, and not just observe and report.

The next day, nothing of this appeared in the broadcast. The anchors and correspondents devoted a great deal of time to systematic refutation of the allegations against the IDF following the fatal bombing. The message they conveyed was clear and definitive: “We’re going on fighting.” The opening headline of the Channel 2 news broadcast, as we have seen, explained that the only one to blame for the tragedy of Kafr Qana was Hezbollah: **THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH IS CONTINUING TO TAKE A HEAVY TOLL. TODAY, THAT TOLL IS BEING PRIMARILY PAID BY LEBANESE VILLAGERS, WHO ARE BEING USED AS A LIVING SHIELD FOR THE KATYUSHA LAUNCHERS.** Another headline stated:

OLMERT EXPRESSED HIS SORROW, BUT ANNOUNCED THAT THE MILITARY OPERATION WAS GOING ON

Deep into the report, Rina Matzliah spoke of the diplomatic developments. Israel, she said, was busily engaged in a struggle for its image:

“We won’t stop the operation,” said Olmert, “notwithstanding the grave details from this morning; and we’ll explain that to our friends – and we have no greater friends than the United States”... But now, no one is talking about the composition of the multinational force, or even about its mandate... now, people are engaged in minimizing the damage worldwide.

Things looked the same in *Haaretz*. The main headline of the paper on the day before the incident, July 30, stated:

DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT BELIEVES: OPERATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON WILL END WITHIN 10 DAYS (top banner)

RICE: SHEBAA IN RETURN FOR INTERNATIONAL FORCE (main headline)

Immediately below the headline, the following line appeared in bold type: **THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE – ACCORDING TO RICE, AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE OF UP TO 30,000 TROOPS WILL BE DEPLOYED IN LEBANON.**

The commentary column which appeared on the front page, under the headline **ACHIEVEMENT FOR ISRAEL AND SINIORA**, presented the arrangement being formulated as positive from Israel’s point of view. The column stated:

According to the deal being formulated by Rice, Israel will be able to present the deployment of the international force in Southern Lebanon, and at the border

crossing points between Lebanon and Syria, as an achievement. It will also be able to claim that this was only made possible by the IDF operation and the military blow struck against Hezbollah.

The reference to an additional article on the front page read: **NASRALLAH SUPPORTS LEBANESE GOVERNMENT DECISION TO DEPLOY ARMY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON**. The article itself, which appeared on page 3, stated:

On Thursday, the Lebanese Government passed a resolution which was described in the Lebanese press as a “surprise”, and as “one of the most important resolutions in years”. This is the resolution by the Lebanese Government to adopt the points made by Prime Minister Fuad Siniora in his speech before the Rome Summit last week. That resolution includes several points which will enable progress in the diplomatic contacts with Lebanon.

But the very next day, after the Kafr Qana incident, the paper blatantly changed direction. The diplomatic move no longer appeared on the front page: the main headline of the issue stated: **USA: ISRAEL WILL SUSPEND IAF ATTACKS**. The subhead only mentions the fact that the United States assisted Israel in the struggle for world public opinion: **USA FRUSTRATES SECURITY COUNCIL CENSURE FOR ISRAEL FOR KILLING LEBANESE CIVILIANS**. The paper reported on “significant expansion” of the ground activity, and did not stop to ask how and why the idea of the ceasefire had been taken off the agenda. In a commentary article by Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, headlined **PERFECT TIMING FOR NASRALLAH**, which appeared on the front page, the Kafr Qana incident was portrayed as an achievement for Hezbollah and the shift from diplomatic efforts to expansion of the fighting was depicted as a natural development which required no further study:

At least outwardly, there is a consensus among Israel’s political and military echelons as to the implications of the Kafr Qana bombing with regard to the continued fighting in Lebanon. In the offices of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense, people are still talking about another 10 days to two weeks being necessary for the conclusion of the offensive activity.

It is interesting to note that in the very same issue, television critic Ehud Asheri addressed the acute change in the prevailing moods of the previous evening’s news broadcasts (as we saw in the Channel 2 broadcast above). Asheri compares the coverage of Kafr Qana to the coverage of the battle in Bint Jbail, in which nine IDF soldiers were killed. His critique, published under the headline **IMAGE TRAGEDY**, also describes the atmosphere that arose from the news pages of the newspaper for which he wrote:

In two different ways, the atmosphere which prevailed yesterday in the studios recalled that which took over after the battle in Bint Jbail. In both cases, there was a pervasive sense of disaster, of gradually increasing dimensions; in both cases, all the speakers came to the same conclusion: In spite of everything, the war must go on until we beat the crap out of Hezbollah. In two other ways, there was a vast difference between the two days of broadcasting. In the case of Bint Jbail, the battle was perceived as a military tragedy which took on unbearably heavy toll in losses and gave rise to unprecedented criticism of the Army's functioning. In the case of Kafr Qana, the incident was perceived as a diplomatic and PR tragedy, and moved the studios to express a vast wave of support for the Army. It may be said that the IDF has never been given such sweeping support on TV as it was the day after the death of 60 innocent Lebanese. [...] All of the channels rallied yesterday to convince the Israeli public that the tragedy was not our fault. [...] One after the other, correspondents, commentators and politicians explained the cynical use of civilians by the enemy. [...] There can be no better example of the unifying role of the media in time of national crisis. [...] The Kafr Qana disaster instantly changed the trends expressed in the TV discussions in the logic of the military campaign. Until yesterday, more and more voices (led by Amnon Abramovich) were heard to say that the IDF operation had exhausted its potential. Yesterday, in the face of growing international pressure, a multi-channel consensus suddenly arose, to the effect that stopping the operation would constitute a national catastrophe.

The Ground Operation and the Ceasefire: “Enough is Enough”

The discussion in the media with regard to the ceasefire agreement, which eventually came into force on August 14, was carried out in the shadow of reports on the decision by the defense and security Cabinet, two days before, to launch a broad-based ground operation which, according to declarations, was intended to seize control of Southern Lebanon, as far as the Litani River. Aside from exceptional cases, the media continued to support the ground operation, and the discussion of the ceasefire agreement was quite significantly influenced by that position. The commentaries which presented the ceasefire agreement as a defeat for Israel – positions which principally reflected the view of the IDF – were significantly emphasized and added weight to the militant stance that called for “war to the last moment”. Even the commentaries that actually saw positive components in the agreement described it as “the lesser of evils”; those commentaries, in most cases, were relegated to the margins of the coverage. The quantitative data are impressive: the agreement was described as a bad agreement 149 times, and this description took over the headlines about 30 times. Other voices appeared 47 times – only three of them in the headlines.

The position which considered the agreement to be a defeat for Israel was promoted by Channel 1 and Channel 2, which told the story of the agreement from a purely IDF point of view. Thus, for example, Oded Granot presented the agreement a few hours before the UN vote, in the August 11 Channel 1 news broadcast:

Yigal Ravid: Oded Granot, let's hear the positive and negative points in the agreement which is to be made with the UN.

Oded Granot: Look, Yigal, you're right. The proposal placed before the Security Council today, according to the details we have, is not completely negative from Israel's point of view. But what's been happening in the last few hours, and it's been happening in Beirut, has tipped the negative balance more against Israel and the positive balance more in favor of Lebanon. And then the resolution was adopted, as we just heard from Ayala. And why did the negative side prevail? ... What are the negative sides, as far as Israel is concerned? This reinforced UNIFIL force will not have the authority to open fire... The second point in the proposal concerns the return of the Shebaa Farms, against Israel's will. Israel said: The issue of Shebaa is out of place and out of context, but nonetheless, that section was put in there, under Lebanese pressure. And another point: there is no mention of the disarming of Hezbollah. On the other hand, there are at least two, and actually more, positive points from Israel's point of view. First of all: Southern Lebanon, up to the Litani, will be a Hezbollah-free zone... and there will be an embargo on the supply of arms to the organization. You ask yourself: An embargo on the supply of arms to the organization? But, if this reinforced force does not have the authority for enforcement, then who will ensure that Hezbollah doesn't get weapons? In other words: the balance has a negative and positive side, and the negative side is stronger...

