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About 200 supporters of Lebanon and critics of Israel rallied in Copley Square last night and called for an immediate, unconditional cease-fire. The conflict had displaced about one-eighth of Lebanon's 4 million people by yesterday, according to UN data. (Matthew J. Lee/ Globe Staff)

## Rally denounces Israel's military actions in Lebanon

The Boston Globe

### Boston protesters call for cease-fire

By Charles A. Radin, Globe Staff | July 20, 2006

About 200 supporters of Lebanon and critics of Israel rallied in Copley Square last night for an immediate, unconditional cease-fire in the conflict that has devastated Lebanon over the past eight days.

Some organizers and activists said their intent was to hold a nonpolitical demonstration of support and sympathy for innocent Lebanese caught up in the fighting, but the crowd was strongly anti-Israel and sprinkled with people calling for an end to Zionism and victory for the Islamic extremist organization Hezbollah, whose raid into Israel triggered the fighting.

Loai Naamani, who is president of the Lebanese Club at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said the rally grew out of a decision by the club to try to galvanize the Lebanese community of Greater Boston.

"We want an immediate end to what is happening there, and we want aid for the reconstruction of the country," Naamani said. "We denounce the indescribably disproportionate actions of the Israeli military" in response to the initial Hezbollah attack.

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``Hezbollah started as our national resistance" to the 20-year Israeli occupation of Lebanon's southern border areas, he said. ``The current Lebanese government endorses it as such. It is a military group that ultimately must be disarmed, but we might disagree about the timing of this. . . . The last thing we needed was to be bombed back to the Stone Age."

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Amal Arnaout , a pharmacist, rejected the idea that Hezbollah's raid into Israel -- during which two Israel soldiers were kidnapped for use in bargaining for the release of Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners held by Israel -- set off the conflagration. ``This was a premeditated action" planned in advance by Israel and backed by the United States, she said.

Citing Israel's assassinations of leaders of the Islamist group Hamas in the occupied territories and its capacity to round up Palestinian militants, she asserted that the Israelis ``had the capacity to capture 200, or 2,000, Hezbollah people. But they are flattening the country, and we will end up with a situation that is far worse."

Many observers said they fear that the fragile Lebanese government could collapse under the pressures of the current conflict, leading to a resumption of Syrian control of Lebanon or even to dominance of the country by Hezbollah, which is allied with Iran.

The Israeli government has said it is open to a cease-fire as long as the terms of the agreement include the disarmament of Hezbollah, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions. The demonstrators voiced their objection to this.

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