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The situation in the Middle East

**Security Council
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**Letter dated 19 February 2002 from the Permanent
Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General**

I wish to draw your attention to the false allegations and accusations made in Israel's letter of 17 January 2002 (A/56/778-S/2002/79), and we elucidate hereunder the grounds on which they are made and provide our response to them.

I.

It must be said that the fact that Israel is occupying Lebanese and other Arab territories, remains in them in violation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and engages in murderous practices against their inhabitants on a daily basis is the very essence of terrorism. Those who offer resistance in Lebanon and the occupied Arab territories have a legitimate right to do so that is endorsed by the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions embodying international legality.

**II. The Israeli allegation that the resistance fired at Israeli
military aircraft on 15 January 2002**

The statements made by the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in Lebanon, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, 14 of which we attach as examples, reveal the fact that Israel daily violates Lebanese sovereignty with aerial incursions that the Secretary-General has described in his reports as "provocations", with all that this word implies.

We transmit herewith a report by the Lebanese liaison unit, endorsed by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), showing that Israeli aircraft were violating Lebanese airspace throughout the same afternoon of Tuesday, 15 January 2002 (document 1), as will be confirmed by UNIFIL. Anti-aircraft fire was directed at Israeli aircraft over Lebanon from inside Lebanese territory, and the anti-

aircraft fire followed the aircraft into Israeli airspace, as is required in situations involving response to military attack.

Including these violations and those previously reported by the United Nations, there have been a total of 977 Israeli aerial violations since Israel's withdrawal from most of Lebanon's territory, including 91 incidents in which the sound barrier was broken over Beirut and other Lebanese towns and villages (document 2). These violations have often alarmed schoolchildren and hospital patients, and there have been cases of hospitalization following sonic booms and mock attacks on a number of Lebanese towns and villages.

III. The Israeli allegations regarding the firing of Katyusha rockets and attacks on population centres

It should be pointed out that Israel's allegation that Katyusha rockets have been fired at population centres is false and that nothing of the kind has happened since Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon's territory in May 2000. During the time Israel was occupying Lebanon's South, however, its hostile operations would meet with a response from the Lebanese side. This had the consequence of bringing about the understanding of April 1996, which brought some protection for civilians on both sides at that time.

The allegation that Hizbullah is launching attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory is also untrue. The boundaries between Lebanon and Israel stretching from Naqurah to the Wazzani have not been violated by official Lebanese authorities or by the Lebanese resistance since the date Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon's territory, and Israeli territory has not in any way been the target of any military action from the Lebanese side from that time up to the present. This can be confirmed by UNIFIL.

The part [of the Blue Line] located in the Shab'a area, however, does not represent a boundary between Lebanon and Israel and it is in an area that falls between Syria and Lebanon and is occupied by Israel. Lebanon, of course, demands that Israel should withdraw from the Lebanese Shab'a farmlands in implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Lebanese territory without exception.

In response to Israel's reference to operations against its troops and military outposts in that area since October 2000, it must be said that these developments did not take place in Israeli territory but in locations seized by Israel in the area of the occupied Shab'a farmlands. The allegation concerning the abduction of an Israeli civilian is a distortion of the true state of affairs, inasmuch as the person in question was a reserve officer working for Israeli intelligence who came to Beirut of his own accord to spy on the resistance for Israel.

IV. Israel's assertion that the actions of the resistance in occupied territory as to be classed as terrorism

Acts of legitimate resistance against Israeli occupation do not come within the scope of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, to

which Lebanon is committed, but within that of General Assembly resolution 46/51 of 9 December 1991 and other relevant resolutions that differentiate between terrorism and the legitimate right of peoples to resist foreign occupation.

While the Israeli letter refers to “the duty ... to resolve disputes by peaceful means”, the fact is that Israel’s actions are the antithesis of this. For 22 years, it failed to comply with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) calling for its full and immediate withdrawal from Lebanon, and it was forced to withdraw from most of Lebanon’s territory and to submit to the will of the international community only under pressure from the resistance.

V. The reference in the Israeli letter to the bombing of the Multinational Force in Beirut in 1983 and to another incident there in 1985

The actions in question took place at a time when the present Hizbullah did not yet exist. Everyone knows that at that time Lebanon was prey to internal disturbances and wars in which many countries were involved and which produced many developments, victims and losses whose costs and consequences were borne primarily by the Lebanese.

