



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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3-5 NATIONAL CIRCUIT

CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600

9 August 2006

Mr Tony Yacoub
President
World Lebanese Cultural Union
PO Box 86
TULLAMARINE VIC 3043

Dear Mr Yacoub

Thank you for your letters of 15 July and 5 August to the Prime Minister about the current conflict in the Middle East. The Prime Minister has asked that I reply on his behalf.

The Australian Government is deeply concerned by the escalation of tensions in the Middle East, which have resulted from the capture of Israeli soldiers and the launching of rockets and mortar bombs into Israel by Hamas and Hezbollah. Australia condemns these actions and calls for the unconditional release of the hostages and an immediate end to the rocket attacks on Israel. Australia recognises Israel's right to act in self-defence, and calls on both sides to exercise restraint and to refrain from acts which escalate an already dangerous situation. The government has also made clear that it is strongly committed to efforts to establish a durable settlement to the conflict which will provide peace and security for the Lebanese people and for Israel and which fully recognises the sovereign authority of Lebanon's government over its territory.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Nicholas Coppel'.

Nicholas Coppel
Assistant Secretary
International Division



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

28 July 2006

Mr Tony Yacoub
President
World Lebanese Cultural Union
PO Box 86
TULLAMARINE VIC 3043

Dear Mr Yacoub

Thank you for your letter dated 15 July 2006 concerning the Middle East conflict. Mr Downer has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Australian Government shares your concern about the current crisis in Lebanon, which commenced with the attacks on Israel by Hamas and Hezbollah, and the kidnapping of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers. Australia recognises Israel's right to protect itself from terrorist attacks. We urge all parties to exercise restraint, to avoid civilian deaths and damage to civilian infrastructure, and to refrain from acts which escalate an already dangerous situation.

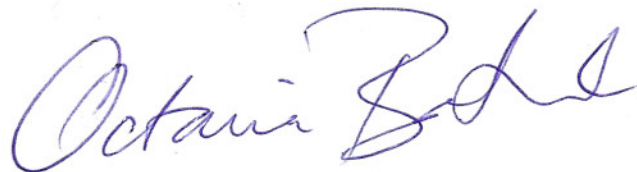
As the Prime Minister noted on 14 July, a long-term solution to the Middle East conflict must involve acceptance of Israel's right to exist in peace and the need for the emergence of a Palestinian state.

The Australian Government shares your conviction that the Lebanese Government must be able to exercise full sovereignty over its territory, requiring the full implementation of all aspects of UNSC Resolution 1559. We have actively pursued these objectives within multilateral fora such as the United Nations, and will continue to raise these issues where appropriate.

The Australian Government shares your concern about the impact of the violence on civilian populations. In response, Australia is providing funds to the International Committee of the Red Cross for immediate humanitarian relief supplies and services for victims of the current conflict. Of this, \$2 million dollars will be allocated to victims in Lebanon, and \$500,000 to victims in northern Israel.

Thank you for bringing your views to the attention of the Government.

Yours sincerely



Octavia Borthwick
Director
Middle East Section