

Italy summons Israeli ambassador after UN observers wounded in Lebanon

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Rome, October 11 (RHC)-- Italy has summoned the Israeli ambassador to Rome after two United Nations peacekeepers were wounded in attacks on UN peacekeeping forces' bases in southern Lebanon. An

Italian government source said the country's defense minister summoned the envoy to protest tank shells fired by Israeli troops at UN peacekeepers on Thursday, describing it as "intolerable".

The UNIFIL mission's Italian spokesperson, Andrea Tenenti, told the media that Israeli forces targeted three UNIFIL bases in Southern Lebanon. "These accidents are intolerable," Italy's Defense Minister Guido Crosetto told the Israeli envoy.

"I protested to my Israeli counterpart and to the Israeli ambassador to Italy," Crosetto said, adding such strikes "must be carefully and decisively avoided." Crosetto said he also sent a formal communication to the United Nations to reiterate the unacceptability of what is happening in southern Lebanon.

"The safety of the Italian soldiers deployed in Lebanon remains an absolute priority for me and for the entire Italian government so that the Italian peacekeepers continue their work of mediation and support for peace and stability in Lebanon and the entire region."

The UNIFIL force, which consists of a total of 10,058 peacekeepers from 50 troop-contributing countries of which about 1,000 are Italian soldiers, was created by the Security Council in March 1978 to maintain peace and security in Southern Lebanon. The UNIFIL mission's top general is also an Italian officer.

Lebanese military intelligence sources said Israeli tanks fired on a hill in the village of Labbounneh, an area under the responsibility of the Italian contingent.

Prior to the tank shelling the UNIFIL base, an Israeli drone repeatedly flew over the position, the sources said, and the Israeli artillery fire targeted the entrance of the bunker sheltering the Italian soldiers.

UNIFIL said Israeli forces "deliberately fired at and disabled" on-site monitoring cameras before the attack. Communication systems between the base and the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura were also damaged in the attack, Lebanese and Italian sources reported.

The impact of the strikes on the watchtower caused two Indonesian peacekeeping soldiers to fall from the height and get injured. "The injuries are fortunately, this time, not serious, but they remain in hospital," said UNIFIL in a statement.

The Israeli aggression on southern Lebanon, which has claimed the lives of thousands of Lebanese people, comes as part of the regime's year-long war on Palestinians trapped in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The Israeli regime forces have killed close to 42,000 Palestinians in Gaza since last October, mostly innocent and defenseless women and children.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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