This was also, unequivocally, how the upcoming agreement was presented in a conversation between Gadi Sukenik and Roni Daniel, on the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 10:

Gadi Sukenik: They were called clowns, old timers, and now they're the Great Hope – UNIFIL? The only thing missing is a section calling for Hezbollah to convert to Judaism!

Roni Daniel: If there ever was an entirely inefficient force in this area, it's UNIFIL, and I don't understand where that satisfaction with those drafts is coming from. I think Israel mustn't accept them. For example, they say nothing about dismantling the Hezbollah infrastructure, and the ground here is crawling with Hezbollah infrastructure. All these fancy words about preventing them from getting weapons are unnecessary, because they've got a lot of weapons already. It seems to me

that these are drafts with no real substance – and I want to mention another thing. We’ve forgotten, hardly anyone has mentioned, the matter of the kidnapped soldiers – after all, it was for that reason, for them, that we started this campaign. It seems to me that this draft – I’ll be very surprised if Israel’s political establishment accepts it, and I have no doubt that the Army is extremely dissatisfied with it.

Maariv, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Haaretz* presented the upcoming agreement in a more balanced manner. Not by chance, this presentation gave more expression to the positions of the political echelon. The main headline of the August 11 issue of *Maariv* presented the situation in these terms:

USA, FRANCE FORMULATE AGREEMENT * OLMERT: “DRAFT AGREEMENT IS GOOD FOR ISRAEL” (top banner)

ON VERGE OF CEASEFIRE (main headline)

AFTER 30 DAYS OF BATTLE – DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH IN NEGOTIATIONS * ACCORDING TO THE PROPOSAL, IDF WILL RETREAT WITHIN 1 WEEK * INTERNATIONAL FORCE TO SOUTHERN LEBANON * ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST HEZBOLLAH * RETURN OF KIDNAPPED SOLDIERS NOT PROMISED IN DEAL * UN VOTE TODAY (subhead)

Another headline on the same page – **REJOICE AND WORRY** – referred to an article by Ben Caspit, which appeared on page 2 under the headline:

WE CAN REJOICE; WE SHOULD WORRY (main headline)

HUNDREDS OF SOLDIERS’ LIVES SAVED, BUT NO REASON TO CELEBRATE * GREAT IDF DID NOT VANQUISH HEZBOLLAH * 4 GENERALS AND ONE MINISTER OF DEFENSE SAT YESTERDAY IN A SMALL ROOM WITH A PHONE, IRRITATION AND FRUSTRATION * THEY TRIED TO CONVINCE OLMERT TO ACT AT ONCE, BUT UN GOT THERE FIRST (subhead)

A commentary article by Aluf Benn appeared on the front page of *Haaretz* on August 13, under the headline **OLMERT SATISFIED**:

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is satisfied with Security Council Resolution 1701 on the end of the war in Lebanon, which, in his opinion, reflects the objectives set by the Government. Shimon Peres volunteered yesterday to serve as Olmert’s mouthpiece, voicing effusive praise: “The resolution gives Israel its full backing, and Hezbollah, which started the campaign with great strength, is ending it with the whole world against it.” [...] Not only Olmert is pleased. So is Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who thought it would have been possible to end the war much earlier and in a better diplomatic position. In her opinion, the resolution is better for Israel than the

previous draft, eight days ago. That draft spoke of a clumsy process, in which Israel would have to pay for the international force by withdrawing from the Shebaa Farms. The two issues have now been separated. Defense Minister Amir Peretz thinks the new arrangement in Southern Lebanon is better for Israel than the situation prior to the war.

As previously shown, the discussion of the agreement took a backseat to the preoccupation with the ground operation. The operation had been approved on the previous Friday, August 11, a few hours before the UN Security Council vote on the ceasefire agreement. Its declared goals were to seize the area up to the Litani River, to eliminate more terrorists and stockpiled Katyusha rockets, and to attempt – as much as possible, and up to the last moment – to tip the draft agreement in Israel’s favor. That operation was to cost the lives of 34 IDF soldiers. The concerns about the ground operation were hardly a secret on that day or in the days that followed; even then, however, they were consigned to the margins of the media coverage. The headlines, almost without exception, called for “war to the last moment”. The following sequence of headlines illustrates the belligerent atmosphere of the last days of the war:

THE CHIEF OF STAFF CALLS FOR LETTING IDF CONTINUE THE MILITARY OPERATION, TO PREPARE A BETTER FOUNDATION FOR THE DIPLOMATIC MOVE (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 11, opening headline)

SEVERAL HOURS AFTER THE UN RESOLUTION ON THE CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON, LARGE IDF FORCES PENETRATED DEEP INTO LEBANON. IDF FORCES WERE LANDED INSIDE LEBANON AND ARE APPROACHING THE LITANI RIVER. 40 HEZBOLLAH TERRORISTS WERE KILLED IN THE MOST RECENT FIGHTING, IN BATTLES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON; THE IDF HAS ATTACKED ROADS AND BRIDGES TO PREVENT THE TRANSFER OF WEAPONS (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 12, opening headline)

IN A SORT OF RACE AGAINST TIME, THE FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN LEBANON HAS NOW REACHED A PEAK, PRECISELY WHEN THE OUTSIDE WORLD IS ABOUT TO FORCE A CEASEFIRE. THUS, WHILE THE UN HAS DECLARED A CEASEFIRE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HEZBOLLAH, WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN A DAY OR TWO, THE FIGHTING THIS WEEKEND IS EXPANDING THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN LEBANON, AFTER THE AIRDROP OPERATION WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF, WAS THE GREATEST IN THE HISTORY OF THE IDF (Channel 2 news broadcast, August 12, opening headline)

**CEASEFIRE TO ENTER INTO FORCE AT 7 AM TOMORROW
WAR TO THE LAST MOMENT**

24 HOURS BEFORE CEASEFIRE, FIGHTING REACHES PEAK * TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS FIGHT HARD BATTLES THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN LEBANON; EFFORTS TO REACH LITANI * IDF CARRIES OUT LARGEST AIRDROP OPERATION SINCE YOM KIPPUR WAR * ESTIMATION: LARGE-SCALE CONTINUATION OF FIGHTING WILL TAKE A HEAVY TOLL (*Maariv*, August 13, front page, top banner, main headline and subhead of the issue)

TOMORROW MORNING: CEASEFIRE; IDF IN RACE FOR LAST OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON

30,000 IDF TROOPS FROM BORDER TO LITANI (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, August 13, front page, top banner and main headline of the issue)

Even after the U.N. Security Council approved the ceasefire agreement, the headlines backed the broad-based ground operation, and almost without exception called for “war to the last moment”.



➔ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, main headline of the issue, August 13:
30,000 IDF TROOPS FROM BORDER TO LITANI (huge main headline)
TOMORROW MORNING: CEASEFIRE; IDF IN RACE FOR LAST OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON (much smaller top banner)



➔ *Maariv*, main headline of the issue, August 13:
WAR TO THE LAST MOMENT (huge main headline)
CEASEFIRE TO ENTER INTO FORCE AT 7 AM TOMORROW (much smaller top banner)

In this atmosphere, the doubts and criticism with regard to this operation were shoved aside – except on Channel 10. As early as August 11, the day the resolution was adopted, that channel reported on questions concerning the reasons that led Olmert to approve the operation:

Raviv Drucker: The question, Emanuel, is if this is the reason [for launching the ground operation] – or is it more because he suddenly sees a poll that shows that his popularity is falling, and suddenly some article-writer calls on him to resign, and some kind of internal rage starts up?

