



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 24 July 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In a letter dated 24 June 2024 addressed to me, the caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon requested that the Security Council extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a further period of one year, in full accordance with resolution 1701 (2006) wording and provisions, and without any amendments to its mandate, its concept of operations and its rules of engagement. In this regard, and further to my report to the Security Council of 12 July 2024 (S/2024/548) on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), I hereby request the Council to consider the renewal of the mandate of UNIFIL, which is due to expire on 31 August 2024.

I am sure that the Security Council shares my profound concern at the continued exchanges of fire across the Blue Line since 8 October 2023, in repeated breach of the cessation of hostilities and in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Between 8 October 2023 and 30 June 2024, UNIFIL detected 15,101 trajectories, of which 12,459 were from south to north of the Blue Line and 2,642 from north to south. While most exchanges of fire have been confined to within a few kilometres of either side of the Blue Line, several strikes have reached as far as 130 km into Lebanon and 30 km into Israel.

The intensifying exchanges of fire along and, increasingly, well beyond the Blue Line have exacted a heavy toll. At least 107 civilian fatalities, including 16 children and 28 women, 3 journalists and 21 health workers, have been reported in Lebanon. In Israel, 12 civilian fatalities have been reported as a result of the exchanges of fire. On both sides of the Blue Line, tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced, and there has been widespread damage to civilian infrastructure, agricultural lands and forests and contamination from explosive remnants, all of which will have long-term negative implications. The intensification and geographical expansion of the exchanges of fire, coupled with increasingly bellicose rhetoric and threats of an all-out war, are deeply alarming. This cycle of escalation poses a grave threat to the stability of Lebanon, Israel and the region as a whole and has underlined the imperative for urgent steps towards a permanent ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel.

Both parties have yet to fulfil their respective obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). The exchanges of fire demonstrate the presence of armed personnel, assets and weapons outside the authority of the State other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line by Hizbullah and other non-State armed groups in violation of the resolution. The Government of Lebanon must take all actions necessary to ensure that there will be



no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State, including through the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1680 \(2006\)](#), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon. The outstanding elements of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), including the issue of the national defence strategy, must be addressed. It remains important that earlier decisions of the National Dialogue be implemented, especially those pertaining 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.

Israel must withdraw its forces from northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line and cease its violations of Lebanese airspace. UNIFIL detected approximately 3,426 such violations between 8 October 2023 and 20 June 2024, alongside 868 air attacks. I reiterate my condemnation of all violations of Lebanese sovereignty from Israel and call again for the Government of Israel to cease all overflights of Lebanese territory. I also condemn any violation of the sovereignty of Israel from Lebanon. Both parties must recommit to the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), including full respect for the Blue Line. UNIFIL, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and other key partners, is working with the parties on the fulfilment of their outstanding obligations, as well as in restoring stability and moving to addressing long-term solutions.

Prior to 8 October 2023, the situation in the UNIFIL area of operations had been tense but relatively stable. Tensions had largely focused on the occupied Shab'a Farms area, including with respect to tents placed by Hizbullah south of the Blue Line near Bastrah (see [S/2023/522](#), para. 7), until they were destroyed after 8 October. Israel Defense Forces and Lebanese Armed Forces personnel pointed weapons at each other during construction works by either the Israel Defense Forces or Lebanese individuals on several occasions in September. UNIFIL engaged with the parties to de-escalate tensions in connection with these incidents.

Northern Ghajar (Sector East) was also the site of tensions prior to 8 October. An explosion was recorded by UNIFIL on 6 July, with the Israel Defense Forces subsequently firing artillery rounds impacting north of the Blue Line near Kfar Shuba. Continued construction and engineering works near the Blue Line by the Israel Defence Forces, including 36.75 km of T-wall south of the Blue Line, saw several related incidents of weapons pointing between Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces personnel before 8 October. In each instance, UNIFIL acted to de-escalate tensions.

The presence and active use of weapons at unauthorized firing ranges outside State control represents a grave violation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#). As at 7 October 2023, there were five such firing ranges observed in the UNIFIL area of operations actively used on a number of occasions by gatherings of individuals in military-style attire with weapons. Despite repeated requests to the Government of Lebanon, visits to these sites were not facilitated. There was also no response to requests for access to other locations of interest, including installations close to the Blue Line and elsewhere in the area of operations. Due to the continued exchanges of fire and contamination of the terrain with unexploded ordnance and remnants of war, UNIFIL was not able to monitor locations of interest on a systematic basis after 8 October 2023. However, the mission has assessed that many locations of interest, including Green without Borders infrastructure, have been destroyed or damaged since 8 October. The Lebanese authorities must uphold their obligations to facilitate access by UNIFIL to all areas requested by the mission.

Since 8 October, the ability of UNIFIL to conduct patrols has been impacted due to force protection issues, with peacekeepers and the Lebanese Armed Forces

sheltering in bunkers in areas affected by shelling, initially for prolonged periods of time. Liaison with the parties has helped to ensure the mission's ability to conduct operational activities. The mission has focused on Blue Line and counter-rocket-launching patrols, as well as checkpoints in support of the Lebanese Armed Forces at entry points to the UNIFIL area of operations while foot patrols have been substantially curtailed and helicopter patrols suspended. Operations were conducted in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, where possible, including after 8 October.

Restrictions of the freedom of movement of UNIFIL continue to be of great concern. UNIFIL was subjected to restrictions to its freedom of movement on an average of nine occasions per month between October 2023 and June 2024, out of an average of 13,596 operational activities per month. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL in its entire area of operations and along the full length of the Blue Line is critical to the implementation of its mandate. I reiterate the need for the Government of Lebanon to address any such incidents.

