



# Security Council

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## Report of the Security Council mission to Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, 3–7 December 2025

### I. Introduction

1. Security Council members carried out a mission to Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic from 3 to 7 December 2025, co-led by Algeria, Denmark and Slovenia (President of the Council for the month of December). The terms of reference for the mission are contained in annexes I and II to document [S/2025/801](#), which also contains the composition of the mission. The mission was the first visit by the Security Council to Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

### II. Visit to the Syrian Arab Republic

#### A. Briefings on the political and security situations by the Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and the Department of Safety and Security

2. The Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Najat Rochdi, provided members of the Security Council with an overview of the status of the political transition and the situation on the ground in the Syrian Arab Republic, including challenges to security and stability, as well as to the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. She noted that 14 years of conflict had left deep institutional scars, widespread destruction of infrastructure and unresolved housing and property issues. The humanitarian situation remained dire, with some communities, including in the south of the country, absorbing new waves of displaced persons, while basic services were overstretched and funding for essential programmes was diminishing. She cautioned that, without tangible improvements in living conditions, the prospects for voluntary return and national recovery remained bleak, while continued instability risked undermining the progress achieved thus far. She underscored the readiness of the United Nations to support the Syrian Arab Republic on its path from relief to recovery by leveraging the Organization's comparative advantage in institution-building, inclusive development and human rights, and by supporting reconciliation efforts, transitional justice and reform where requested. She further emphasized that human rights, accountability and the participation of women and youth must remain at the core of rebuilding the social contract, and she appealed for comprehensive sanctions relief, sustained funding and political space, especially for civil society, so that that the Syrian Arab Republic could transition to sustainable peace.



3. The Department of Safety and Security delivered a briefing on the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which it highlighted the overall fragility of conditions and the multiplicity of challenges across the country. The main hotspots identified included Aleppo, the coastal region, Homs, Dayr al-Zawr, Rif Dimashq and the south, where the activities of Ansar al-Sunnah, Da'esh and other terrorist groups remained of concern. In the northern Syrian Arab Republic, clashes between the Syrian Democratic Forces and Syrian security forces continued, even within city of Aleppo. The security environment in the coastal region had stabilized somewhat since the violence that had occurred in March 2025, while the central region had seen sectarian violence and criminality. Dayr al-Zawr was described as particularly volatile, with Da'esh activity and the highest concentration of explosive remnants of war in the country. Crimes constituted the largest category of incidents, with terrorism accounting for approximately 7.2 per cent of incidents. Damascus was assessed as being relatively stable, though isolated incidents had occurred, including a terrorist attack on the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox church in June and a rocket strike in the weeks preceding the mission's arrival in the country. Lastly, the Department indicated that, while certain areas had shown signs of stability, the broader security landscape in the Syrian Arab Republic remained precarious, requiring continued vigilance and coordinated measures to safeguard personnel and operations.

#### **B. Drive through Jawbar and visit to the old city of Damascus, including the Umayyad Mosque**

4. Upon crossing the Lebanese-Syrian border at Masna'/Judaydat Yabus, the delegation drove along the Beirut-Damascus highway, which was guarded by Syrian security personnel all the way to Damascus. En route, the mission convoy passed through Jawbar, a suburb to the north-east of the centre of Damascus that had been completely destroyed during the conflict. At the invitation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, members of the Security Council then visited the old city of Damascus, including Bayt al-Wali, a restored eighteenth century Damascene house, and the Umayyad Mosque.

#### **C. Meeting with the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and Cabinet ministers**

5. Members of the Security Council were welcomed by the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Ahmed al-Sharaa, and the country's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Asaad al-Shaibani. Mr. Al-Sharaa declared that, with liberation of Syria from the former regime, the region and the world had become safer. He expressed his appreciation for the Council's unanimous support. Commenting on the delegations drive through Jawbar, he said that what Council members had seen there was a tiny fraction of the destruction caused by the conflict, and he lamented the far-reaching consequences that the war had had, including the refugee crisis and the battered economy. Mr. Al-Sharaa said that the launch of the new Syrian State had not begun on 8 December 2024, but rather with the initiation of the military operation "Deterrence of Aggression". He emphasized that the conduct of hostilities in late 2024 had been in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), noting that armed opposition groups had not caused any civilian casualties or displacement. He also noted that the peaceful handover of power by the country's last Prime Minister under the Assad Government had also been in line with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

