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Implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

Twenty-ninth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is the twenty-ninth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the implementation of the resolution since the issuance of my previous report on the subject, on 15 October 2018 (S/2018/920), and covers developments up to 8 April 2019.

I. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) by the Security Council on 2 September 2004, limited progress has been made in its implementation and a number of provisions, including with respect to the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, remain pending.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

3. Through the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council sought to strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in accordance with the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon had committed themselves. That objective has remained the priority of my efforts.

4. Nearly nine months after parliamentary elections were held, the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, announced on 31 January 2019 the formation of the new Government of Lebanon, as noted in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2019/237). The Government, comprising 30 ministers, reflected the result of legislative elections, as detailed in my report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (S/2018/480), the Kata'ib party remaining in opposition. The Cabinet includes four women, one of whom is the first female Minister of the Interior in the Arab region.

5. In a statement made on 1 February, I welcomed the formation of the Government and reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to supporting Lebanon in strengthening its sovereignty, stability and political independence in accordance with the Taif Accords and the Baabda Declaration, and its effective implementation of



Security Council resolutions [1701 \(2006\)](#), [1559 \(2004\)](#) and other relevant resolutions that remain essential to the stability of Lebanon and the region.

6. As noted in my latest report on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) ([S/2019/237](#)), the Cabinet approved a ministerial statement on 7 February 2019 following consultations with political parties. In the statement, the Government's commitment to implementing an economic, reform, investment, service and social programme was emphasized. The new Government won a vote of confidence on 15 February, with 111 out of 128 votes in Parliament.

7. As in 2016, the Government reiterated in the statement its commitment to resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) and its intention to support the army and security forces. It also reiterated "Lebanese citizens' right to resist the Israeli occupation, repel its attacks and regain occupied territories". As was the case previously, the statement also contained a pledge to "strengthen the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue so as to prevent further tensions in the camps, [...] in accordance with the unified Lebanese vision pact". The Government reaffirmed its commitment to the dissociation policy. In the statement the Government renewed its pledge to continue to consolidate the rights and role of women in public and political life and to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. Contrary to 2016, however, the recent statement did not contain a reference to the national dialogue or a national defence strategy.

8. During the reporting period, the Prime Minister publicly reiterated his Government's commitment to the dissociation policy, most recently on 3 April in a meeting with ambassadors of the European Union in the region.

9. The issue of the normalization of relations between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and the dissociation policy continued to colour the political dynamics. In this regard, the Prime Minister reportedly stated on 19 March that, "as for the normalization of relations with the regime, Lebanon applies a dissociation policy and is committed to the stance of the Arab League and its decisions about the Syrian regime".

10. The number of registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic hosted by Lebanon totalled 944,613, as at 31 March 2019. At the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, held from 12 to 14 March, participants announced their pledges for both the Syrian Arab Republic and the region, including Lebanon, amounting to \$7 billion for 2019 and multi-year pledges of close to \$2.4 billion for 2020 and beyond. In addition, international financial institutions and donors announced around \$20.7 billion in loans on concessional terms.

11. In its resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request made by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. This remains critical to enable proper border control and management, including the movement of people and the potential movement of arms.

12. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon also remain elements that are essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. While border delineation is a bilateral matter, progress on the issue remains an obligation for Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#). There were no reports of cross-border incidents on the eastern and northern borders up to March 2019.

13. Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

14. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab‘a Farms area. Furthermore, neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded to the provisional definition of the area contained in my predecessor’s report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) ([S/2007/641](#)). In his speech at the thirtieth summit of the League of Arab States, held in Tunis on 31 March 2019, after the decision made on 25 March by the Government of the United States of America to recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, the President of Lebanon stated that the decision of the United States “threatens [...] the sovereignty of the Lebanese State, which possesses land gradually [annexed] by Israel, particularly in the Shebaa Farms and the Kfarshuba hills and the northern part of Ghajar. Lebanese ownership of these territories is documented by internationally recognized documents and maps”. In a tweet on 30 March, referring to the decision of the United States, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gebran Bassil, referred to “Arab support to the right of Syria to retrieve the occupied Golan and [the Lebanese right to retrieve] Shab‘a Farms, Kfar Shuba Hills and the northern part of Ghajar village”. In a speech on 26 March, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, stated that “whoever is still doubting and confused should be convinced that the only option after Jerusalem and the Golan Heights for the Syrians to restore the Golan and the Lebanese to restore the Shebaa Farms and the Kfarshouba Hills and the Lebanese part of Ghajar [...] is resistance, resistance, resistance”.

