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GETTING OUT OF THE PRESENT ISRAELI-LEBANESE CONFLAGRATION

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The present war-like situation between Israel and Lebanon necessitates decisive international action. This paper offers a short overview of positions taken by the International Community in the past (particularly its commitment to UN Resolution 1559), the positive impact achieved by international involvement in support of the partial implementation of UN Resolution 1559, and suggested guidelines to solve the present crisis on the basis of an international effort to be based on the full implementation of UN Resolution 1559.

1. The Role of International Legitimacy and the Legal Situation

The legal situation seems to be absolutely clear. The International Community has defined its policy towards Lebanon in UN Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426 (1978), 520 (1982) and resolution 1553 of 2004. In fulfillment hereof, Israel completely withdrew from southern Lebanon in May 2000. The UN confirmed that Israel had fully implemented its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 425. UN Special Envoy Terje Rod-Larsen went to Syria and asked President Assad if the Rajr area and the Sheba'a Farms were part of Lebanon or Syria, and his response was that it was part of Syria and that Israel should not withdraw. In partial fulfillment of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, Syria withdrew from Lebanon in 2005.

Sustaining international legitimacy would necessitate implementation of UN Resolution 1559 in all its parts, which includes: a. the disarmament of Hizbollah and b. the deployment of the Lebanese Army throughout the entire sovereign Lebanese territory, including of course southern Lebanon until the Israeli border.

Hisbollah attacks on Israel's sovereign territory, after Israel's complete withdrawal, presents an open act of war and documents that the international acceptance of the obstruction to full implementation of 1559 by the Hisbollah, Syria and Iran has created a destabilizing effect in the area, that either leads to an ongoing escalation of violence, or will have to lead, towards a determined local, regional and international stabilizing effort.

2. The Power of the International Community to implement UN Resolutions on the Ground

The International Community has played an important role in demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and has hereby contributed to the implementation of a further element of UN Resolution 1559. This was made possible by the fact that powerful internal Lebanese forces were willing to take up a vivid political struggle to achieve the withdrawal of Syrian forces from sovereign Lebanese territory. At present, internal Lebanese forces (the Sunni community, the Maronite and the Druze communities) have a similarly strong vested interest to implement the other two elements of UN Resolution 1559, i.e. to extend the sovereign control of the Lebanese army to its southern border, and disarm Hizbollah.

In order to pacify the situation, the International Community has a vested interest to support these tendencies. So far this has not been done, due to the fear of the weakness of the Lebanese government and fear of Syrian and Iranian military support to Hizbollah.

The present situation has complicated matters: military escalation will not permit a return to the *status quo ante* and the danger of the extension of the conflict to Syria and even beyond can not be excluded. On the other hand, the present crisis offers an opportunity for a solution and the creation of an international initiated and implemented stability building package.

3. The Lebanese Initiative

The Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, has come out with a four point plan which actually would be a move toward implementation of 1559 in all its parts. The Israeli response has been that the four points were substantially positive, as long as such a plan would not be merely declarative, but would be carried out.

It is evident that the Lebanese government does not have the power to implement its own plan and UN Resolution 1559 in all its parts. What is needed is the creation of an effective international support structure to achieve exactly this.

4. A Nine Point Stabilization Program

A detailed Stabilization Program will have to be prepared as soon as possible. Whereas the specific details still will have to be worked out, the contours of the Stabilization Program will have to be as follows:

- a. Return of Israeli hostages held by Hisbollah;
- b. Agreement on a complete and lasting ceasefire;
- c. The creation of an international support package for Lebanon to include:
 - i. Humanitarian assistance;
 - ii. Immediate economic assistance;
 - iii. Security assistance;
- d. The creation of an effective liaison mechanism between the Government of Lebanon and the International Community for assisting in the implementation of the Stabilization Program, with an additional oversight and monitoring mechanism, particularly regarding the process of disarmament of Hisbollah and the prevention of further arms deliveries to Lebanese militias;
- e. The preparation and implementation of a detailed plan to allow for the deployment of the Lebanese army to Lebanon's southern border with Israel, and a commensurate plan to disarm Hisbollah and integrate some of their para-military forces into the Lebanese army.
- f. The creation of an international MFO (Multilateral Force of Observers) to create an effective liaison, report and oversight mechanism with two functions: to assist in the process of disarmament of Hisbollah militants and the integration of some of their forces into the Lebanese army, and assist in supporting a necessary liaison structure between the Lebanese and the Israeli governments, in support of the Nine Point Stabilization Program;
- g. Define an agreed solution regarding control and sovereignty over the Rajr village and the Shaba'a farms;
- h. Define an agreed solution regarding outstanding water issues between Israel and Lebanon and;
- i. Create a cease-fire oversight structure, to include the representatives of the Governments of Lebanon, Israel, the US, Russia and France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

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