6. Mr. Al-Sharaa recounted the steps that his country had taken and the achievements that it had made in the transition thus far, including the creation of

national transitional justice and missing persons institutions and investigative committees for the incidents that had occurred in the coastal region and Suwayda', as well as efforts to preserve rule of law, curb migration and drug smuggling, and counter terrorism. He characterized the state of affairs in the country as "post-conflict," observing that while other countries had fragmented in the aftermath of wars, the Syrian Arab Republic had overcome that challenge. He attributed that to the Government's strong desire to differentiate between the regime and the State, as well as its concerted efforts to preserve the latter. Part of those efforts had been the appointment of a Cabinet with diverse representation, which offered reassurance to Syrian communities. Mr. Al-Sharaa said that he was intent on avoiding any system of quotas, however, and that he wished to promote participatory politics, so that the Syrian Arab Republic could be a living example of sustainable peace. He informed members of the Security Council that the transitional parliament would convene its first session in 2026, adding that the indirect elections conducted in October had been "unusual," given that many citizens lacked documentation as a result of the conflict.

7. Responding to a question regarding the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, Mr. Al-Sharaa recalled that there had been broad sympathy for the struggle of Syrians during the early days of the uprising, not just in the Middle East region, but around the world. He added that the Syrian Government had tried to regularize the presence of foreign terrorist fighters in accordance with Syrian laws, and he emphasized that "Syria would not export crises" to the region or beyond. Mr. Al-Sharaa stated that the two priorities of the State in the current phase were preserving stability and economic development, and that its primary policies were aimed at achieving those objectives. He thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates for having achieved "perfect diplomatic relations" since 8 December 2024 in support of those objectives. He sought the support of the Security Council in maintaining the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic in the face of Israeli violations of the country's sovereignty, referencing an incident that had occurred in Bayt Jinn on 28 November 2025, in which, he said, "25 Syrian civilians had been massacred." Reiterating the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, Mr. Al-Sharaa lamented that, in 2025, there had been "1,000 Israeli air strikes and 400 incursions into Syrian territory". He also said that these actions undermined the mission of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights. Nevertheless, Mr. Al-Sharaa noted that security talks mediated by the United States of America were ongoing, and he reaffirmed that the Security Council should compel Israel to comply with the terms of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Lastly, with regard to sanctions relief, he thanked the Council for having adopted resolution [2799 \(2025\)](#) and asked for support in having all sanctions lifted, adding that there were encouraging signs regarding the lifting of the sanctions imposed by the United States pursuant to the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019 (Caesar Act). The lifting of sanctions would contribute to economic development and stability.

8. During the meeting with Mr. Al-Sharaa and Cabinet ministers, Security Council members reiterated their solidarity with the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian people and their strong support for the country's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. Several Council members expressed grave concern at Israeli violations of those principles, including the continued incursions of Israel into the Syrian Arab Republic.

9. In addition, Council Members told Mr. Al-Sharaa that they acknowledged the progress that had been achieved in 2025 and stressed the importance of an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process that safeguarded the rights of all Syrians. Council members further stressed the importance of inclusive and transparent justice and reconciliation processes. Moreover, they inquired how best to

support Syria and expressed their readiness to assist in advancing national reconciliation, institutional reform, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

#### **D. Meeting with the United Nations country team in the Syrian Arab Republic**

10. Members of the Security Council were briefed by the United Nations country team. In addition, they were provided with updates by representatives of the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria, the Department of Safety and Security, UNDOF and the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

11. The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. stressed that there was a need to look at the full picture of the humanitarian, development and peace landscape in the Syrian Arab Republic. For example, the escalation in the south could not be viewed in isolation from the wider national context, as it posed a serious challenge to the country's sovereignty and regional stability and risked undermining the progress that had been made since the beginning of the transition. Events in the coastal region, Suwayda' or areas adjacent to the ceasefire line had caused displacement, eroded social cohesion and compounded the effects of 14 years of conflict. In addition, humanitarian needs remained high and continued to grow, with new hostilities increasing displacement and a severe drought compounding vulnerabilities. Humanitarian assistance remained the only safety net for millions, yet predictable funding was rapidly diminishing, forcing cuts to food, health, protection, education and gender-based violence services. The Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. also emphasized that the United Nations could help to bridge the gap between emergency assistance and recovery by supporting vulnerable families, strengthening basic services and providing technical assistance for governance and strategic planning. He welcomed the new national recovery plan as a basis for increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and reiterated that human rights, accountability and meaningful participation of women and youth must remain central to the transition. Appealing for sustained humanitarian funding, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. also sought the support of the Security Council with regard to protecting the humanitarian space and sanctions relief, as the chilling effects of sanctions continued to be felt in relation to procurement, banking channels and operational costs.

