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**In the Middle East**



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**Iran wants "religious empire" in Middle East: Israel**  
 (AFP)

10 August 2006

PARIS - Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres on Thursday urged the international community to prevent Iran from imposing a "religious empire" across the Middle East.

"The problem, once again, lies with the religious ambitions of the Persians," Peres told French television France 3.

"That is why many people, even among Arabs, are against Hezbollah and the Iranians. They want to maintain the Middle East as an Arab place, not an Iranian religious empire."

"The world, including France, needs to do something to stop this dangerous behaviour," he said.

Israel accuses Iran and Syria of supporting the Shia Hezbollah militia in Lebanon and supplying it with arms, notably its arsenal of thousands of rockets, which is being used to shower Israel with attacks every day.

The two countries consistently argue that their support for Hezbollah is purely moral.

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