Emanuel Rosen: The poll and the article-writer undoubtedly affected the Prime Minister’s mood today. But the main thing, it must be said, was the pressure by the Army – the pressure exerted by the Army in the last 24 hours, which, I would say, was even brutal. The other person who totally changed his position last Wednesday, along with the Prime Minister, was the Minister of Defense, Amir Peretz. He came to a meeting with the Prime Minister this afternoon in a burst of rage and anger, and with instructions and orders to stop this game, move the forces, and start carrying out the operation on the ground...

Later in the broadcast, the subject came up again, in a discussion between Chico Menashe and Ofer Shelah:

Chico Menashe: The question is whether, in some way, the move that was made also concerns Israeli public opinion, which, at this moment, is quite grave – and, let’s say, no one is satisfied with the Prime Minister’s conduct.

Ofer Shelah: But Israeli public opinion [about] Section 6 and Section 7 – people don’t even understand what those sections mean.

Chico Menashe: That’s right, but what they do understand is that we’re continuing to conquer, that we’re continuing to try one more military move, and that we didn’t give in too quickly to what the UN wants, to what the UN Security Council is trying to do... Yes, spin, I agree entirely with that; the question is how far north in Lebanon that spin will go.

And in the 44th minute, Emanuel Rosen continued to report:

The Prime Minister reached the conclusion, as early as last week, that this operation had exhausted its potential a week ago. Everything that’s happened since is an attempt to maneuver between public opinion and public opinion polls.

All of this is extremely significant. The people at Channel 10 did not give into the spin; they tried to understand what was happening behind it. The other media, from time to

time, uttered a few words of reservations, but their headlines were swept up in the race to the Litani River. Thus for example, in the August 13 issue of *Maariv*, where the main headline was **WAR TO THE LAST MOMENT**, an article by Danny Yatom, headlined **STOP NOW**, appeared on page 5:

The decision to expand the ground operation, precisely after the Security Council passed a resolution for a ceasefire to enter into force within 24-48 hours, is a mistaken decision which runs absolutely counter to the expected ceasefire [...]

I have tried to understand the motives for this strange decision, and the principal reason I keep hearing is that we have to teach Hezbollah a lesson and hit it even harder. Anyone with eyes in his head knows that what has not been achieved in 32 days will not be achieved in 32 hours.

In the *Yedioth Ahronoth* issue of the same day, whose main headlines are quoted above, an article by Sima Kadmon appeared on page 7, with a reference on the front page. It bore the headline **BETWEEN FIRE AND FIRE**:

The dramatic decision regarding the ceasefire was received by Israel yesterday with an exceptional response: a lot of fire. It's confusing when one ear hears Israel agreeing to the Security Council resolution, and the other ear hears the instructions given by the political echelon to the IDF to launch an extensive ground operation, which was grudgingly approved by the Cabinet two days before. What kind of sense does it make that, on the same night as the UN vote in favor of the ceasefire, the troops are given orders to move north? [...] Here too, feelings are mixed: on the one hand, the desire to give the IDF a chance to strike and come out with an image of victory. On the other hand, why send soldiers into battle one day before the ceasefire? What can that achieve?

On Channel 2, criticism of this type appeared only after the ceasefire had entered into force, on August 14 – and even then, only in the 51st minute of the broadcast:

Rina Matzliah: Why wasn't the Army given orders to stop the "operation up to the Litani" after the ceasefire agreement was finalized? Yes, the Army had to improve its positions; but that could have been done without expanding the operation and causing the death of 34 more soldiers.

Haaretz, to conclude, deserves a separate discussion. As it had throughout the war, now too, *Haaretz* provided more in-depth discussion of the issues on the agenda than the other papers. The decisive fact, however, is that at this stage, not even *Haaretz* issued a clear and unmistakable call to stop the war. Quite the contrary is true. On August 11,

the paper published two articles on the front page, above the main headline. Both of these articles marked the boundaries of the consensus. One, written by Uzi Benziman, called for accepting the agreement. The other, by Ari Shavit, called for continuing the war. Benziman’s article, headlined **SWALLOWING THE BITTER PILL**, reflected a sense of defeat and a feeling of no choice – the goals were not achieved, but the war still had to be stopped:

This war, to no small extent, broke out because of the State’s leadership inexperience at the political and security level, and its failure to foresee what would happen. We cannot right that wrong, but we can reduce the damage and prevent further deterioration by preferring diplomatic channels over military ones. Olmert will need a certain degree of moral courage to resign himself to the compromise being formulated on the international level, because this will involve an admission of Israel’s inability to achieve its declared objectives. [...] The diplomatic solution, notwithstanding its limitations and the bitter pills which it calls for swallowing, is better than expanding the war.

Ari Shavit’s article, on the other hand, was actually the most blatant and prominent call for a continuation of the war which appeared anywhere at that time. Shavit, under the headline **OLMERT MUST GO**, wrote as follows:

Ehud Olmert is entitled to decide to accept the French proposal, to stop the fighting, and to surrender unconditionally to Hezbollah. That is his right. Olmert is a Prime Minister invented by journalists and protected by journalists, and his government has been preserved by the press. Now the journalists are telling him: Run away. That’s legitimate. It’s not smart – but it’s legitimate.

One thing, however, has to be clear: if Olmert now runs away from the war he initiated, he cannot remain as Prime Minister for even one day longer. He must resign on the very same day. Enough is enough. There is a limit to the audacity. No one can lead an entire people to war with a promise of victory, reap a shameful defeat, and remain in office.

It should be noted that Shavit was the “article-writer” we encountered earlier, the one mentioned by Emanuel Rosen on Channel 10 as having angered Olmert that day. It is not hard to surmise that the article in question had some effect on the miserable decision to launch the ground operation – a decision which, as mentioned above, cost the lives of 34 soldiers. The fact that *Haaretz* chose to publish such a militant article on the front page, on such a critical day, and to place it opposite a concept which considered the diplomatic alternative as a bitter pill which must be swallowed, shows – in an extremely significant way – the prevailing mood of Israel’s media throughout the entire war, and up to its last day.

The two articles marking the boundaries of consensus. One considers the diplomatic alternative as a bitter pill that must be swallowed, and the other states that: "If Olmert runs away from the war he initiated he cannot remain as Prime Minister for even one day longer".



Haaretz, articles by Ari Shavit and Uzi Benziman, side by side on the front page of the August 11 issue.

WAR IN THE NORTH (top banner)

OLMERT MUST GO (headline of article by Ari Shavit on the right)

SWALLOWING THE BITTER PILL (headline of article by Uzi Benziman on the left)

8 > SUMMARY

“Three hours after the incident in Kfar Giladi – last Sunday – I’m stuck to the TV set like everyone else. The Channel 10 correspondent explains, without blinking, that this was an error by the unit commander. I’m usually not one of those people who talk to the TV screen, but now I shout at it. ‘What’s the urgency?’ I plead. ‘Why now?’ And don’t start lecturing me about freedom of the press and the duty of reporting.”

