

October 12, 1997

Dear Ms. Hawn,

I am writing to you from Israel because I know of your long involvement in peace causes and in women's issues and wanted you to know about an important grassroots group begun here: THE FOUR MOTHERS MOVEMENT. Our purpose is to get Israel to unilaterally withdraw from the self-declared security zone in Southern Lebanon, a zone that serves no security purpose, escalates tensions in the region, and causes terrible loss of life to both Israelis and Lebanese. To achieve our goal we need your help.

The group was started last March by four mothers who live in the North of Israel--the area the Security Zone was designed to protect--and who had sons serving in Lebanon. They knew personally that the zone has not stopped the Hizbollah from sending in Katushas shells; on the contrary, the presence of Israelis in Lebanon has prompted such acts.

They protested the fact that the Israeli government, which had indicated its readiness to pull out of Lebanon in 1985, had done nothing in the intervening twelve years and had allowed the situation to remain unresolved. During the same period nearly 600 Israeli soldiers and untold Lebanese have been killed in this "SILENT WAR," which nobody seems ready to acknowledge or to seek solutions to end. THE FOUR MOTHERS MOVEMENT demands that the Israeli government put Lebanon back on the national agenda and actively seek ways of extracting Israel from the unending nightmare of Lebanon, our Viet Nam.

Our numbers have quickly swelled, indicating the widespread dissatisfaction and frustration of a large cross-section of the country with the present status quo. At present we have gathered 20,000 signatures calling on the government to withdraw from Lebanon.

Since we are non-partisan and draw our support from across the Israeli political spectrum, we get no money from any political party or movement. We are grassroots and would like to stay that way. That means that our funding is very limited. Every bumper sticker and flyer we produce is paid for from our own pockets.

Although we have had extensive coverage in local and foreign media, including the article by Joel Greenberg in New York Times, which I am enclosing, and features on BBC TV and NPR radio, as well as Australian, Austrian, Argentinean, Canadian, German, and Italian television and newspapers, we still are limited in getting our message across to the 50% of the Israeli population who support the present Prime Minister and government policies.

I know the terrible feeling of a mother waiting for her son to come home from Lebanon. My son Arik was there for three years. I was lucky; he made it out. Others have not been so fortunate. From 1982, when the Lebanon war began, to 1985, when it presumably ended, 640 Israeli soldiers died there. Since 1985, an additional 583 soldiers have been killed, including 27 who have died in the last six weeks.

Many in Israel despair about the present political climate and feel nothing can be done. We of the FOUR MOTHERS MOVEMENT say that individuals can make a difference; we need not remain passive. The American Viet Nam protests showed us that citizen movements can gain momentum, bring boys home, and even topple administrations. Help us to do the same here, in the name of peace and justice.

If we are to stop this senseless loss of life on both sides, we need your help. We ask you to make a contribution to support THE FOUR MOTHERS MOVEMENT in their effort to have Israel withdraw from Lebanon. Send tax-deductible contributions to  
THE FOUR MOTHERS MOVEMENT  
BANK HAMIZRACHI, KIRYAT SHMONA  
BRANCH 487, ACCOUNT NUMBER 347717.  
[RECEIPTS WILL BE FORWARDED TO YOU]

If you would be willing to support our movement in some capacity, please contact me:

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All best wishes,

Linda Ben-Zvi