12. Responding to queries from members of the Security Council, the Deputy Special Envoy explained that the Office of the Special Envoy was awaiting the host country's approval to relocate fully to Damascus. She emphasized that limited capacity in Damascus remained a significant operational challenge and confirmed that the United Nations had the tools and expertise to support the Syrian Government during the transition, including with security sector reform, should assistance be requested in that regard.

13. Asked about working with the Syrian Government, a World Food Programme (WFP) official said that the United Nations was entering a new phase of engagement described as "working with Syria for Syria," the first time that such an approach had been implemented since 2011. For example, WFP implemented the subsidized bread programme in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce, which provided salaries and fuel, while the United Nations supplied wheat flour. That programme was critical to stability and linked to development activities, including rehabilitating mills, silos and bakeries, to preserve the bread value chain. The WFP official stressed that food security was national security in the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. An official of the United Nations Mine Action Service informed members of the Security Council that the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be one of the most

heavily contaminated countries in the world, and that immediate and long-term mine action interventions were required. Coordination with the Syrian Mine Action Centre was ongoing, but lack of machinery and funding were identified as principal constraints.

15. An UNDOF official reported that the security environment in the mission's area of operations remained volatile. The mission continued to implement its mandate to the extent possible, despite operational constraints, including the construction of roadblocks and the unauthorized presence of the Israel Defense Forces in the area of separation. UNDOF requested the support of the Security Council in order to ensure respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

16. An official of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) observed that coordination with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic was progressing. A workshop in October had brought together relevant United Nations entities and members of the National Commission for Missing Persons and the National Commission for Transitional Justice to clarify the roles of each commission and develop terms of reference for working groups. The OHCHR official emphasized the importance of advancing transitional justice and accountability as part of the recovery process.

17. An official of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women noted that while the Constitution contained language on women's representation, in practice, women were severely underrepresented in parliament and ministerial positions. The official emphasized that collective efforts were needed to bridge the gap between normative commitments and reality and stressed that women's leadership in political and social spheres was essential for sustainable peace.

18. A representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that the transition to the "whole-of-Syria" approach was complete, with a functioning countrywide coordination architecture anchored in Damascus and linked to national decision-making. Improved sector coordination and field presence were positive developments that reduced duplication and improved joint planning.

## **E. Meeting with representatives of Syrian civil society**

19. The messages shared by Syrian civil society representatives included the following:

(a) There must be an emphasis on the need for an inclusive, Syrian-led transitional process. Multiple speakers rejected quota-based approaches, calling for meaningful participation by all components of society, instead. One speaker observed that civil society was a permanent actor on the political scene. Another speaker highlighted the fact that the current political phase had emerged from a "victory conference", not resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), and therefore had been marked by a lack of meaningful involvement on the part of civil society or political entities. Accordingly, the speaker called for the expansion and continuation of the national dialogue. Other speakers called for decentralization and the protection of diversity, as well as for mechanisms to ensure women's participation and the development of gender-sensitive legislation, including a national plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). Describing the experience of a generation raised during the war, some speakers emphasized the vulnerabilities of young persons. Several speakers underscored the importance of the role of the United Nations in supporting the political transition;

(b) Truth-seeking, accountability and reconciliation must be prioritized. Speakers called for independent funding of mechanisms, in order to protect them from political coercion, and expressed their aspiration for comprehensive transitional justice and accountability processes, including for the kidnapping of women after 8 December 2024. Some called for a national security doctrine that transcended sectarianism, while others called for guarantees of protection from further violations and recognition of rights as prerequisites for peace;

(c) The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic must be respected. Many speakers condemned the military actions of Israel and its violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, including reported kidnappings of Syrian citizens. Some speakers demanded that Israel withdraw to the lines of 1967. One speaker drew attention to several “Turkish-occupied areas” in the north, where thousands of forcibly displaced women lived in tents;

(d) It was important to resolve governance and security issues. Many speakers called for legal and institutional reforms to consolidate the transition and protect civil society space, as well as for an elections law that guaranteed transparency and international observation. One speaker underscored that the advanced governance experience in the north-east could be used as a model for the rest of the country, and called for support for the implementation of the 10 March agreement between Mr. Al-Sharaa and the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Mazloum Abdi. There were some calls for ensuring a State monopoly over weapons, in accordance with a transparent process, and appropriately addressing reported violations of the 10 March agreement, as well as guaranteeing the protection of vulnerable communities;

(e) Humanitarian, economic and reconstruction priorities needed to be established. Some speakers highlighted worsening poverty among women heads of household, obstacles to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the effect of sanctions on recovery. One speaker said that there was a need for an early recovery strategy.