I condemn all acts that endanger the safety and security of peacekeepers, and I am seriously concerned by injuries to peacekeepers and the impacts on UNIFIL positions. I urge all parties to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to respect the inviolability of United Nations premises at all times.

Between 8 October 2023 and 30 June 2024, UNIFIL registered 91 instances of impacts on United Nations positions, largely as a result of incidents in the vicinity, but some under direct fire. Seven peacekeepers have been injured. UNIFIL has continued to prioritize peacekeepers' safety and security, with enhanced security measures implemented. On 31 October 2023, the temporary relocation of non-programme-critical international and national United Nations personnel to north of the Litani River was approved. Flexible working arrangements for civilian personnel were implemented, and the mission has since operated with a lightened footprint. Since January 2024, the number of personnel in 14 of the most affected United Nations positions and 1 observation point close to the Blue Line, and the sites of intense exchanges of fire, has been temporarily reduced by one third. On 12 April, Tyre was designated a non-family duty station by the International Civil Service Commission.

Perpetrators of attacks against UNIFIL, including those responsible for the killing of a peacekeeper and injuries to three others near Aqibiyah on 14 December 2022, must be held to account. The role of the host Government remains crucial in helping to prevent attacks against UNIFIL in the future, including by helping to dispel misinformation and disinformation regarding the mission's mandate.

The liaison and coordination mechanisms established by UNIFIL with both parties are a vital tool in mitigating tensions and preventing further escalation. Operational- and tactical-level liaison and coordination has been actively carried out since 8 October, including to convey messages to facilitate access for humanitarian activities (including in cases of casualties), activities in support of civilian livelihoods, and force protection. Prior to 8 October, the tripartite forum served as a unique forum in which incidents along the Blue Line and violations of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) were addressed. While two such meetings were convened by UNIFIL in August and September 2023, none has been convened since October 2023. UNIFIL remains ready to convene a meeting, as agreed by the parties. I urge the parties to make effective use of liaison structures to avoid further escalation and to enable steps to be taken towards a restoration of the cessation of hostilities under the framework of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#).

Upon restoration of the cessation of hostilities, I encourage both parties to resume the process of marking the Blue Line on the ground and discussions with

respect to Lebanese “reservation areas”. These can serve as confidence-building and proactive conflict mitigation measures, without prejudice to future border negotiations, and as steps towards the long-term solutions envisaged in resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#).

A strong and well-resourced Lebanese Armed Forces remains integral to the full implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#). The strengthened presence and capability of the Lebanese Armed Forces south of the Litani River, as well as at sea, is and will continue to be an important confidence-building measure in line with resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#). The Lebanese Armed Forces have not engaged in the exchanges of fire across the Blue Line, while I note with concern that they have been impacted by the crossfire on a number of occasions.

Cooperation and coordination between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces remain crucial for the successful implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#). The continued resource constraints faced by the Lebanese Armed Forces affect not only operational capabilities but also progress in the strategic dialogue with UNIFIL aimed at increasing Lebanese Armed Forces deployments in southern Lebanon and extending State authority. Reiterating appreciation for the continued international support for Lebanon’s State security institutions, I also underscore the need for further demonstrable commitment by the Lebanese authorities to an effective and durable deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces to southern Lebanon.

At sea, I note that the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy continued to increasingly assume command functions for maritime interdiction operations, with support by the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force. In this regard, the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy increasingly assumed hailing and tracking duties in the central maritime corridor.

A fundamental activity in support of implementation of the mission’s mandated operational activities is strategic communications. UNIFIL has continued to proactively explain the mandate and role of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon, while underscoring the importance of the parties upholding their respective obligations. Countering misinformation and disinformation with respect to the mission’s mandate has been a continued focus of the mission’s strategic communications strategy. In addition, inaccurate or misleading reports, including with respect to the mission’s support for/relations with local communities, to the mission’s preparedness in the context of the deteriorating security situation, or to the mission’s impartiality, have been addressed by UNIFIL through interviews and background interactions with the media and relevant national authorities.

Noting that it is incumbent upon the parties to implement resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), it is of utmost priority that the parties urgently recommit to a restoration of the cessation of hostilities under the framework of the resolution and avail of diplomatic channels, including United Nations good offices, to avoid further suffering and the risk of a wider, devastating conflagration. Upon restoration of the cessation of hostilities, the priority remains for the parties to take the necessary steps towards a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution to the conflict as called for in resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#). UNIFIL, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, is ready to lend its full support to the parties in this process.

As at 4 July, UNIFIL comprised 10,024 military personnel, including 869 women. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force comprised five vessels with 554 of the Force’s military personnel, including 42 women. In addition, 49 military observers, including 10 women, from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization served with Observer Group Lebanon, under the operational command and control of UNIFIL. The civilian component of UNIFIL has 242 international and 547 national

staff. I am grateful to the 49 troop-contributing countries and continue to encourage them to increase the number of women deployed to UNIFIL.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL, Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL, for the work they are carrying out in southern Lebanon and for their commitment in the service of peace. I express my condolences to all those affected by the continued exchanges of fire in breach of the cessation of hostilities.

The General Assembly, by its resolution [78/305](#) of 28 June 2024, appropriated the amount of \$536.8 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. As at 17 July 2024, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNIFIL amounted to \$211.8 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$3,445.8 million. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 March 2024, and contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2023.

I would like to express my appreciation for the continued united and steadfast support of the Security Council to UNIFIL and its mandated activities. With the above information in mind, I recommend that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of 12 months, until 31 August 2025.

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Council.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**

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