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**ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERT CLAIMS ISRAEL
VIOLATED LAWS OF WAR IN CAUSING
LEBANON OIL SPILL**

**Calls attack “a malicious intent to inflict widespread
environmental and economic damage.”**

Asks Israel to pay \$1 billion (USD) for Restoration

After a 2-week mission to Lebanon to assess the damage and guide response operations for the nation's largest oil spill, an American environmental expert claims that the Israeli missile strikes on the Jiyeh power plant south of Beirut that caused the spill likely violated international laws of war.

Rick Steiner, professor at the University of Alaska and member of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy, has been in Lebanon to advise the Government of Lebanon and NGOs on the spill.

In a letter sent today to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Professor Steiner said: "I am not taking sides here in this conflict. I do not care if the person pulling the trigger on the missiles that hit Jiyeh was Israeli, Hizbollah, or other", Steiner said. "As the tank farm is within 100 m of the sea, it was clear that such an attack could lead to a massive oil pollution disaster in the eastern Mediterranean basin, and as such likely violated international laws of war", he said.

"All nations are governed by rules of conduct in war, and those rules specifically prohibit intentionally inflicting unnecessary environmental harm," he said.

In today's letter to Prime Minister Olmert, Steiner cited Paragraph 18 of the Geneva Convention:

All armed forces, whether regular or irregular, should continue to observe the principles and rules of international environmental and humanitarian law to which the parties to the conflict are bound in times of peace. Natural and cultural resources shall not be pillaged under any circumstances.

As well, he cited the Statute of the International Criminal Court stipulating in Article 8 that the following may constitute a war crime:

Intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such an attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated.

Professor Steiner said that because the Israeli military knew that the attack may result in a massive oil spill and an environmental disaster along the Lebanese coast, and struck twice to achieve this objective, it was obviously an intentional act designed to inflict large-scale environmental injury. And if not for the 2-week fire that burned another 25,000 tons of fuel oil at the plant, the spill would have been over twice as large as it was. He told Prime Minister Olmert that the Jiyeh attack appeared to represent "a malicious intent to inflict widespread environmental and economic damage."

Professor Steiner requested of Prime Minister Olmert agree to a full and immediate legal inquiry of the incident, and for Israel to establish a \$1 billion (USD) *Eastern Mediterranean Oil Spill Restoration Fund*. This Fund would be used to reimburse all government costs for response and cleanup, lost income for fishermen and tourism businesses, and for the implementation of a comprehensive program for the injured coastal and marine environment, he said.

"The Jiyeh attack and resulting oil spill had no strategic value whatsoever. Are we still barbarians at war, pitching boiling oil on our enemies over the castle walls here? We simply must find a better way to behave in the 21st century, even in war."

The Lebanon government has initiated a comprehensive Natural Resource Damage Assessment program to quantify the environmental damage caused by the spill.

"Our small planet has had a rough enough time of late for us to now be inflicting intentional harm to our environment," Professor Steiner said. "We have to do better."