VI. The allegation that there have been operations by Hizbullah outside Lebanon and outside the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict

This charge lacks proof or evidence and it is made in the context of an Israeli media campaign that is exploiting in a despicable manner the 11 September attacks against the American people that have been condemned by Lebanon and by the Arabs. We are daily witness to Israeli fabrications and allegations that are totally unfounded and seek to influence world public opinion in general, and American public opinion in particular, by exploiting the climate prevailing in the aftermath of 11 September.

We present hereunder a list, indicative rather than exhaustive, of a series of Israeli allegations such as have required the Ambassador of Italy to issue a response in Beirut on 8 February 2002 and United States government sources to deny claims made by Israeli officials. They are:

1. That Hizbullah was involved in the smuggling of weapons on board the vessel *Karine A*, a charge that is absolutely not proven;
2. That there are Iranian training camps in the Bekaa, an allegation that has been denied by the Ambassador of a European country, namely Italy (statement by the Ambassador of Italy published in the newspaper *Al-Nahar* on 9 February 2002), as it was by Lebanese government sources at the time;
3. That elements of the al-Qa’idah organization had joined forces with Hizbullah in southern Lebanon, an allegation that was denied by official American sources (article in the newspaper *Al-Safir* of 8 February 2002;

4. That Iran has recently sent elements of the Revolutionary Guard to join Hizbullah, a false allegation;

5. That Iran has supplied Hizbullah with 10,000 Katyusha rockets, a mendacious allegation made by Shimon Peres on 5 February 2002. The chief of staff of the Israeli army, Shaul Mofaz, had contradicted him in an interview with the newspaper *Ma'ariv* on 6 January 2002, when he said that Hizbullah had acquired Katyusha rockets and long-range rockets during the time Israel had not been in southern Lebanon, that is to say during the time of the civil war when weapons could be obtained by all Lebanese. This is, moreover, within the context of legitimate resistance to Israeli occupation, and it is the right of the Lebanese resistance to obtain support and weapons from any parties that support its cause. Israel has no grounds to protest against this, particularly when it too purchases weapons from other States but uses them to occupy the territories of others by force.

VII. Israel's protest against statements by resistance leaders indicating that Israel is to be targeted

The fact must not be ignored that ministers in the Israeli Government itself, including the present minister of tourism and Ariel Sharon himself, have made public statements regarding the extermination of the Palestinians and their expulsion from their land after the fashion of the Nazis, and more recently Slobodan Milosevic. Moreover, Sharon himself is responsible for committing the Sabra and Shatila massacre, in which he exterminated an entire camp. He has also expressed regret that he did not kill Arafat in Beirut. It is natural that such official Israeli attitudes should provoke populist reactions in Lebanese, Arab and Islamic public opinion and that these Israeli pronouncements should elicit similar responses.

VIII. The protest against the statement by a Lebanese resistance leader that there are no civilians in Israel

The dominant impression in Arab public opinion is that Israeli settlements are being sited in the occupied Arab territories and their inhabitants are being armed in such a way that they resemble fully equipped military garrisons and are nothing like benign and peaceable villages. The settlers in the occupied Arab territories, the establishment of whose colonies has repeatedly been condemned by the international community and the United Nations, thus have scheduled periods of service and guard duty, as is the case in military cantonments in combat areas, and always carry unconcealed weapons. The settlement policy that has been pursued by successive Israeli Governments and that Sharon has taken to the greatest lengths, in spite of international protests, has itself been the principal reason this impression of the settlements has been created, especially since that policy has used children and women as human shields in the interests of the internationally condemned policy of expansion.

By its call for the designation of Hizbullah as a terrorist organization and its attempt to ride the wave of resolution 1373 (2001), Israel shamelessly seeks to deprive Lebanon of its legitimate right to resist the occupation of a part of its territory and to halt Israel's violations of its sovereignty and its airspace. The Arab

States and the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference support the struggle of the resistance, and the European countries and most Members of the United Nations reject the inclusion of Hizbullah in the list of terrorist organizations.

IX.

In sum, it is clear from the foregoing that the Israeli letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations consists of nothing more than a series of sophistries and fabrications. It exposes once again Israel's schemes to impart legitimacy to its occupation of the Arab territories and its daily aggression against peaceable civilians and to exploit the events that befell the American people on 11 September in a repugnant manner that offends the feelings of this people, which has the sympathy of Lebanon and of all the countries of the world. By adopting these methods, Israel is nurturing feelings of hatred and loathing in the international community in the service of its occupation, acts of aggression and expansion.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Sélim Tadmoury**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative