

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
29 March 2005

Original: English

Identical letters dated 29 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith identical letters dated 29 March 2005 from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Security Council on the fact-finding mission to Lebanon led by Peter Fitzgerald (see annex).

It would be greatly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the identical letters dated 29 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Identical letters dated 29 March 2005 from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

After reading the report of the fact-finding team headed by Peter Fitzgerald, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to make the following observations:

1. Owing to the fact that the report gives an elaborate description of the political and psychological conditions prevailing in Lebanon prior to the abominable crime that took the life of the late Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri, the results of the report depart from objectivity, reflecting sympathy in one way or another with the point of view of one segment of the Lebanese population and showing little concern for clearly mentioning the point of view of other segments. The explosion of 14 February has been used to serve the point of view of a Lebanese group that had aspired to bring about an overthrow and fails to take into consideration the importance of coexistence, the preservation of domestic peace and the maintenance of the national reconciliation among the Lebanese, in which Al-Hariri himself believed.
2. In its report, the team, despite its politicization of the mission, neglected to mention the historical and geopolitical ties and the interconnected social fabric that exist between the Syrian and Lebanese peoples. Those ties have made the relations between the two countries, since they wrested their independence from France in the 1940s, deeper than the relations that bind any two other neighbouring countries in the region.
3. Though it was not expected that the report would contain any reference to the positive Syrian contribution to the building of national peace in Lebanon and to bringing an end to the civil war in the various regions of Lebanon and among all its confessions and political parties, it is very surprising that the report should lay the blame on Syria for the political tension that had existed for a number of months prior to the assassination of the late Rafik Al-Hariri, ignoring the fact that that tension in the Lebanese political arena had been quite apparent since June 2004, after information leaked out about the preparations under way to bring the question of Lebanon before the Security Council, though there was no understandable justification for so doing. It is indeed a fact that is difficult for any observer or researcher to refute that the adoption of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) of 2 September 2004 increased the level of tension and created a sharp division in Lebanon between a group that supported the resolution and another group that opposed it. The resolution was given various contradictory interpretations that exacerbated the split between the Lebanese groups, and this resulted in political and economic paralysis and weakened security both within and outside the Lebanese capital.

4. It must be mentioned that the civil war that lasted many long years and was accompanied by Israeli occupation of large parts of southern Lebanon required close military and security cooperation between Syria and Lebanon and political coordination for meeting various challenges. That cooperation was focused primarily on the establishment of internal peace in Lebanon, which arose from the national reconciliation established after the conclusion of the 1989 Taif Agreement. This enabled Syria automatically to reduce its forces in Lebanon from 40,000 to 10,000 troops. In addition, it will carry out a complete withdrawal of those troops before the coming elections in Lebanon.

5. The report ignored the long-term friendly relations that existed between the Syrian leadership and the late Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri. It also failed to mention the contribution of Mr. Al-Hariri, side by side with Syria, to the conclusion of the Taif Agreement, his persistent maintenance of strategic Syrian-Lebanese relations and his role as Prime Minister of successive Lebanese Governments over a period of 15 years. If he sometimes withdrew for a few months from holding the office of Lebanese Prime Minister, it was due primarily to Lebanese-Lebanese political differences, not to any dispute between him and Syria. A review of Mr. Al-Hariri's last statements prior to his criminal assassination on 14 February 2005 shows his great desire to maintain personal and political relations with the Syrian leadership. A few days before he was assassinated he had more than one telephone conversation with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs for the purpose of arranging a visit he intended to make to Damascus in order to meet with President Bashar Al-Assad.

6. Syria is therefore greatly surprised at the reference in the report to an unseemly conversation that allegedly took place between the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and the late Prime Minister Al-Hariri. Such a reference is absolutely unacceptable inasmuch as it is false and not substantiated by any material evidence.

7. In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic, desirous of maintaining the credibility of the United Nations and the reports issued on its behalf, specifically requests the deletion of the reference concerning the person of the President of the Republic from the report of the fact-finding team, for it sees no justification for its being inserted into any report submitted to the Security Council. As one of the parties injured by the tragic loss of the late Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri, Syria also stresses the importance of promptly discovering the perpetrators of that loathsome crime and determining the parties that stand to benefit from it. Syria will support the position of Lebanon in any investigation of that event, given the fact that it is most solicitous of Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and prosperity.

Minister for Foreign Affairs
Syrian Arab Republic