



Security Council

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Implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

Thirty-seventh semi-annual report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. The present report is the thirty-seventh semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and assessment of the implementation of the resolution since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (S/2022/749), on 11 October 2022, and covers developments until 24 March 2023.

II. 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 on its implementation. A number of provisions, including with regard 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 help 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. The political impasse in Lebanon persisted as economic conditions in the country continued to deteriorate. On 29 September 2022, the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, convened the first parliamentary session to elect a successor to the President, Michel Aoun, whose term in office ended on 31 October 2022. No candidate received the required two-thirds majority, 86 of 128 votes, in the first round of voting. The second round of voting, in which, according to the Constitution, only an absolute majority of 65 votes is required to win the presidency, did not take place owing to a lack of quorum. Subsequent sessions did not yield any candidate who could secure the majority vote. Members of Parliament from Hezbollah, the Amal Movement and the Free Patriotic Movement repeatedly cast blank votes, with



Hizbullah calling for a President who would not “backstab the resistance”. After 11 parliamentary sessions to vote for a president, no President has been elected.

5. After the eleventh parliamentary session, held on 19 January 2023, two Members of Parliament – one woman and one man – affiliated with emerging groups began an open-ended sit-in in the Parliament to press for an end to the presidential impasse. On 11 February, citing the Constitution, which provides that Parliament “meeting to elect the President of the Republic shall be considered an electoral body and not a legislative assembly”, 46 parliamentarians announced that they would boycott legislative sessions until a new President was elected. They were Members of Parliament from the Lebanese Forces, the Kata’ib Party, emerging groups and independent figures. The Free Patriotic Movement later also announced its boycott of such sessions.

6. Maintaining that presidential prerogatives could not be devolved to a caretaker Government, the then President signed a decree on 30 October 2022 asserting that he deemed the Government of the caretaker Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, to have resigned. Considering that his Government had de facto resigned after parliamentary elections had been held in May 2022, the caretaker Prime Minister said that the decree “lacked any constitutional value”. On 3 November, the Parliament convened and affirmed “the need to move forward in accordance with constitutional principles by the Prime Minister-designate to carry out his duties as a caretaker Government”. Subsequently, on 5 December, the caretaker Prime Minister convened the caretaker Cabinet for the first time since the parliamentary elections to address “urgent and essential files”. Eight ministers affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement boycotted the meeting, declaring it unconstitutional. The caretaker Cabinet convened again on 18 January and 6 and 27 February to address other urgent matters. Six ministers, including five from the Free Patriotic Movement, continued to boycott those Cabinet sessions.

7. The International Support Group for Lebanon, in a statement released on 2 March, expressed grave concern about “the ramifications of a prolonged presidential vacuum” and urged “the political leadership and Members of Parliament to assume their responsibilities, act in line with the Constitution, and uphold the Taef agreement by electing a new President without further delay”. The Group warned that “the status quo is unsustainable. It is paralyzing the State at all levels ... and eroding people’s confidence in state institutions as hardships mount”. It further noted that “expediting the adoption of laws necessary to restore confidence in the banking sector and the harmonization of exchange rates are vital to stem socioeconomic deterioration”. The Group had released statements, on 5 October and 2 November 2022, urging the Lebanese Parliament to swiftly elect a president “who will unite the Lebanese people”.

8. On 6 February, France convened a meeting in Paris, including Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, during which the participants discussed the situation in Lebanon. On 13 February, representatives of the five countries met with the caretaker Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament and the caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abdallah Bou Habib, respectively, to brief them on the Paris meeting. According to a statement issued by the caretaker Prime Minister after his meeting, the representatives had stressed that “real support for Lebanon will begin after the election of the future president, and then follow-up on the implementation of the required reforms”. In the statement, the caretaker Prime Minister noted that the representatives had said that “not electing a new president will lead to a review [by their countries] of all relations with Lebanon”.

9. On 23 January, the lead investigator examining the Beirut port explosion of August 2020, Judge Tarek Bitar, resumed his probe, which had been stalled since

December 2021 following the filing of legal challenges against him. He ordered the release of 5 of the 17 detained suspects and filed charges against eight additional senior security, customs and judicial officials. The charged individuals, together with several former ministers who had previously been charged, were summoned by the judge for questioning in February.

