Hezbollah Storing Arms in Civilian's Homes for Use Against Israel, Lieberman Tells UN Chief

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Hezbollah is storing arms for use against Israel in the homes of Lebanese civilians who live near the Israeli border, and Israel will respond with great force if those missiles and rockets are actually fired at Israel, Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman told UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday.

It is important that both the Lebanese government and residents of southern Lebanon be aware of this, he added.

Lieberman also told the visiting secretary-general that Iran is working to set up factories to manufacture precision weapons within Lebanon. This is intolerable for Israel, which is determined to prevent any threat to its security, he said.

Lieberman accused Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of making the situation in Gaza worse, charging that Abbas’ goal is to spark another Hamas-Israel war. Hamas is equally to blame for Gaza’s woes, Lieberman added, since it invests most of its money in digging tunnels and manufacturing or smuggling arms rather than improving life for its residents Gaza.

Lieberman added that Hamas still holds both Israeli civilians and the bodies of two fallen soldiers in the Gaza Strip, but refuses to return them or even provide any information about them. It also refuses to allow the Red Cross to visit the captives. Aside from being cruel, this is a violation of international law, he said, and he expects the UN to speak out on this issue and pressure Hamas to return the missing and fallen Israelis.

Guterres also met with families of the fallen soldiers and captive civilians. The parents of soldiers Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul and civilians Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed all urged him to get personally involved in securing their return to Israel.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett also commented on the issue, calling for harsher conditions for Palestinian terrorists serving time in Israeli jails. "We are dealing not only with [negotiating for] the release of Israeli soldiers, but also preventing the next kidnapping. We have to levy the price of an attack against terrorists in prison by refusing to release corpses and by using aggressive military operations. We must not capitulate to Hamas but instead intensify our work against them, so that it's not worth it for them to hold our soldiers captive."