



**Statement**

**by**

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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*

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Mr. President,

Allow me to start by welcoming you among us today and to congratulate your country for assuming the Presidency of the Council for this month. I would also like to commend the Permanent Mission of France for its excellent stewardship of the Council in December.

Mr. President,

Last July, when we spoke before this Council, we commended 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. However, we also said:

“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”.

In October, we sounded the alarm anew drawing the attention of this Council one more time to the dangers of the unrelenting Israeli settlement activities on the prospects for the Palestinian Israeli negotiations and we called on you to condemn them in the strongest terms.

Mr. President,

While this Council remained silent, the roar of the Israeli bulldozers destroying Palestinian homes in Jerusalem and uprooting olive trees in the West Bank to pave the way for still more settlements could be clearly heard. And as it has already been mentioned, the Israeli authorities announced earlier this month their intention to build 1, 400 new housing units in the occupied territories.

Mr. President,

We are sure that you realize that we are at a historic crossroads. To say the least, the future of the negotiations has undoubtedly been put in jeopardy by the unabated settlement activity. The silence of your Council does not serve the cause of peace. To save the prospects for peace in our part of the world you ought to make yourself heard. For the sake of peace, we urge you to act with no delay.

Mr. President,

Let me turn now to another challenge facing this Council.

Last week on January 15, and during the Second International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria hosted by the government of Kuwait, the figures spoke for themselves on the magnitude of the Syrian tragedy: Over 120,000 killed including about 11,000 children, 9.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 6.5 million internally displaced, and 2.2 million refugees in neighboring countries. It is an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in recent history. Lebanon welcomes the generous pledges made during this conference and will continue to work closely with the donor community to alleviate the sufferings of the refugees as well as that of their host communities.

As the conflict unfolds in Syria, the flow of refugees into Lebanon continues unabated at an average of 3,000 a day. Months ago their number exceeded 1 million, which is almost one quarter of the population of my country. Clearly, this has begun to have an “existential” dimension in Lebanon which is the smallest among host countries while having the highest number of refugees whether relative to the population of these countries or in absolute terms.

Mr. President,

The suffering of the Syrians in Syria must end and the flow of Syrian refugees must stop.

It is high time that the international community assumes its humanitarian responsibilities and acts in one voice to ensure humanitarian corridors for the delivery of aid in Syria and to establish camps within Syria and on its borders which could also allow for a dignified and gradual return of Syrian refugees from host countries to their own.

To all those who may consider this to be unrealistic, allow me to say the following: While aware of its humanitarian responsibilities and legal obligations, Lebanon has kept its borders open to all those fleeing the horrors of violence and destruction in Syria, and will continue to do so; and what is unrealistic here is not to acknowledge that Lebanon can no longer cope alone with the pressures and burdens resulting from this situation.

Moreover, since this Council succeeded in unanimously adopting resolution 2118 on the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, is it unrealistic to hope that it could still show similar commitment in addressing the humanitarian situation there?

More importantly, on the eve of the date set for the Geneva II conference, is it unrealistic to also hope that this same international leadership will be renewed to insure the full implementation of the June 2012 Geneva Communique and its Action Plan in order to help fulfill the aspirations of the Syrian people and to put an end to their ongoing ordeal?

Mr. President,

Despite all the challenges facing my country, Lebanon remains committed to the full implementation of SC resolution 1701, and stresses the need for you to act swiftly to put an immediate end to the systematic Israeli violations of Lebanon's sovereignty by land, air and sea. My delegation have kept you informed of these violations and requested that its letters to that effect be circulated as official documents of the United Nations. The latest of these was on January 9, when we submitted a complaint against Israel for launching an electronic warfare on Lebanon. We informed you that Israel increased the number of sites, towers, antennas and other monitoring, espionage and surveillance devices that have been installed along the Lebanese border. We called on this Council to assume its responsibilities in "the maintenance of peace and security" by condemning such blatant violations of International Law and taking the necessary measures to put an end to them.

Mr. President,

Recently, my Country was also the victim of several terrorist attacks, from the targeting of the Iranian Embassy, to the assassination of former Minister Mohammad Chatah, to the car bomb in the Southern suburbs of Beirut, and to the attack in Hermel. Time and again, this Council condemned these attacks and stressed the need to bring the perpetrators to justice. Lebanon expresses its deep appreciation for your continued support to its stability and security.

Furthermore, this Council welcomed last week the beginning of the trial proceedings of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and stressed the vital importance of combating impunity for the long-term stability and security in Lebanon. In turn, the President of the Republic of Lebanon, General Michel Sleiman clearly stated that: "the start of the trials was a sure first step toward uncovering the truth behind the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and would ensure that the perpetrators do not think that they could evade justice."

Finally, the launching of the International Support Group for Lebanon in September was based on the consensus articulated by the presidential statement adopted in July by this Council which stressed "the need for strong, coordinated international support for Lebanon to help it continue to withstand the multiple current challenges to its security and stability". In this respect, the Group also underlined the importance of Lebanon's policy of disassociation and the Baabda declaration of June 12 2012.

Today, and more than ever, such support is needed to help shield Lebanon from the spillovers of the Syrian crisis and from my country being turned anew into a battle field of regional rivalries and proxy wars.

Thank you.