Yair Lapid, weekly column headlined **CAN’T YOU CALM DOWN?**
Yedioth Ahronoth, page 13, 7 Days weekend supplement, August 11

In the two years which have gone by since the Second Lebanon War, Israeli society has been awash in an unprecedented wave of criticism aimed at the decision-makers – Olmert, Peretz and Halutz. The media have adopted this criticism, and have quite rightly given it a place on center stage. The general feeling has been one of “Now that the war is over, we can say what we didn’t allow ourselves to say while the war was going on.” This conviction – that criticism must not be expressed while the fighting is going on, but must be withheld until it ends – is one of the most absurd attitudes in the collection of feelings and opinions which, in the final analysis, give rise to mobilization by the media: not only in this war, but in the ones before it, and in both Intifadas.

Courageous, critical media reporting is meaningless when carried out in retrospect. The really difficult questions have to be asked while the war is still being waged, when there is still a chance for a change. If the media had headlined the fact that there were no shelters in many cities and towns, and that the State was not providing assistance to the residents of the North – the State might well have been forced into taking action in real time, and would not have left the work to Arkady Gaydamak. If the media had emphasized the fact that various international actors had raised favorable proposals for a ceasefire in the first days of the war, we probably would not have had to consider, in retrospect, the question of why Olmert and Peretz ignored those proposals. If the media had stressed the fundamental criticism of that war, the understanding that it never had defined goals, the fact that it was launched out of a sense of insult and frustration – the war itself might well have been shorter. The political players who objected to the ground operation up to the Litani River, at the end of the war, might have succeeded in preventing that unfortunate decision, which cost the lives of 34 more soldiers. If the headlines had broadcast the fact that Defense Minister Peretz had released the IDF from the restrictions on opening fire, as they should have done, it might have been possible to prevent some of the fearsome destruction which was sowed in Lebanon. Critical coverage which arises when it is

already out of date is a meaningless ceremonial act. The media criticize, publish, disclose – and then move on to the next topic. Precisely for this reason, Prime Minister Olmert, during the period when he was most severely criticized, following the publication of the Winograd Committee Report, was able to decide that he would stay in office. He knew full well that the wave of public criticism would subside. After all, it was already outdated when it began.

In light of all of the above, the question is not only how the Israeli media covered the Second Lebanon War. The really important question is how the media will cover the next war. The media professionals, the editors and managers, the correspondents and commentators, must subject themselves to the moral reckoning which they demanded after the war – and rightly so – of the decision-makers in the Government of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces. This must happen – and it must happen now. Before – not after – the next war breaks out.

APPENDIX 1:

UNILATERAL MOVES: “THE QUESTION THAT MANY ARE ASKING TODAY...”

Throughout the war, various voices were heard in the media, calling for a re-evaluation of the unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. This retrospective analysis, from time to time, reached the news pages of the newspapers and the TV news broadcasts. Thus, for example, Haim Yavin said, in an interview with Ehud Barak, in the Channel 1 news broadcast on July 13:

Mr. Barak, let us recall that night, May 24, 2000, a bit more than six years ago, when we pulled out of Lebanon overnight. The question that many are asking today is how you ever agreed to let Hezbollah sit on our border fence for six years, right up close, in our midst, only a few meters from the road?

Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff asked similar questions in a column published in *Haaretz* on July 17, under the headline **THE RESULTS OF SUPPRESSION:**

The IDF withdrawal from Lebanon, after 18 years of protracted bleeding, was accompanied by such a huge feeling of relief that any discussion of what Israel had left behind in Southern Lebanon was considered to be no more than pettiness for its own sake. Hassan Nasrallah continued to stockpile rockets, which came into the Beirut and Damascus airports on weekly flights from Iran, and Israel monitored them from afar, with almost academic curiosity.

And Amram Mitzna, in a column published on the front page of *Maariv* on August 14, headlined **GOING ALL THE WAY**, wrote as follows:

The withdrawal from Lebanon was right and just, but it was carried out too late and in a situation where Hezbollah had reasons to boast that it had driven us out of Lebanon. In such a situation, it was known in advance that someday there would be a confrontation in which we would have to restore our deterrent force. Perhaps we should have caused this blow-up immediately after the kidnapping of the soldiers on Mount Dov.

This discussion naturally led to a more general examination of the unilateral actions, in the overall context of Israel's relations with Hezbollah, Syria and the Palestinians. The subject reached the news pages in connection with one event, when Prime Minister Ehud Olmert,

in an interview to the Associated Press, said that the outcome of the war would promote the “convergence” plan.²² Two contradictory conclusions appeared in the media in this regard. The first conclusion was that the unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon and the Gaza Strip had led to an increase in violence against Israel. This being the case, Israel had to stop withdrawing and prepare for possible war – with both Syria and the Palestinians. The second conclusion was that the deterioration of the security situation in the north and in the Gaza Strip proved that unilateral actions could not resolve differences. Israel had to return to the negotiating table – with both Syria and the Palestinians.

Other than in a few exceptional cases, Israel's media made it clear, in various ways, that they adopted the first conclusion. The media stressed Syria's threats of war and Israel's counter-threats, and suppressed Syria's repeated invitations to return to the negotiating table. They devoted main headlines to the defense and security establishment's fear of a Syrian attack on Israel, and suppressed the estimates, also by the defense and security establishment, that Assad's intentions of peace were serious. This is how it looked, as shown by the following sample of headlines:

ISRAEL SENDS GRAVE MESSAGE TO ASSAD (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 19, front page, main headline of the issue)

PM, VISITING HATZOR AIR FORCE BASE, SAYS: SYRIA IS NOT A PARTNER IN THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 24, headline at the opening of the newscast)

ASSAD TO SYRIAN ARMY: RAISE ALERT LEVEL (*Maariv*, August 1, main headline on page 6)

“IF SYRIA INTERVENES, IT WILL PAY DEARLY”

SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, IN LEBANON, DECLARES: IF ISRAEL WANTS WAR, THAT'S FINE WITH US * ISRAELI SECURITY OFFICIALS, IN RESPONSE: IF ASSAD THINKS HE CAN SURVIVE SUCH A CONFRONTATION, HE'S WRONG [...] (*Maariv*, August 7, front page, main headline and subhead of the issue)

SECURITY OFFICIALS: “WE CAN PARALYZE SYRIA IN HOURS” (*Maariv*, August 7, headline on page 5)

INCREASING FEAR IN ISRAEL OF SYRIAN SURPRISE ATTACK (Channel 10 news broadcast, August 10, headline at the opening of the newscast)

²² Ehud Olmert's plan to unilaterally remove Israeli settlements from most of the West Bank consolidating them into large settlement blocs near the 1967 border. This plan is now long forgotten.

The headlines emphasized the threats of war coming from Syria and Israel's counter-threats.

