

Security Council Resolution 1701 / 2006

Examined with regard to the following aspects:

- ⇒ Neutrality
- ⇒ Civilian Aspects
- ⇒ Effectiveness

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IUIES April 2008**

Background on the Resolution

The history of the United Nations' presence in Lebanon started with the Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426 in 1978, after the Palestinian raids into Israel and the following violent response from Israel, who invaded Southern Lebanon. The Resolutions called upon Israel to cease its military action against the Palestinian armed groups and to withdraw from Southern Lebanon. They also decided the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The full withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon was completed in 2000, and according to a Lebanese request, UNIFIL continued to be deployed in Southern Lebanon as a Peacekeeping mission.

A new crisis started on 12 July 2006 when Hizbollah launched rockets from Southern Lebanon into Israeli, while at the same time, two Israeli soldiers were kidnapped in Israeli territory and three others were killed. The conflict erupted and the escalation of violence caused, in just a few days, there were hundreds of deaths and injuries on both sides. Resolution 1701 was adopted by the Security Council on 11 August 2006 and required the immediate end of violence and the withdrawal of Israel from Southern Lebanon (art.1-2). These requests have been addressed to both Israeli armed forces and Hizbollah, in order to allow UNIFIL and the Government of Lebanon to deploy their forces together to control the territory (art.2). The resolution stressed the importance of the integrity of the territory of Lebanon and its sovereignty, and asked Lebanon and Israel for a commitment to a long-term cease-fire (art.5).

How Neutral is the Resolution?

The text of the Resolution named different actors that have a role in the crisis. The two opponents, Israel and Hizbollah, have completely different status. The first one is a State, recognized at international level (of course, some states still do not recognize it), and has a regular army, an elected government, and a territory. Hizbollah is a political party within the Lebanese arena, but at the same time it has an organized and active militia, separated by the official armed forces of the Lebanese state. As a consequence, the Resolution was not balanced between the two conflicting parties (a State and a non-state actor). No political recognition was given to Hizbollah, which was mentioned only at the beginning of the text regarding the cessation of the violence. The provision of weapons was forbidden in Lebanon to actors different from the State Army and UNIFIL, while no restriction was given to Israel.

Concerning civilian aspects of the intervention, as we will see later on, the Resolution did not foresee interventions not covered by the military presence of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Army. The resolution was an immediate answer to the escalation of violence and there was no mention to a future passage of the mission of the UNIFIL from a peace keeping to a peacebuilding mission, even if further enhancements were intended. (art. 16).

The reports of UNIFIL mission state that the Blue Helmets are perceived as neutral by the population of Southern Lebanon, and they show generally a positive attitude.

UNIFIL maintains relations with local communities, providing humanitarian assistance, including medical services, limited engineering support and identification and disposal of unexploded ordnances.

Attention to Civilian Needs

In examining Resolution 1701 for its attention to remedying the effects on the civilian population resulting from the 2006 conflict between Israel and Lebanon, there are few indications for improving the circumstances for civilians in the long term. The resolution mostly addresses military and technical aspects of the agreement. These details include, but are not limited to: a ceasefire, disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, securing the borders of Lebanon, and the overall end of violence and hostility from both sides. Technical aspects of the peacekeeping efforts are mentioned, including the increase of troops in UNIFIL, the interim United Nations peacekeeping force. The agreement recognizes military authority of the Government of Lebanon, giving them the right to deploy forces in conjunction with UNIFIL, and states that the only weapons permitted are the ones authorized by the Government of Lebanon. Hizbollah, as well as all groups in Israel, are obligated to stop all attacks.

Some urgent concerns of the civilian population in the immediate aftermath of the conflict are addressed in various parts of the Resolution. On the first page, it is acknowledged that the conflict caused significant “damage to the civilian infrastructure” and that there were “hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons.” While the issue of the displaced persons was subsequently addressed in the document, there were no instructions on what was to be done to improve or rebuild the damage to the civilian infrastructure.

