



Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam
Permanent Representative of Lebanon
to the United Nations**

**at the
Security Council**

**The Situation in the Middle East,
including the Palestinian question**

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Check Against Delivery

*Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017*

Madam President,

Allow me to start by thanking you for organizing this timely meeting and to express my delegation's deep appreciation to Mr. Robert Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, for his comprehensive briefing.

Madam President,

We meet today, a few days after the adoption of a PRST on July 10, in which all members around this table expressed "deep concern at all violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and calls on all parties to fully respect Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence within its internationally recognized borders in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions."

While my delegation expresses its appreciation for your reiterated calls for full respect of Lebanon's sovereignty, I stand before you today to remind you that the basic foundations of SC resolution 1701 and of this PRST are challenged on a daily basis by Israeli jet fighters. This has been highlighted by the Secretary-General in para 9 of his latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701, where he stated that "during the period from 3 to 5 May alone UNIFIL counted 49 Israeli fighter jets violating Lebanese airspace." UNIFIL and my Government protested these violations in the strongest terms and called for their immediate cessation.

Need I also remind you that Israel persists in violating the territorial integrity of my country by occupying the Shebaa farms and Kfarshouba hills? Need I remind you as well that Israel delays in even responding to the plan proposed by UNIFIL for ending Israel's occupation of the Northern part of Ghajjar. It is indeed high time that Israel withdraw from the remaining occupied Lebanese territories.

Moreover, it is my privilege, once again, to recognize the determination of TCCs and UNIFIL men and women, and to commend their relentless efforts in helping maintain stability and security in the South of Lebanon. Their determination matches Lebanon's commitment to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701.

Madam President,

Concerning the situation in Syria, let me thank you one more time for the concerns expressed in said PRST regarding "the marked increase of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon" which violates my country's sovereignty and threatens to destabilize it. It is a well-known fact that since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, my country adopted a policy of disassociation aiming at safeguarding Lebanon's internal unity and stability from regional conflicts; a policy which has been reaffirmed in the Baabda declaration adopted by the National dialogue Committee on June 11, 2012.

However, disassociation from the Syrian conflict could not, and did not, mean disassociating Lebanon from its responsibilities towards our Syrian brothers and its obligation under International Law and International Humanitarian Law. As I told you last week, Lebanon will not close its borders, will not turn back refugees, and will continue to provide assistance to them, within available means. Yet, let me one more time stress that Lebanon will not be able, within its scarce and diminishing resources, to cope alone with the increase influx of Syrian refugees. Hence, our repeated appeal for the International Community to share the burden and to intensify its direct support to Lebanon, politically and financially.

Turning now to the main subject of this meeting, I would like to commend the efforts of US Secretary of State John Kerry for a resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in the hope that they will lead to a just and lasting peace which, in our view, can only be based on the principles and rules of International Law, relevant decisions of the United Nations, the Madrid parameters, and the Arab peace initiative.

Still, let us be loud and clear: the main danger facing such negotiations is the continuation of provocative Israeli actions capable of undermining it. To protect these negotiations, they ought to be completely stopped. Obviously, there is no better example of such actions than the unabated construction in the past months of Israeli settlements at an unprecedented rate, let alone the approval of new settlement units, the latest being 1169 units this past June and about 900 so far this month - and how not to mention the ongoing acts of land confiscation, attacks on property, and settler violence? As to the prospects for the success of these negotiations, the issue was eloquently framed in the editorial of the leading Israeli paper, Haaretz, on the 21st of this month: "The main responsibility for moving the talks ahead rests on Israel. Only Israel can put an end to the occupation, which is the key to everything else."

Finally, reference has been made in this session to the EU's adding of what it labeled "the military wing" of Hezbollah to its terrorist list. My country, as expressed yesterday by President Michel Suleiman, hopes that "the EU would re-examine its position, on the basis of avoiding hasty decisions, of safeguarding the stability in Lebanon, and of confirming the fundamental options under discussion in the National Dialogue Committee mainly dealing with the terms of the Ba'abda declaration and the Presidential plan for a National Defense Strategy".

Here, it is also clearly fitting to remind this council that the same EU had issued on the 19th of this month a landmark "Directive" barring cooperation with, and financial support for, Israeli entities and projects beyond the 1967 line, in the occupied territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. It might be a "small step" as many have said, in view of the "guideline" nature of this EU instrument; but it's indeed an important step, and in the right direction. We strongly welcome it, and seize this occasion to ask whether it is not high time for this council as well to send a similar message indicating that continued occupation in violation of International Law can no longer benefit from impunity.