"אם סוריה תתערב היא תשלם ביוקר"

שר הרוץ הסורי תגיע ללבנון והצהיר: אם ישראל רוצה מלחמה – אולין (סדלן) ■ ערביי ביטחון בישראל תמונה: "אם אסד חושב שייצא בשלום מדינות כזה – הוא טועה" ■ בעקבות ירי הקטיושות המאסיבי אסד קצין בכיר: ייתכן שהגנ"ע נוסף להחשיך ולקיים מלכודת ■ בן בססית ועמיר רשפורם, עמ' 172

➔ "IF SYRIA INTERVENES, IT WILL PAY DEARLY"
Maariv, front page, main headline of the issue, August 7

הבוקר: התייעצות ביטחונית אצל ראש הממשלה

גורמים ביטחוניים: "אפשר לשתק את סוריה בתוך שעות"



איזמיו של שר החוץ הסורי על מלחמה כוללת העלו אתמול את סך המתח בין ירושלים לדמשק ■ אין לנו כוונה להחזיק עמם סוריה, אומרים בכירים במערכת הביטחון. אבל אם אסד חושב שייצא מזה בשלום, הוא טועה

בן בססית
אף דומה להחלטה לנשק המסוכן, מיוזמתו של גנרל סבאלט, ייתכן שיש סיכויים להשגת הסדרה. כוונתו הייתה להיגמל את המערכת הישראלית. רוב שם מורחב אם זה לא יבטל במחויבות את המערכת הישראלית. בעקבות המיזם שלהם הם יחזרו בישראל. מקור: על אסד חושב שהמדינה והמדינות מלכודת מיוזמתו. ירושלים, עמ' 172

➔ SECURITY OFFICIALS: "WE CAN PARALYZE SYRIA IN HOURS"
Maariv, headline on page 5, August 7



➔ INCREASING FEAR IN ISRAEL OF SYRIAN SURPRISE ATTACK
Channel 10, headline at the opening of the newscast, August 10

Other headlines stressed the connections between Syria, Iran and Hezbollah:

SYRIA SMUGGLES IRANIAN MISSILES TO HEZBOLLAH IN MIDST OF FIGHTING (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 19, front page, top banner of the issue)

HQ: IRANIAN EMBASSY IN DAMASCUS (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 19, headline on page 4)

HEZBOLLAH'S ANTITANK MISSILES

RUSSIAN WEAPONS SOLD TO SYRIA CAUSED MOST CASUALTIES AMONG SOLDIERS (*Haaretz*, August 6, top banner and main headline of commentary column on page 2)

Yoav Limor: **SYRIA SECRETLY TRANSFERRED ADVANCED ANTITANK MISSILES WHICH IT HAD BOUGHT FROM RUSSIA, CORNET MISSILES, TO HEZBOLLAH. [...]**

Oded Granot: **FOLLOWING WHAT WE JUST HEARD FROM YOAV, SYRIA IS CONTINUING TO TRANSFER WEAPONS TO HEZBOLLAH BY INDIRECT ROUTES, BECAUSE THE PRIMARY ROUTE, AS WE KNOW, WAS BOMBED – AND THIS IS THE GREATEST DIFFICULTY THAT THE IDF MUST COPE WITH, IN THE CONTEXT OF SYRIA AND HEZBOLLAH** (Channel 1 news broadcast, July 21, headline at the opening of the newscast)

IRAN AND SYRIA ARE REINFORCING HEZBOLLAH. THE SYRIANS OBJECT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MULTINATIONAL FORCE. [Immediately after the headline, a Syrian TV broadcast segment is shown:] **THE FEATS OF RESISTANCE IN THE LAST 20 DAYS WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS AN IMPORTANT VICTORY** (Channel 1 news broadcast, August 1, headline at the opening of the newscast)

In vivid contrast to all of what is presented above, items and articles reflecting a different position appeared in the margins of the media coverage, and almost never made it to the headlines. This is how things looked, for example, in the July 24 issue of *Haaretz*, in a paragraph that appeared inside an item on page 12:

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, Feisal Maqdad, said yesterday in an interview with the Reuters news agency that Syria is prepared to initiate a dialogue with the United States in order to resolve the crisis. He explained that, as Syria sees it, the crisis could lead to an arrangement for peace in the area, which would include Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 lines.

The top banner of the paper, however, chose to emphasize a statement by another Syrian official:

90 KATYUSHAS; 2 ISRAELIS KILLED; SYRIAN MINISTER: WE WILL JOIN CONFLICT IF ISRAEL INVADES LEBANON

An additional example: in the 20th minute of the Channel 1 news broadcast on August 15, Amir Bar Shalom said:

The Minister of Defense is saying that we have to be aware that war opens opportunities and we have to embrace Syria. This is how he sounded: “We have to renew the dialogue; this is one of the necessary conclusions. We have to renew the dialogue, because today I am certain that any war creates an opportunity for a new diplomatic process, and I am certain that our enemies understand today that they cannot overcome us by force, and accordingly, we have to renew the dialogue with the Palestinians as well; we have to hold a dialogue with Lebanon; and we have to prepare the conditions for dialogue even with Syria.”

But the headline of the broadcast emphasized a harsh statement by Assad:

SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD DECLARES: HEZBOLLAH HAS BEATEN HATED ENEMY, ISRAEL

The headline at the opening of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 6 proclaimed:

SYRIA THREATENS: IF ISRAEL ATTACKS, WE WILL RESPOND AT ONCE

But in the 62nd minute of the broadcast, Ehud Yaari explained that this is actually a defensive measure:

Yonit Levi: But Ehud, these words by the Syrian Foreign Minister are rather frightening – if we take them the way they sound. Doesn’t that mean that Syria wants war? Maybe some kind of reassurance is necessary.

Ehud Yaari: No, no, the Syrian tanks are being repaired; this is not a situation where the [camouflage] netting is being taken off. Syria is on the defensive, and it’s staying on the defensive. This is just how they’re talking: “If [Israel] attacks, we’ll respond.”

Items and articles reflecting the view that there is a chance for negotiations with Syria were marginalized, and almost never made it to the headlines. Thus, for instance, the top banner on the front page of *Haaretz* on July 24 chose to emphasize a statement by a Syrian minister who threatened Israel with war. Statements by another senior Syrian official regarding possible negotiations were pushed deep into the text of the article.



Top banner on the front page:

WAR IN THE NORTH

90 KATYUSHAS; 2 ISRAELIS KILLED; SYRIAN MINISTER:

WE WILL JOIN CONFLICT IF ISRAEL INVADES LEBANON

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, Feisal Maqdad, said yesterday in an interview with the Reuters news agency that Syria is prepared to initiate a dialogue with the United States in order to resolve the crisis. He explained that, as Syria sees it, the crisis could lead to an arrangement for peace in the area, which would include Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 lines.

From the text of the article

The possibility of negotiations with Syria appeared in prominent places in the news pages only five times throughout the war – four times in *Haaretz* and one time in *Maariv*. Thus, for example, on July 18, a reference on the front page of *Haaretz* referred readers to an interview with Uri Sagi, which appeared in Section B of the paper, under the headline “**TALKING TO SYRIA**”. The subhead of the article itself read:

MAJ. GEN. (RET.) URI SAGI SUGGESTS NOT BELIEVING IN ILLUSION THAT IAF WILL SUCCEED IN ELIMINATING HEZBOLLAH. THIS WOULD REQUIRE “BRINGING IN GROUND FORCES, AND I EMPHATICALLY OBJECT TO THAT”. IN HIS OPINION, SOLUTION LIES IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA, WHICH MIGHT EVEN ENABLE DIALOGUE WITH IRAN.

A passage in the article read as follows:

It's not that he is proposing to plan an attack on Syria. Quite the opposite. Sagi, who headed the Israeli negotiation team with Syria and accumulated hundreds of hours of dialogue with key Syrian figures, defines the break-off with Syria as “a fatal error”.

On July 25, a commentary column by Aluf Benn, headlined **OLMERT IS NO PARTNER**, appeared in *Haaretz*. The column stated:

About two years ago, the IDF held a large-scale exercise, “Firestone 9”, which examined a war scenario that predicted the present war in the north. The conclusion of the exercise was that the way to ensure order and stability in Lebanon was diplomatic negotiations with Syria. In other, less delicate terms: only a withdrawal from the Golan Heights will bring calm to Avivim and Haifa. [...] Ehud Olmert accepted Sharon’s approach, which held that Israel’s diplomatic efforts should be focused on the Palestinian front, and the Syrian channel should be left alone. [...] A few weeks ago, before the war in Lebanon, Olmert told a senior minister that he had no intention of conducting negotiations with Assad.