10. On 25 January, the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation, Judge Ghassan Oueidat, who was among the senior officials charged by Judge Bitar and who had recused himself from the case in 2020 owing to a conflict of interest, charged Judge Bitar with “abusing power”. He directed all security services to disregard any correspondence from Judge Bitar, imposed a travel ban on the judge and summoned him for questioning. In addition, Judge Oueidat ordered the release of all 17 suspects detained in the case. Judge Bitar rejected the charges brought against him and refused to step down, saying that the Public Prosecutor had “no authority to charge” him. The Higher Judicial Council was to discuss the legality of the measures taken by Judge Bitar, but meetings scheduled for 26 January and 7 February were postponed owing to a lack of quorum. On 6 February, Judge Bitar indefinitely postponed all interrogation sessions that had been scheduled, citing the lack of cooperation by the public prosecution.

11. On 7 March, at the fifty-second session of the Human Rights Council, 38 countries signed a joint statement calling for “a swift, independent, impartial, credible and transparent investigation” into the Beirut port explosion. They expressed concern that the investigation by Lebanon to date had been “hampered by systemic obstruction, interference, intimidation, and a political impasse”. They called upon the Lebanese authorities to “uphold the right of the victims to effective remedy and to adequate, effective, and prompt reparation for harm suffered” and urged Lebanon to “abide by its international human rights obligations to take all necessary measures to safeguard, in law and in practice, the full independence and impartiality of the Lebanese judiciary”.

12. In the case of the deadly clashes in Tayyounah, Beirut, on 14 October 2021 (see [S/2022/345](#), para. 7), the prosecution of 68 individuals charged remains pending. On 12 October 2022, the military court released the remaining suspects who were still being detained in relation to the case. No progress has been made in the investigation into the killing of Lokman Slim, on 4 February 2021 (see [S/2021/396](#), para. 11). On 2 February, the Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the independence of judges and lawyers, the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the situation of human rights defenders, respectively, expressed their deep concern and stressed that it was “incumbent on the Lebanese authorities to fully investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of this heinous crime”.

13. On 27 October, the maritime boundary between Israel and Lebanon was established by means of an exchange of separate letters with the United States. In separate letters also dated 27 October addressed to me, the Governments of Lebanon and Israel provided the coordinates of the maritime boundary to be deposited with the United Nations. A few days earlier, in a press statement on 19 October, the Security Council called that “a major step, which will contribute to the stability, the security, and the prosperity of the region”. In a speech on 6 March 2023, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, said that the agreement did not include “any normalization nor security guarantees nor security commitments”.

14. On 8 February, following the earthquakes that had struck the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, a Lebanese ministerial delegation, led by the caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bou Habib, visited Damascus to express solidarity and explore earthquake relief efforts.

15. In its resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request of the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border, noting that such measures would constitute a significant step towards asserting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon and improving the relations between the two countries.

16. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain critical to enable proper border control and management and to prevent smuggling, including with regard to the movement of people, goods and, potentially, arms. 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 \(2006\)](#).

17. 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 report on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) of 30 October 2007 ([S/2007/641](#)).

18. Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line,¹ in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

19. During the reporting period, uncrewed aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israel Defense Forces continued to fly over Lebanon, in violation of Lebanese territorial sovereignty and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

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

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

21. On 14 December, a peacekeeper was killed and three others were injured when a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) convoy was attacked in Mazra'at al-Aqibiyah outside the area of operations, while moving to the Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut. Lebanese officials swiftly condemned the attack and offered condolences. The United Nations, Ireland and Lebanon each launched separate investigations into the incident (see [S/2023/184](#)).

22. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 31 January ([S/2023/74](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel expressed "great concern regarding the situation in southern Lebanon and in particular the ongoing attacks against ... UNIFIL". He noted that "these disturbing developments ... constitute grave violations of Security Council resolutions [1701 \(2006\)](#) and [1559 \(2004\)](#), among others".

23. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 17 February ([S/2023/120](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel expressed "great concern regarding the alarming ongoing construction of unlawful military

¹ Lebanon requests the amendment of the reference to "northern Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the blue line", as it is usually described in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, and the adoption, in all reports and documents issued by the United Nations within this context, of the name to which Lebanon referred in the two identical letters contained in documents [A/77/708-S/2023/49](#) as follows: "the occupied lands in the outskirts of the town of Al-Mari, which partly includes the urban expansion of the village of Ghajar".

outposts by Hezbollah along the Blue Line”. He stated that “the Government of Lebanon should dismantle and remove immediately all Hezbollah outposts in southern Lebanon ... and prevent further construction of such facilities along the Blue Line”.

24. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 1 March (S/2023/176), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Lebanon called the allegations in the two Israeli letters “baseless” and “distortions of the facts”. She stated that the allegations “undermine the positive atmosphere and relative stability created by the understanding on maritime border demarcation”, and “are intended to provide cover for [Israel’s] repeated daily air, land and sea violations of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty”.

25. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued their operations to maintain security and stability in the country, including through their counter-terrorism and anti-trafficking activities, under difficult circumstances. On 16 February, three soldiers were killed during a raid by the Forces against drug traffickers in Hawr Ta’la, Baalbek-Hirmil.

26. Member States continued to provide bilateral support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and State security institutions, given the ongoing economic crisis in the country. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 2650 (2022), a financial transfer mechanism has been set up by the United Nations Development Programme, in coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, to facilitate the transfer of donor support to provide livelihood support to personnel of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces. Such support helps to reverse the rate of attrition in the armed forces due to economic hardships and to increase morale and the readiness of those institutions to operate.

27. The economic situation continued to deteriorate in Lebanon. The Lebanese pound fell to a rate of below 140,000 pounds to the United States dollar on 21 March on the parallel market, compared with 38,000 pounds to the dollar at the end of the previous reporting period. On 1 February, Lebanon changed its long-standing official exchange rate from 1,507.5 to 15,000 pounds to the dollar, a devaluation of almost 90 per cent. On 16 February, as the value fell to 80,000 pounds to the dollar, dozens of demonstrators set fire to several banks in Beirut and ransacked a number of banks in Tripoli. Protesters blocked roads in several parts of the country. Concern over security prompted the Central Security Council to hold an emergency meeting on 17 February. On 21 and 22 March, protestors blocked roads across the country to denounce the deteriorating living conditions. On 22 March, hundreds of retired military personnel demonstrated in front of the Parliament building as joint parliamentary committees convened to discuss the financial situation in the country. Security forces fired tear gas to disperse the demonstrators.

28. The current multi-pronged crisis has exacerbated poverty rates, inequality and unemployment. To protest the decline in their purchasing power due to currency depreciation and inflation, thousands of public sector employees have been observing intermittent strikes during the past two years. This includes public school teachers who have been on a nationwide strike since January 2023 to demand salary adjustments, forcing the closure of all public schools. The dire situation has led to the steady decline of public institutions in Lebanon, severely undermining their ability and effectiveness to respond to the needs of Lebanese citizens.

29. Lebanese authorities have been calling for the repatriation of Syrian refugees and for international assistance for those refugees to be provided inside the Syrian Arab Republic instead of Lebanon. Following the announcement by the then President, on 16 October, that Lebanon would start sending batches of Syrian refugees back to the Syrian Arab Republic, two government-organized return movements were

conducted on 26 October and 5 November, reportedly with 511 and 190 returnees, respectively. On 3 December, at the conclusion of his three-day visit to Lebanon, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, called for sustained support for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and vulnerable Lebanese citizens. He pledged to continue to work towards long-term solutions for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the region.

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

30. 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.

31. 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.

32. There has been no tangible progress made 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.

33. 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, which consider that those issues are destabilizing factors in the country and 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.

34. 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 ability of the State to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory.

35. Unauthorized weapons, including light machine guns, assault rifles, pistols and hunting weapons, were observed by UNIFIL at the firing ranges in Zibqin, Dayr Amis, Qantarah and Frun in southern Lebanon. The firing ranges are outside State control.

36. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the Palestine refugee camps 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, 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.

37. There was an increase in armed clashes in the camps during the reporting period. On 24 October, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested nine individuals and seized weapons and ammunition in an operation in Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. In protest, some camp residents forced the temporary closure of facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). On 12 November, a dispute between groups affiliated with Fatah and Jund al-Sham, an Islamist faction, in Ein El Hilweh camp escalated into heavy shooting, resulting in one fatality and damage to a school operated by UNRWA. On 20 and 23 November, armed clashes in Rashidieh camp near Tyre resulted in three injuries and the temporary closure of UNRWA installations. On 19 December, armed clashes in Shatila camp in Beirut resulted in one fatality and the temporary closure of one

UNRWA school. On 27 January, armed clashes in Beddawi camp resulted in one injury. On 2 March, armed clashes between groups from Fatah and Asbat al-Ansar, an Islamist faction, in Ein El Hilweh camp resulted in one fatality and the temporary closure of UNRWA schools and health centres and the suspension of solid waste management.