An example of the mention of these immediate civilian concerns is found in Paragraph 3, Page 3, under the mandate to increase of the UNIFIL troops to 15,000. In part ‘d’ they are also directed to “extend assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian population and safe return of displaced persons.” Page 4, Paragraph 12 instructs UNIFIL to protect civilians whose physical safety is threatened. In Paragraph 7 on Page 2, it is stated that all parties to the agreement must make sure that humanitarian aid can reach civilian populations and that displaced persons can return safely to their homes.

While it was very positive that these urgent civilian matters were addressed in the wake of the conflict’s end, long-term issues were almost ignored. The only slight instruction was given on Page 2, Paragraph 6, where the Resolution “calls on ‘the international community’ to take immediate steps to extend its financial assistance to the Lebanese people” and to “consider further assistance in the future to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Lebanon.” However, it is rather vague, not further specifying who in the international community was supposed to provide this assistance, and how the rebuilding of damaged areas and infrastructure in Lebanon was to be done.

Immediate needs of the civilian population in the aftermath of the conflict were addressed, but perhaps the issues in the long-term had not been significantly dealt with. Instructions were not strong and rather ambiguous. The issue was left open, with not enough attention paid to the fact that long-term programs were needed in order to improve Lebanon’s damaged economy, infrastructure, and society overall. More was needed to successfully bring Lebanon back to where it had been before the conflict.

The Effectiveness of Resolution 1701

In order to understand the effectiveness of Resolution 1701, we took a look at the Report of the Security Council on the Implementation of Resolution 1701, dated 28 February 2008. The report highlights the continued progress on the implementation of Resolution 1701, and areas of concern that continue to impede the establishment of a permanent ceasefire and long-term peace between parties. The areas covered include 1-The implementation of Resolution 1701, 2-Security and liaison arrangements, 3-Disarming Armed Groups, and 4-Land mines, so we will discuss each of these four areas below.

The humanitarian aspects remain without any progress, according to the report, specifically on the issue of the two kidnapped Israeli soldiers and Lebanese prisoners. The report reflects an optimistic point of view and forecasts a bright future for the resolution. The report evaluates the UN mission on many aspects:

1-The implementation of Resolution 1701:

The UNIFIL area was generally stable during the report period, nevertheless there were a number of serious incidents during this period which have raised the tensions in the area of operations. In particular, this was evident in some points of friction along the blue line; these incidents constitute violations of Resolution 1701 and undermine UNIFIL efforts to build trust and confidence between parties as well as with the population of southern Lebanon. For example, there were rockets that had hit northern Israel, causing minor damage on a main road, and on two occasions, the Israeli defense forces apprehended a Lebanese shepherd for the crossing of the blue line (he was released later). On two separate occasions, on 9 November 2007 and 3 February 2008, Lebanese civilians were involved in criminal operations to smuggle illegal substances and commercial goods from Lebanon into Israel. Both incidents occurred in the area of the village of Ghajar, along with a possible accomplice. UNIFIL completed its investigation into the incident and submitted its findings and conclusions to the parties. These two incidents around Ghajar reinforce the vital importance of the liaison and coordination arrangements agreed between UNIFIL and the two parties.

2-Security and liaison arrangements:

The regular tri-party meetings held by the UNIFIL force commander, the representative of the Lebanese armed forces, and the Israeli defense forces, remain a crucial mechanism to build confidence between parties, since the two parts continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to this forum which aims to prevent incidents and violations, enhance liaison, and increase coordination. Coordinated operations have increased both in number and complexity, resulting in enhanced monitoring and control over the UNIFIL area of operations. Now the area of

operations is effectively controlled by the combined presence of UNIFIL and Lebanese armed forces.

3-Disarming armed groups:

According to the government of Israel, Hizbollah has continued to construct its power; there is great concern because of reports that Hezbollah is rearming, which would pose serious challenges to the sovereignty and stability of the country.

4- Land mines:

The UN has made considerable effort towards the clearance and reduction of land mines. Since the end of the 2006 conflict, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre in South Lebanon has coordinated the clearance and reduction of 33 million square meters of contaminated land.

SOURCES

Resolution 1701 (2006). 11 August 2006, United Nations Security Council.

[http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1701%20\(2006\)](http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=S/RES/1701%20(2006)).

Report to the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Resolution 1701 (2006). 28 February 2008, United Nations Security Council.

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unifil/>.