On August 1, a reference on page 1 of *Haaretz*, under the headline **GHQ WANTS NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA**, referred readers to an article by Akiva Eldar. The headline of the article itself, in Section B of the paper, said: **ON THE WAY TO DAMASCUS**. The subhead added: **GHQ KNOWS IT WON’T WORK WITHOUT SYRIA; ASIDE FROM THAT, WE ALSO HAVE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS IN LEBANON**. The text stated:

[...] According to sources in the defense establishment, Gilad [Amos Gilad, the diplomatic and security coordinator for the Minister of Defense] succeeded in convincing the Minister, Amir Peretz, and those around him that the key to the Lebanon crisis lay in a peace arrangement with Syria. Maj. Gen. (res.) Uri Sagi, formerly O/C Intelligence Corps and head of the negotiating team with Syria, stated that his public appeal (*Haaretz*, July 18) to open a channel for dialogue with Syria, was well received even among his friends in the IDF top brass. They told him that there were some generals in the GHQ who agreed with every word he said.

But any real discussion, including arguments favoring and opposing negotiations with Syria, could be found on rare occasions and only in Section B of *Haaretz*. Thus, for example, on August 10, Aluf Benn wrote, in a column headlined **SYRIAN CHANNEL, PRO AND CON**:

PRO: Israel has an interest in a diplomatic arrangement, which will remove the hostile state, which pulls the strings of Hezbollah and Hamas, from the circle of conflict. The Syrian regime has demonstrated stability, internal control and respect for agreements. Bashar Assad wants negotiations, and the present war in Lebanon and Gaza has shown, once again, that it is dangerous to ignore him.

CON: The price of peace with Syria is known – withdrawal from the entire Golan Heights, down to the Sea of Galilee, and handing over Israel’s water sources to Assad, the ally of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Frightening.

PRO: It is easier to agree with the Syrians than with the Palestinians. There are no holy places on the Golan, and the refugee problem is negligible. You can draw a borderline and make up security arrangements, and you'll have an agreement at once.

CON: That is what five Israeli Prime Ministers, who negotiated with Hafez Assad in the previous decade, believed. At the critical moment, however, Israel refused to give him the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and he insisted on it. Even a dispute over a narrow strip of land can torpedo an arrangement.

Testimony by anyone outside Israel's defense and security establishment, with regard to Assad's intentions, could be found only once, deep inside the weekend supplement of *Maariv*, on page 25, on August 4:

ASSAD'S PRICE (main headline)

IN A PALACE IN DAMASCUS, THAT LOOKS AS IF TAKEN FROM "THE WIZARD OF OZ", AMERICAN MIDDLE EAST EXPERT DR. DAVID LESCH GAINED IMPRESSION THAT SYRIAN PRESIDENT IS WILLING TO MAKE A FINAL SEPARATION FROM IRAN AND HEZBOLLAH * ALL IN EXCHANGE FOR ONLY ONE THING: GOLAN HEIGHTS * BUT MEANWHILE, NO ONE IS LISTENING TO HIM (subhead)

This pattern repeated itself, more insistently, with regard to the effect of the war in the north on the future of Israel's relations with the Palestinians. Most of the comments on this subject appeared in the context of Olmert's statement about the war and the "convergence" plan. In the coverage of the various responses to that statement, only voices from the right side of the political map made it to the headlines. Criticism from the left remained within the texts. A headline on page 6 of *Haaretz* from August 3 read as follows:

OLMERT: RESULTS OF WAR WILL FAVOR CONVERGENCE PLAN (main headline)

FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY PM, RESERVISTS LIVING IN SETTLEMENTS THREATENED NOT TO GO TO WAR IN LEBANON "IF DECLARED GOAL OF WAR IS TO DEPORT US FROM OUR HOMES" (subhead)

The text contained other information as well:

The left criticized Olmert, too. According to the Chair of the Meretz faction, MK Zehava Gal-On: "The lesson learned from the war in Lebanon, in which the grandiose objectives presented by the Prime Minister will apparently not be achieved, is that, instead of talking about convergence and unilateral moves, we

should negotiate with the Palestinians, with international backing, about leaving the territories”.

Only one voice of this type made it to the front pages of the news. On August 1, *Yedioth Ahronoth* published a front page reference to an article by A.B. Yehoshua, which was headlined **TALK NOW**:

If the Government of Israel wants to get any significant achievements from the difficult war now being waged in the north, it must take initiative and hold a summit conference with the top Palestinian leaders in the immediate future.

Hezbollah's missiles, which do not distinguish between Jewish and Arab cities and towns in Israel, symbolize for the Palestinians what they already know: their salvation has not come in the past, and will not come in the future, from their brothers in the Arab states.

Their salvation will come from binding and ongoing negotiations with Israel regarding their legitimate rights – but those rights must be reasonable. A partnership for peace between Palestine and Israel is the guarantee that both people will continue to exist, in a future exposed to unconventional weapons.

All of the other such voices were confined to op-ed articles. Orit Levanon-Degani, in an especially relevant article, published on the op-ed page of *Maariv*, on July 17, under the headline **PLEASE CALM DOWN**, wrote the following words:

The only solution is to create negotiations. And don't tell us, again, that there's no one there to talk to. You've used this excuse throughout the years to continue the war, because you believe it's possible to win that way. [...] Allow us to tell you again that victory will not be achieved in any battle, as it has not been in the past. Victory will not be achieved in any unilateral move. The victory is in the agreement; that will be your great victory. Try it once. Try it this time. It's about time.

APPENDIX 2:

MEANWHILE, IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: “THE GAZA DIVISION CONCLUDED ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL OPERATION”

In the course of the war, the IDF was also extensively and continuously active in the Gaza Strip, and in a less extensive manner in the West Bank. In these operations, the Speaker of the Palestinian Parliament was arrested, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry building in Gaza was bombed, the Rafah border crossing was shut down – and no fewer than 83 Palestinian civilians, who were not involved in the fighting, were killed. Granted, it might be possible to understand why these subjects did not head the news agenda of Israel’s media, in the midst of a war on another front – but the media’s neglect of what was going on at the same time in the occupied territories was nearly absolute. The coverage was scanty, sparse – and almost entirely in line with the military perspective. This is how it sounded, for example, in the introduction to a report by Sagi Bashan, in the 12th minute of the Channel 2 news broadcast on July 28:

And the fighting is also going on in the South, with Qassam rockets hitting the towns and villages. During the night, soldiers of the Givati Brigade killed 25 terrorists. Our correspondent Sagi Bashan with a report on the southern sector.

And this is how both Bashan himself, and Col. Erez Katz, Deputy Commander of the Gaza Division, sounded in the report:

Sagi Bashan: The Gaza Division concluded another successful operation, codenamed “Samson’s Pillars”. In the operation, the IDF attacked more than 100 armed terrorists who were attempting to harm the troops. Fighters from the Givati Brigade, the Engineer Corps, the Armored Corps, the Navy and the Air Force killed 25 terrorists. Our forces left the area before dawn with no casualties.

Col. Katz: A prolonged operation, for about three weeks, which has led, to date, to 140 casualties among the terrorists.

Sagi Bashan: Since Gilad Shalit was kidnapped, the IDF has been conducting raids in the Gaza Strip. Every few days, forces go into the terrorist strongholds and succeed in killing many of them.

Col. Katz: The objective of the IDF operation is to create continuous, incessant pressure on the terrorist organizations and the Palestinians, to make them want to ask for a ceasefire.

Sagi Bashan: In the last few days, the IDF has warned residents of the Gaza Strip that any house where weapons are found will be blown up. Yesterday, four such houses were destroyed. One of them was the Katyusha arsenal of the Islamic Jihad. Those Katyushas were intended to be used against cities and towns in Israel.