III. Observations

38. The multi-pronged crisis in Lebanon can only be addressed through the election of a President of the Republic, the formation of a fully empowered Government and the implementation of comprehensive reforms, in order to respond to the needs and aspirations of the Lebanese people. I note with deep concern that, to date, Lebanon remains without a President and has a caretaker Cabinet with limited powers and a fragmented parliament. I am increasingly concerned about the impact on the effective functioning of State institutions. It is therefore vital that Lebanese political leaders prioritize the national interest and work together to break the current impasse, in the interest of all communities in Lebanon. I again appeal to Lebanese Members of Parliament to assume their constitutional duty to elect a new President without further delay. The importance of a free and fair presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence is noted clearly in resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

39. I condemn in the strongest terms the attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers in Mazra'at al-Aqibiyah and extend my condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of the peacekeeper who was killed in the incident. The safety and security of peacekeepers must be ensured, and those who attack or threaten them must be held accountable. Incidents such as this offer a vivid reminder of the risks posed by the widespread presence of weapons outside the control of the State and by the spread of disinformation.

40. I welcome the resolution by Lebanon and Israel of their maritime boundary dispute and the establishment of their maritime boundary, under the mediation of the United States. This diplomatic breakthrough marks a positive development that enhances stability and prosperity for both countries and the region. Moreover, it shows the importance of Lebanese political leaders working together. I ask that Lebanese leaders once again demonstrate unity in tackling the multiple challenges that the country is facing, including in implementing the prior actions agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

41. I remain concerned at the lack of progress on the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). I again encourage relevant Lebanese actors to reinvigorate efforts towards an inclusive national dialogue to address the outstanding issues.

42. Furthermore, the dire living conditions in Lebanon pose security risks to the country by exacerbating tensions and increasing the risk of social unrest. I commend the efforts of the armed forces to meet those multiple security challenges throughout the country. In that regard, I stress the importance of further and increased international support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and State security institutions, for the security and stability of Lebanon. I thank all those who have been assisting these institutions at a time of enormous pressure and encourage all partners to contribute to that effort, including through the financial transfer mechanism set up pursuant to paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution [2650 \(2022\)](#).

43. The self-acknowledged maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a

matter of grave concern. Calls from sections of the Lebanese population for the full implementation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#) and for the rejection of the possession of arms outside State authority indicate that the maintenance of weapons by Hizbullah remains a divisive issue within Lebanese society.

44. The Lebanese 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 groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

45. I again call upon all parties not to engage in any military activity in 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 renewed confrontation among Lebanese citizens and to strengthen the institutions of the State. All parties concerned must contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State.

46. The continued, self-acknowledged involvement of Hizbullah in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is not only in breach of the disassociation policy and the principles of the Baabda Declaration of 2012, but also carries the risk of entangling Lebanon in regional conflicts and undermining the stability of Lebanon and of 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. The reported involvement of Hizbullah and that of other Lebanese elements in fighting elsewhere in the region remains of concern.

47. Countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah should encourage the disarmament of the group and its transformation into a solely civilian political party, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#) and in the best interests of Lebanon and of regional peace and security.

48. In that regard, it is important that decisions taken from the earlier national dialogue be implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

49. I strongly condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as they undermine the credibility of Lebanese security and State institutions and give rise to 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 the adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and to immediately cease its violations of Lebanese airspace. The repeated alleged use of Lebanese airspace by the Israel Defense Forces to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerning and poses a risk for regional stability.

50. The independence of the judiciary in Lebanon must be respected. Delays in the investigations of the Beirut port explosion, the assassination of Lokman Slim, the Tayyunah clashes and other cases only erode people's trust in State institutions and the rule of law. I therefore reiterate my call for a swift, impartial, thorough and transparent investigation into each of those cases in order to deliver justice to the victims and their families, hold the perpetrators accountable and restore people's confidence in the judicial system of Lebanon.

51. I am thankful to Lebanon for continuing to host the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. A robust and united response, including from the international

community, is vital to address the rising needs of refugees and host communities. I call upon the international community to continue to provide the necessary support, including through increased resettlement quotas, and for Lebanese authorities to help promote social stability. Application of legal and procedural safeguards, notably the principle of non-refoulement, remains vital.

52. The Palestine refugee community continues to suffer owing to security risks within the camps, as well as the overall deterioration of the economic situation of the refugees. It is therefore vital that UNRWA receive consistent and sufficient funding to ensure that it can meet the protection needs of the Palestine refugee community. The role of UNRWA in maintaining stability in the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon is more critical now than ever and vital to the dignity and security of Palestine refugees. Such efforts are without prejudice to the need for a just resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

53. 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 in support of the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.
