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Trends. Civilians and Meanings of Collateral Damage: Hezbollah and Israel

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Recent Israeli government attacks in Lebanon have been vociferously criticized by high-level officials in many Arab countries and by representatives of multilateral governmental organizations and human rights organizations. The criticism focuses on the Israeli attacks' killing and wounding of Lebanese civilians and destroying Lebanese materiel infrastructures supporting the basics of life.

The Israeli response is the attacks have been in response to Hezbollah killing and wounding of Israeli forces and are intended to deter further attacks. Civilians are killed and wounded as collateral damage--i.e., secondarily and accidentally to hitting primary targets more directly related to Hezbollah capabilities and motivation. The Israelis less insistently add that civilians can be conceptualized as collateral damage in at least two other senses--first, as being intentionally (from the perspective of Hezbollah) and physically coincident to primary targets, second as being supportive of primary targets.

Facts on the ground strongly suggest that these three meanings of collateral damage ensure there is moral blame to spread around the two adversaries and beyond to their supporters and adversaries. (Braithwaite, V. (1998). The value balance model of political evaluations. *British Journal of Psychology*, 89, 223-247; Elbedour, S., et al. (1997). The impact of political violence on moral reasoning in children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 21, 1053-1066; Fiske, A.P., & Tetlock, P.E. (1997). Taboo trade-offs: Reactions to transactions that transgress the spheres of justice. *Political Psychology*, 18, 255-297; Sachs, S. (February 9, 2000). Arab neighbors voice alarm at flare-up in violence in Lebanon. *The New York Times*, p. A8; Teske, N. (1997). Beyond altruism: Identity-construction as moral motive in political explanation. *Political Psychology*, 18, 71-91.) (Keywords: Collateral Damage, Israel, Lebanon.)