This mobilized tone was also reflected in reports "on the ground", which dramatically described the fighting experience of the IDF soldiers. These reports resembled an attempt to raise the prestige of the IDF, at a time when its reputation was being worn down in the other, primary sector. For example, an article published on page 25 of *Maariv* on July 17, under the headline **"SHARAS" FORCE IN BET HANUN**, read as follows:

During the afternoon, the battalion commander assembled his officers. "We'll keep moving in, in order to create more friction with the terrorists who escaped into the more populated area," said the battalion commander. It turns out that the strength of the force drove out some of the armed terrorists, who understood that there was no chance of surprising the soldiers in the area where they were located. He also reported that helicopters had killed four armed men in one event, and three additional armed men in another.

A similar report appeared on July 23 in the *24 Hours* supplement of *Yedioth Ahronoth*. The headline on the cover page of the supplement stated:

FORGOTTEN FRONT: WHILE EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT NORTHERN BORDER CAMPAIGN, ISRAEL'S SOUTHERN FIGHTERS ACCUMULATE HOURS OF FRUSTRATION IN GAZA MUD: "WE FEEL NO ONE CARES ABOUT US ANY MORE", THEY COMPLAIN. "EVEN OUR COMMANDERS' ENTHUSIASM HAS WANED A BIT" * 24 HOURS TEAM JOINS FIGHTERS IN SOUTH, DISCOVERS THE WAR OUTSIDE THE SPOTLIGHTS

On page 8, where the article actually appeared, the headlines reflected the same message:

FORGOTTEN IN GAZA (main headline)

THEY SLEEP BARELY 4 HOURS A NIGHT, HOLDING STAKEOUTS, SEARCHING FOR TUNNELS – BUT NO ONE HEARS ABOUT IT. WELL, WITH ALL THE ACTIVITY IN LEBANON, DOES ANYONE EVEN REMEMBER THE GAZA STRIP? * A WEEK AND A HALF AGO, WHEN THEY WERE IN THE HOTTEST SECTOR IN THE COUNTRY, EVERYONE MADE PILGRIMAGES TO THEM, BRINGING TV SETS AND GIFTS. NOW, EVEN IF THEY

KILL A TERRORIST, THEY BARELY GET A NEWS ITEM. AND THEY'RE FRUSTRATED, VERY FRUSTRATED * "NO ONE'S INTERESTED IN US ANY MORE", COMPLAINS A GIVATI FIGHTER IN THE SOUTHERN SECTOR. "WE'VE BEEN FORGOTTEN, AND THAT HURTS, BECAUSE WE'RE STILL DOING THE DIRTY WORK HERE" (subhead)

Throughout the entire war, there were few reports of Palestinians killed in IDF activity in the territories. The subject reached the front pages of the news when Israel tried to assassinate Muhammad Def, and in a few other isolated cases. On July 30, for example, *Haaretz* published an article on the front page under the following headline:

GAZA: SUMMARY OF SECOND FRONT (top banner)

97 KILLED IN GAZA STRIP SINCE START OF WAR, BUT MEDIA ARE BUSY IN LEBANON
(main headline)

In all of the other cases, the reports were laconically phrased and marginalized, without explaining the circumstances and significance of the events. For example, on July 25, *Maariv* published a tiny reference on page 3, as part of the daily "Diary of Events" of the war, which referred to an article published on page 19. The reference stated:

GAZA, 6:40 PM - IAF BOMBED BUILDING USED AS ISLAMIC JIHAD'S CENTRAL ARSENAL

Only the subhead of the article on page 19 mentioned the fact that nine people were killed in the bombing:

GAZA: STOCKPILE OF "GRAD" KATYUSHAS BOMBED (main headline)

IDF RAISES BAR OF ACTIVITY IN GAZA STRIP, STARTS BOMBING PRIVATE HOMES WHERE ARMS ARE HIDDEN * PALESTINIANS: 9 PEOPLE KILLED (subhead)

Only the text of the article revealed that six of the dead were civilians:

And in the town of Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip, six Palestinian civilians, including a girl, were killed by IDF fire. According to statements by Palestinian sources, the civilians were hit by IDF artillery fire in the area. Eyewitnesses stated that the shells hit a-Nada Towers, the officers' quarters, where the greatest damage was done.

Obviously, the paper did not even try to look into the moral and operational significance of the IDF decision to bomb private homes.

An additional example: on July 30, in the 45th minute of the Channel 1 news broadcast, Ohad Hamo, almost casually, reported on the large number of civilians killed in the territories:

More than 90 were killed in the last two weeks in the Gaza Strip and the territories were silent. But what has brought thousands into the streets now is in fact, the disaster in Kafr Qana.

It should be stated that the headline at the opening of the broadcast did not mention these grave figures. It only said: **A TERRORIST ATTACK WAS FOILED IN CENTRAL ISRAEL; THE TERRORISTS AND THE EXPLOSIVE BELT WERE CAPTURED.**

Here is a statement by Suleiman al-Shafi in the 60th(!) minute of the Channel 2 news broadcast on August 3:

Since Operation "Summer Rain" began about a month ago, the Palestinians have reported some 200 casualties; the IDF figure is only about 170. This has been happening in a very harsh war which the IDF is conducting against the Palestinians on the southern front, in various parts of the Gaza Strip...

On August 10, *Haaretz* reported, in a headline on page 9: **"TARGETED ASSASSINATION" IN WEST BANK, TOO – 2 ISLAMIC JIHAD ACTIVISTS KILLED.** Reading the article reveals that, besides the activists, a three-year-old girl was killed as well. This fact appears in one sentence, with no questions asked:

Israel killed two Islamic Jihad activists in Jenin yesterday. [...] In the Sajaiya neighborhood of Gaza, a Popular Resistance Committees training camp was bombed yesterday. Three Palestinians were killed: an activist of the organization, a 17-year-old boy and a three-year-old girl, Rajaa Abu Shaaban.

Newsworthy material which did not make it to the news pages could be found on the op-ed pages. Thus, for example, on July 27, Akiva Eldar wrote the following things, in an article published on page 3 in Section B of *Haaretz*, under the headline **YOU'RE SIMPLY EXAGGERATING:**

All attempts to focus the conversation with [Jan] Egeland [Kofi Anan's deputy, in charge of humanitarian aid in the UN] on Lebanon failed. He insisted on calling our attention to the "catastrophe in the Gaza Strip". He doesn't understand what benefit Israel can derive from punishing 1.4 million people by cutting them off from electrical power and places of employment, water in their toilets and fresh

food. "What is the message Gaza residents get from the sight of mountains of tomatoes thrown at the side of the road, at the border crossing with Israel? That they should be more productive and support peace?" He immediately answers his own question: "The Palestinians are falling into a black hole which generates more hatred. We have to stop this vicious cycle. You should go after the weapons and ammunition and leave the civilian population alone."

Though the article was given a reference on the front page: **UN DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL: "YOU'RE EXAGGERATING"**, nothing of that reference indicated that Egeland was talking about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

In another article, by Meron Benvenisti, which appeared in Section B of *Haaretz* on August 10, under the headline **AN ENTIRE GENERATION BACKWARD**, the following text appeared:

Under the cover of the Lebanese distraction, the IDF has killed almost 200 Palestinians in Gaza and has imprisoned dozens of Palestinian MPs and Government ministers. In such a reality, how can we talk about evacuation of the illegal outposts, convergence, or all the other topics that headed the national agenda?