15. Uncrewed aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israel Defense Forces continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

16. As stated in my report on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) ([S/2019/237](#)), the Israel Defense Forces, on 4 December 2018, informed the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, announced in a letter to the President of the Security Council ([S/2018/1082](#)) and notified the media that it had launched “Operation Northern Shield” to expose and neutralize tunnels allegedly built across the Blue Line by Hizbullah. In a letter dated 6 December 2018 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([A/73/631-S/2018/1091](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon conveyed her Government’s condemnation in the strongest possible terms of what it said was the “political and diplomatic campaign being waged by Israel against Lebanon, which it fears is a prelude to the launch of further attacks”. She added that the campaign was “being accompanied by a number of extremely serious acts, of which the most recent is that Israel has breached the Lebanese communications grid by hacking into the telephone network and sending recorded messages to peaceable civilian inhabitants of the southern part of the village of Kafr Killa warning them of imminent explosions to take place on Lebanese territory that might put their lives at risk”.

17. In identical letters dated 26 December 2018 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([A/73/695-S/2018/1162](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations conveyed her Government’s message that, on 25 December, “Israeli warplanes violated Lebanese airspace to carry out air strikes against the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic,” stating that, “with this new violation, Israel has reverted to the dangerous practice of using Lebanese airspace to carry out air strikes against Syrian territory” that she called on the Security Council to condemn. It was further noted in the letter that “this serious violation posed a threat to civilian aircraft traffic in Lebanese airspace and almost caused a major air catastrophe”. That concern was further reiterated in identical letters dated 27 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([A/73/713-S/2018/1170](#)), noting that it “placed the lives of hundreds of civilians at grave risk”.

18. In its ministerial statement, the Government stated its commitment “to establishing and bringing to light the truth about the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and his companions”. It reiterated its intention to “follow up on the progress of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which was originally established to pursue truth and justice without politicization or retribution and to do so in a manner that does not affect the stability, unity and civil peace of Lebanon”. In his statement on 14 February in commemoration of his father’s death, the Prime Minister reiterated that the verdict would not serve to take revenge but rather lead to justice. Lebanon made its contribution to the 2019 budget of the Tribunal on 28 February.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

19. The Government of Lebanon continued its efforts to extend the authority of the State throughout all the Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif Accords and in resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

20. The overall security situation in Lebanon remained stable during the reporting period. At a conference on 26 November on the theme “Eradication of terrorism in the region and its impact on the African continent,” organized by the General Directorate of General Security, the former Minister of the Interior, Nouhad Machnouk, reportedly stated that “Lebanon defeated terrorism thanks to cohesive national unity, mindful politics, and the military and security institutions”. At that same conference, the Director General of the General Directorate of General Security, Major-General Abbas Ibrahim, reportedly stressed the need to confront the threat of terrorism through the adoption of a “trans-boundary security policy”.

21. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to take steps to protect the country’s security. On 29 December, two soldiers of the Lebanese armed forces were reportedly wounded during an army raid on a house of a wanted person in Brital as the assailants opened fire on the patrol.

22. Despite an overall improved security situation, a significant issue of concern for Lebanon is the potential return to the country of fighters associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In that connection, the Lebanese armed forces continued to arrest individuals allegedly affiliated with or supporting extremist groups. On 9 January, the General Directorate of General Security arrested members of a cell reportedly belonging to ISIL and planning to carry out operations against Lebanese army posts and patrols in Aarsal.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

23. In its resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#), the Security Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, a key provision of the resolution that has yet to be implemented. The provision reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Accords.

24. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continued to operate outside the control of the Government, in violation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, Hizbullah is the most heavily armed militia in the country. In a democratic State, it remains a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains a militia that has no accountability to the democratic, governmental institutions of the State but has the power to take that State to war.

25. The self-acknowledged maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups and the alleged increase by Hizbullah of its arsenal pose a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In an interview with a television channel on 26 January, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah reiterated his claim of 20 September 2018 that Hizbullah possesses precision missiles (see [S/2018/920](#)). In response to a question, he stated "of course we possess precision missiles, and with a sufficient number to confront [Israel] in a future war, to strike any target we want in the course of our war plan [...]. We possess precision missiles in the amount we need and what we need no longer needs to be transferred."

