

Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

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www.pugwash.org

Rome Office:
Via della Lungara, 10
I-00165 Rome, Italy
39-06-687.2606
email: pugwash@iol.it

London Office:
63a Great Russell St.
London WC1B 3BJ, UK
44-20-7405.6661
email: pugwash@mac.com

Geneva Office:
16 rue de la Voix-Creuse
1211 Geneva, Switzerland
41-22-919-7920
email: pugwash.GE@gcsp.ch

Washington, DC Office:
1111 19th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036
1-202-478-3440
email: pugwashdc@aol.com

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan
President

Prof. Paolo Cotta-Ramusino
Secretary General

Dr. Jeffrey Boutwell
Executive Director

Statement of the Pugwash Council *The Middle East Conflict*

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The Pugwash Council expresses its grave concern over the continued escalation of violence in the Middle East. Whatever the proximate cause for this latest eruption of conflict, events risk spiraling out of control, possibly leading to a regional war and even greater suffering, especially among civilians. Moreover, continued conflict only fans the flames of radicalization and the destruction of civil society.

Stopping and reversing this latest round of hostilities and violence should be the immediate priority of the international community, as any regional conflict will truly have international consequences. Accordingly, the Pugwash Council supports an immediate ceasefire to the violence and hostilities currently taking place. Following such a ceasefire, and under the auspices of the UN Security Council, international mediators and guarantors are needed to:

- 1) Secure the release of hostages and of members of the Palestinian Government and Parliament;
- 2) Prevent further cross-border incursions and rocket attacks;
- 3) Respect all political borders and conventions.

In parallel, urgent action by the international community is needed to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and restore minimally acceptable living standards for affected civilians, including the provision of food, water, housing, medical care and disease control. Equally important is the restoration of the capability of the Palestinian Government and Parliament, and Lebanese Government, to function effectively.

All parties concerned, including Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Government, the Lebanese Government and the Quartet, should restart, without delay, a series of direct and, if necessary, indirect meetings to identify means of resuming the peace process. Such talks should be as multi-dimensional as possible, involving all relevant parties.

The situation in the Middle East is extremely volatile. Preventing further conflict and loss of life will require serious and timely action by all concerned. Much is at stake, not least the small but nonetheless possible risk of the use of nuclear weapons. The Pugwash Council appeals to the governments and movements involved, in the words of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, to “remember your humanity” and resume the difficult work of securing peace for your peoples.