On July 26, *Maariv* published an op-ed article by Shlomi Eldar, headlined **THE CONCEPT OF PERPETUATING HEZBOLLAH**. The subhead read: **IN BOTH BEIRUT AND GAZA, IDF THINKS PRESSURE ON INNOCENT POPULATION WILL CAUSE ACTION AGAINST HAMAS OR HEZBOLLAH; DATA SHOW OPPOSITE RESULT**. The text of the article stated:

"We'll take Lebanon back 20 years," promised a senior IDF officer. This threat, which has apparently been implemented, embodied the strong desire to strike, with full force, against anyone who attacks us. But it also contains the assumption that the Lebanese population, and especially the hedonistic residents of Beirut, the "Paris of the Middle East", would draw the obvious conclusion and throw out Hezbollah, the source of their troubles, as they did to the Syrian army a year and a half ago.

The concept of exerting pressure on the civilian population, to get it to tear out the "noxious weeds" is also characteristic of the IDF's activity in the territories in general and the Gaza Strip in particular. Throughout the entire second Intifada, Israel's code of operations has been that pressure on the so-called "uninvolved" population would cause them to take action against the Qassam rocket launchers, the planners of terrorist attacks and the armed organizations, which would force them to "repent" and lay down their arms. The result in the Gaza Strip was that the economic pressure, the harm to infrastructure and the heavy losses of lives, as the

result of the force exerted by the IDF, eventually, increased the power of Hamas at the end of the Intifada. [...]

At the end of the First Lebanon War, a small and insignificant Shiite organization, which took the name of “The Party of God” – or, in Arabic, Hezbollah – sprang from the ruins of Beirut. We should not be surprised if, in two or three years, when elections are held for the Prime Minister of Lebanon, a Hezbollah candidate replaces Fuad Siniora – not through the help of God, but through the help of democratic elections.

APPENDIX 3:

JUSTICE DORNER: “GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MEDIA WERE PATRIOTIC”

About a month after the end of the war, the Israel Press Council set up a commission headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Dalia Dorner, to determine rules of ethics for the media in wartime. The commission focused on the complaints which had been made against the media during the war, and sought to determine, for example, whether the media reports on the IDF military moves were too detailed; whether the media acted properly in reporting the places where the Katyusha rockets fell; whether the media adversely affected the national morale by reporting failures in the IDF's functioning; whether the reports on military and civilian casualties in the north were sensitive enough; and so forth. At the end of its work, the commission reached the following conclusion:

The problems requiring attention which we found did not appear to justify such an acutely hostile attitude toward the media. Accordingly, we have no choice but to conclude that the central factor in that attitude concerns the outcome of the war – which, as we know, gave rise to a profusion of inquiries in the IDF, an examination and inspection board by the State Comptroller. If similar coverage – over a garrulous open microphone, with all of the faults and failures we have learned about – had been given to a war crowned with success and victory, that coverage would have been applauded by the public. It appears that the frustrated public was angry at the messenger which brought the bad news: the media. (Report by the Commission for Determining Rules of Ethics for the Media in Wartime, page 27)

Justice Dorner herself, in an interview with the IDF radio station, defined the situation in the following words: “Everything that could be learned from the military personnel to whom I listened shows that, generally speaking, the media were patriotic.”²³

It should be noted that some of the initial findings of this Keshev Report were presented to the commission. However, aside from the subject of coverage of Arab civilians in the north, its findings were not comprehensively discussed in the report issued by the commission upon the conclusion of its deliberations. The commission merely stated that: “The absence of a critical attitude cannot constitute a subject for specific rules of ethics.”

The Dorner Commission accordingly refrained from any real consideration of the material questions, and exempted the media from the moral reckoning that it should have undertaken after the war.

23 <http://news.msn.co.il/news/StatePoliticalMilitary/Military/200703/20070322203004.html>

KESHEV PUBLICATIONS

- “Press for the Peace of Jerusalem? – Israeli Media Coverage of the Jerusalem Issue” (June 2008)
- “To Say Nothing of the Roadmap – The Israeli Media and the Renewal of Construction over the Green Line” (March 2008)
- “The Spin over who Turned Out the Lights in Gaza” (February 2008)
- “Women, Media and Conflict – A Gendered View of Israeli Television Coverage of the 2006 Lebanon War” (December 2007)
- “‘War to the Last Moment’ – The Israeli Media in the Second Lebanon War” (July 2007)
- “When the Cannons Roar: From the Gaza Beach to Beit Hanun – Israeli Media Coverage of Killings of Palestinian Civilians in the Gaza Strip” (May 2007)
- “*Maariv*’s Fear Index” (March 2007)
- “Who Cares About Another Palestinian Death?” (March 2007)
- “The ‘Great Land Grab’ and the Prime Minister’s ‘Conciliatory’ Speech” (November 2006)
- “‘A Moment of National Pride’ – Israeli Media Coverage of the Takeover of Jericho Prison” (April 2006)
- “‘Liquidation Sale’ – Israeli Media Coverage of Events in Which Palestinians Were Killed by Israeli Security Forces” (March 2006)
- “Disconnected - The Israeli Media’s Coverage of the Gaza Disengagement” (January 2006)
- “Quiet, We’re Disengaging! Israeli Media Coverage of the Tense Ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian Authority following the Sharm e-Sheikh Understandings” (August 2005)
- “Channel 2’s Virtual Reality: Coverage of Events around the Sharbaty Family Home in Hebron” (April 2005)
- “A Dog’s Life: Whose Blood is Worth More – That of Palestinian Civilians or a ‘Jewish’ Dog?” (March 2005)
- “‘Israeli Gestures’: How were Israel’s Steps Covered?” (February 2005)
- “Bush: Territorial Contiguity for the Palestinian State” (February 2005)
- “The Prisoner Release Issue in the Israeli Print Media” (February 2005)
- “When Thy Enemy Falls: Israeli Media Coverage of the Death of Arafat” (January 2005)

KESHEV – THE CENTER FOR PROTECTION OF DEMOCRACY IN ISRAEL was established by a group of intellectuals, jurists, academics and concerned citizens following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in order to defend and promote democratic values in Israel.

Since the beginning of 2005 Keshev has been carrying out a long-term media monitoring project in partnership with the Palestinian organization MIFTAH. The goal of the project is to change patterns of discourse and media coverage in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority that express prejudice, incitement and defamation, bias, de-legitimization and de-humanization of the other side.

Keshev's research methodology examines gaps between the total information that reporters supply to their editors and the final processed stories that editors provide to their readers and viewers. This intra-textual comparison reveals the effects that editing has on the major outputs of the Israeli media.

Using its research findings, Keshev works to instill skills for critical media consumption among various target populations.

Keshev is not affiliated with any political party and its activities are supported by contributions alone. The organization's major sources of support include The New Israel Fund, The European Union, The Ford Foundation, The Abraham Fund Initiatives, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, The United States Institute of Peace, Regione Lazio and The Foundation for Middle East Peace.

Keshev's publications and additional information about the organization are available at www.keshev.org.il.



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הדאגה התקדמית

The question is not only how the Israeli media covered the Second Lebanon War. The really important question is how the media will cover the next war. The media professionals, the editors and managers, the correspondents and commentators, must subject themselves to the moral reckoning which they demanded after the war – and rightly so – of the decision-makers in the Government of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces. This must happen, and it must happen now. Before – not after – the next war breaks out.

■ עשרות אלפי חיילים נלחמים בקרבות
■ צה"ל הוציא לפועל את מבצע ההנחתה הגדול ביותר
■ המעורבות המסך לחימה בהיקף כה רחב תגבה מחיר כואב

הסכם הפסקת אש - בלי החטאים