26. There has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle that crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside of a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, who consider those issues to be destabilizing factors in the country and ones that undermine democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat that the weapons could be used within Lebanon for political reasons.

27. In a letter dated 26 October 2018 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([S/2018/960](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel denounced, on behalf of his Government, Hizbullah's "missile conversion activities," further alleging that they were "amid mass civilian population centres". He called on the Lebanese authorities to "conduct the necessary due diligence to ensure that facilities and funding are not being used" for Hizbullah's activities. As noted in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 ([S/2019/237](#)), in a letter dated 28 February addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations conveyed, on behalf of her Government, that "the Iranian regime continues to bolster Hezbollah's weapons capabilities in various ways, including through the precision-guided missile conversion programme it has established inside civilian population centres across Lebanon, and the proliferation of mass weapons manufacturing capabilities to Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic". In the letter it was alleged that reports over the past few months had revealed a drastic increase in weapons transfers from Tehran to Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut. It was further stated that the "Iranian regime is also providing Hezbollah with technical training and assistance to manufacture, maintain and use these weapons and advanced capabilities independently". The United Nations is not in a position to verify the information provided.

28. The participation of Hizbullah and other Lebanese in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to breach the policy of disassociation and the principles of the Baabda Declaration. In an interview with a television channel on 26 January, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, referring to the announced withdrawal of United States troops from the Syrian Arab Republic, stated that Hizbullah's reason to remain there still stood, given that it was based on a request from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. In a letter dated 13 March 2019 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([S/2019/234](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel, on behalf of his Government, stated that the Israel Defense Forces had exposed a "Hezbollah terror network" ranging "from the town of Hader, at the northern end of the Golan Heights, to the towns of Arneh and Khan Arnabeh and to Quneitra".

29. In his interview on 26 January, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah stated that, should Hizbullah be invited to discuss the national defence strategy, it would be ready

to do so “without prior conditions and at any time,” stating that it had already presented its vision on the matter in 2006.

30. The security situation in the Palestine refugee camps remained relatively calm during the reporting period. However, several Palestinian armed groups continued to operate in the country, inside and outside the Palestine refugee camps. On 15 October, violent clashes broke out in the Mieh Mieh camp between supporters of the Ansarullah Movement and Fatah, involving the use of heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. Six fighters were reportedly killed, and 26 people were injured in the clashes. The fighting resulted in the displacement of most residents of the camp, extensive damage and the temporary suspension of operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The President of Lebanon stated on 25 October that the Lebanese armed forces would continue to take the measures necessary to maintain security and stability in the area. A ceasefire went into effect on 28 October. In a visit to the town of Mieh Mieh on 30 October, the former Minister of Information, Melhem Riachy, reportedly stated that “it is unacceptable to have weapons outside the State [...]. The Lebanese army, which is shouldering its responsibilities to the fullest, is the one responsible in this matter.” A shoot-out that reportedly involved the son of fugitive Bilal Abu Arqub, affiliated with the Bilal Badr extremist group, left four wounded in Ein El Hilweh on 15 March.

31. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps also continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 in the context of the national dialogue, and confirmed at subsequent sessions, to disarm Palestinian militias outside the camps within a six-month period, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country.

32. On 21 January, the intelligence branch of the Lebanese armed forces stated that it had arrested an individual who it said had carried out reconnaissance and monitoring operations on behalf of Israeli intelligence agencies in the case of the attempted assassination of a Hamas official, as mentioned in my report of May 2018 (S/2018/480).

33. UNRWA continued its efforts to deliver essential health, education, relief and social services to Palestine refugees in Lebanon, in the face of serious funding shortfalls. The Agency has called for a total of \$1.2 billion to fund its vital core services and life-saving humanitarian aid for 5.4 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In its ministerial statement, the Government pledged to “work with sister and friendly countries on finding a solution to the funding crisis” of the Agency.

II. Observations

34. I welcome the formation of the Government of Lebanon and encourage Lebanese leaders to use the present momentum to deliver on the priorities set forth in the ministerial statement, the dividends of which Lebanese citizens are keen to see. The nomination of four women to the Government is notable and I reiterate my call for political leaders to further pursue efforts to enhance the full and effective participation of women in Lebanese politics.

35. I note the stated intention of the Government of Lebanon to focus its efforts on addressing the economic situation as a matter of priority. This is essential in order for Lebanon to address the challenges it currently faces. It is also important that other priorities be addressed, notably on the development of a national defence strategy

through a Lebanese-led, Lebanese-owned process in line with the country's international obligations. I reiterate my earlier encouragement to the President to spearhead a renewed dialogue on a national defence strategy and to political leaders to support him in that endeavour. It is important that such a dialogue addresses the need to achieve a State monopoly over the possession and use of weapons and the use of force, a crucial issue that stands at the heart of the sovereignty and the political independence of Lebanon.

36. The renewed commitment to the disassociation policy, as expressed in the ministerial statement, is welcome. I call again on the Government and Lebanese parties and actors to abide by the disassociation policy and the Baabda Declaration in their actions.

37. Hizbullah's continued involvement in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is not only in breach of the disassociation policy and the principles of the Baabda Declaration, but also carries a risk of entangling Lebanon in the regional conflicts and poses risks to the stability of Lebanon and the region. Furthermore, it demonstrates the failure of Hizbullah to disarm and its refusal to be accountable to the very State institutions that the implementation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#) was intended to strengthen.

38. The widespread presence of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the existence of armed militias, continues to undermine security and stability in Lebanon. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern. I note with concern the renewed claim by the Secretary-General of Hizbullah that Hizbullah possesses precision weapons.

39. I call again upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any military activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). It is critical that the Accords be preserved and implemented by all to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among Lebanese citizens and to strengthen the institutions of the State. All concerned must contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State. The State should increase its efforts to achieve a monopoly over the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout its territory. I continue to urge the Government and the armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

40. The reported involvement of Hizbullah, as well as that of other Lebanese elements, in fighting elsewhere in the region remains a concern. I call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah to encourage the transformation of that armed group into a solely civilian political party, and its disarmament, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#), in the best interests of Lebanon and of regional peace and security.

41. I condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. They undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security and State institutions and generate anxiety among the civilian population. I renew my calls for Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, as well as to cease immediately its overflights of Lebanese airspace. The use of Lebanese airspace by the Israel Defense Forces to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerning, because of the risk it poses of a wider confrontation. Any overflight of Lebanese airspace by Israeli military aircraft is a

violation of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity and of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

42. The continued support of the international community to the Lebanese armed forces, the internal security forces and other security institutions is welcome and a key instrument in building the monopoly over the use of force by the State. I encourage donors to follow through on their pledges at the second Rome conference on Lebanon.

43. I express my gratitude for the commitments of sustained funding to Lebanon expressed at the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, including Lebanon. I encourage donors to continue to support the remarkable generosity and hospitality of Lebanon in hosting Syrian refugees, including by delivering promptly on their pledges at the conference, while also working actively to create the conditions to facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrian refugees.

44. The renewed commitment of the Government, through its ministerial statement, to preventing tensions in Palestine refugee camps is positive. It is also critical that the maintenance of weapons by non-Lebanese militias be addressed and that the earlier decisions of the national dialogue be implemented. This includes following up on the efforts of the Government of Lebanon to deal with “quality-of-life, social and humanitarian issues with regard to Palestine refugees living inside and outside refugee camps,” as decided by the national dialogue in 2006.

45. I encourage donors to renew and sustain their efforts to provide funding to UNRWA so that it can continue to perform its essential role and deliver services, which are vital to the dignity and security of Palestine refugees. Such efforts are without prejudice to the need for the just resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

46. As the Special Tribunal for Lebanon moves forward in its proceedings, I reiterate that it is in the interests of Lebanon and in line with its obligations under international law to ensure that those behind terrorist acts, including political assassinations, are held accountable and that violence is not committed with impunity. I welcome the Government’s commitment to establishing the truth in that connection, as expressed in the ministerial statement.

47. Lebanon faces an opportunity to make progress on the outstanding provisions of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#), including by addressing the maintenance of weapons outside State control. I count on the continued commitment of the Government of Lebanon to its international obligations and I call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#), [1680 \(2006\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#). The United Nations will continue its efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.