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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
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**QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL  
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD**

**Written statement\* submitted by the Hariri Foundation – The Islamic Foundation for  
Culture and Higher Education, a non-governmental organization  
in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2004]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

### **The Question of Violations of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom in Any Part of the World/Landmines**

1. After twenty-two years of illegally occupying approximately 10 per cent of Lebanese territory, Israel withdrew most of its forces from Lebanon in May 2000. However, scattered throughout the hundreds of towns and villages in the south of Lebanon that comprised the occupied territory are thousands and thousands of landmines. United Nations experts believe that there are between 400,000 - 500,000 mines, booby traps and unexploded ordnance scattered on the hills of southern Lebanon. The exact location of most of these hidden weapons remains unknown. They include anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance, anti-tank mines, booby traps and roadside bombs.
2. The problem of landmines and unexploded weaponry threatening civilians throughout Lebanon today is the combined result of the 1975-1990 civil war and the Israeli occupation of the southern part of the country, although some of the mine fields date back to the French Mandate and World War II. However, the vast majority of the mines were planted by Israeli occupying forces in the two decades preceding its withdrawal. De-mining efforts revealed that those forces laid mines on top of the old mine fields. Moreover, the landmines laid by Israeli forces are not confined to the areas previously occupied. Israeli forces sent patrols through the United Nations peace-keeping lines to plant booby traps close to the Litani River as well.
3. Near every artillery position or military outpost previously occupied by Israeli forces lie acres of ordnance waiting to explode. The problem of unexploded ordnance alone continues to pose a serious threat to local populations, particularly in the south. That problem is not confined to the south however. The Lebanese Army estimates that in the Bekaa Valley approximately 11 tons of mines and unexploded ordnance are scattered in a 70 square kilometer area inhabited by 20,000 people. The area is highly contaminated with cluster bombs and other types of ordnance. Cluster bombs were used widely by Israeli forces during the war.
4. Civilians, many of whom are children, have been killed and injured. Since the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, at least 30 civilians were killed and scores more have been maimed and injured by landmine explosions. At least twenty soldiers have been hurt in mine-clearing operations launched under UN supervision in the past year alone.
5. The clearing of mines and unexploded ordnance is a large and urgent task. Along the southern border there are roughly 1,000 minefields, containing some 360,000 mines. The volatile situation on the border has prevented minesweepers from working on the border. Since the Israeli withdrawal, minesweepers, mostly financed by a \$50 million dollar grant from the United Arab Emirates, have cleared only approximately 60,000 mines. Israeli forces provided UNIFIL with maps of some of the mines but the location of the majority of mines within the minefields remain unknown. UN sources say that Israel provided maps for only approximately 40 per cent of the mines. UN press reports following the withdrawal indicated that Israel had turned over faulty maps to the United Nations with regard to the location of mines. Additionally, press reports indicate that Israel has attempted to swap landmine location maps for prisoners.

6. Even though some of the maps of the minefields have been turned over to the United Nations, many minefields are unmarked and unknown minefields are still suspected to exist. Moreover, the process of verifying the accuracy of the maps is a lengthy one. According to UNIFIL officials, at the current rate of clearance, it will take at least four more years to clear known mines. The terrain of Lebanon also presents a more difficult task challenge. The rocky mountainous terrain hampers clearance efforts, driving the costs of de-mining up.

7. This problem is complicating the return of displaced people and hindering long-term reconstruction and socio-economic development of the south. The full cooperation of all parties to the conflict responsible for the planting of mines is an imperative for humanitarian reasons.

8. In United Nations Security Council Resolution 1496 (2003) of 31 July 2003, extending the mandate of UNIFIL in Lebanon until 31 January 2004, the Secretary General again “stressed the need [for Israel] to provide the Lebanese Government and UNIFIL with additional maps and records of the locations of the mine.” **UN Doc. S/1496 (2003).**

9. In the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 9 October 2002, in closing its review of Israel as a member-state to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the CRC stated: “The Committee recommends that [Israel] provide full support and cooperation for de-mining efforts in southern Lebanon” **CRC/C/15/Add.195**. This decision came in response to information provided to the Committee by the Hariri Foundation on the death and injuries of Lebanese children from landmine explosives.

Recommendations:

10. The Hariri Foundation recommends that:

- a) The Human Rights Commission call on Israel to cooperate with UNIFIL forces and provide full support and cooperation for de-mining efforts in southern Lebanon, specifically, by providing all maps and other records of the locations of mines it planted;
- b) The Human Rights Commission concur with the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and recommend that Israel provide adequate compensation, recovery and rehabilitation to the victims of Israeli forces in Lebanon and the Arab occupied territories.

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