## **F. Meeting with communities affected by the events in the coastal region and Suwayda’**

20. Several participants from the coastal region expressed concern regarding the long-term consequences of what they described as “the Assad regime’s manipulation of the Alawite community” and the resulting mistrust among Syrian communities. In their view, there was now an opportunity to rebuild confidence and draft a genuinely inclusive social contract. One speaker highlighted small but symbolic intercommunal gestures, such as joint holiday celebrations, as early steps towards healing. Another participant from the coast region argued that, thus far, the transition had not been sufficiently inclusive and called for a United Nations-facilitated constitutional processes, transparent electoral laws, the protection of country’s sovereignty, the independence of the army from ideological influence and guarantees for civil society freedoms. A survivor of the incidents recounted how he had lost nearly his entire family in a single attack, listing the relatives killed by name, including children. Despite his loss, he focused his remarks on the future, emphasizing the need for justice and a credible path forward, rather than dwelling on the irreversibility of loss.

21. Speakers from Suwayda’ voiced strong grievances regarding continued insecurity, kidnappings, displacement and a sense of abandonment. A Bedouin speaker stated that violations by armed factions tied to local religious figures had resulted in massacres, disappearances and large-scale forced displacement in both Suwayda’ and Dar’a. Participants appealed for international assistance in locating

missing relatives, ensuring accountability and restoring basic safety. A tribal representative described the kidnapping of multiple members of his family by armed factions loyal to Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri and appealed for direct international engagement to halt violence and support state-building. A Druze participant said that investigative efforts by the Syrian Government had been performative, thus far, rather than substantive, and recounted how members of his family had been killed in harrowing ways. Another Druze speaker stressed that the Druze community's only political ambitions were building a civil state, establishing the rule of law and achieving equality among all Syrians, instead of being "ruled by one colour." Regrettably, after the violence that had occurred in July 2025, the community's aspirations had been "reduced to searching for bodies of the missing" owing to the scale of the devastation. A heated verbal confrontation ensued between a Bedouin speaker and a Druze speaker, in the course of which they contested each other's narratives of the July events, the numbers of victims and internally displaced persons and the size of the communities and their loyalties.

## **G. Working lunch with religious notables**

22. Members of the Security Council were welcomed by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, who expressed his appreciation for the Council's historic visit. He stressed that the unity of the Security Council in supporting the Syrian Arab Republic mirrored the unity among the religions and sects of the Syrian Arab Republic and their commitment to protecting the country. He also stressed that diversity was a source of strength, not weakness, and noted that the presence of various religious leaders and community figures reflected the resilience of the Syrian Arab Republic and its pride in its pluralism, paying tribute to all those who had contributed to the country's emergence from conflict.

23. A representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch highlighted the long-standing history of coexistence in the Syrian Arab Republic. He appealed for the removal of remaining sanctions, in particular those imposed pursuant to the Caesar Act; the lifting of sanctions would enable the Syrian Arab Republic to stand on its feet as a unified country from north to south and east to west. A Druze representative condemned incursions and violations by "external actors" and those who sought to sow division within the Syrian Arab Republic, called for urgent support to address the impact of recent violence in Suwayda' and appealed to the Security Council to give attention to the situation in the south. An Alawite religious figure from the coastal region provided a detailed account of his community's grievances. He described the shock that had been caused by sectarian and ethnically motivated violence in March 2025, noting that Alawite communities had surrendered their weapons after the fall of the Assad regime, in the belief that fighting should end. He reported that thousands of officers and security personnel from the former regime remained in detention without due process and cited incidents of revenge attacks, property looting, kidnappings for ransom and extrajudicial executions. He described the violence that had occurred in March as "ethnic cleansing", and said that similar patterns of violence had been seen in Suwayda' in July. In addition, he condemned incitement through the spreading of rumours and misinformation, and he highlighted cases of burned religious sites, demonstrations and lack of accountability for crimes, including incidents in which women had been kidnapped and then had defamatory accusations levelled against them. He expressed concern at the Government's lack of control over its own security forces and called for guarantees of State structure, including federalism, as means of ensuring good governance. Responding to those remarks, the Druze representative asserted that the Alawite sheikh should limit his comments to

matters that were within his knowledge and reiterated the importance of accurately depicting the events that had occurred in Suwayda' and other areas. In conclusion, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations said that the strength of the new Syrian Arab Republic laid in bringing differences to the table and addressing them. He emphasized that the Syrian Government would continue to take ownership of successes and shortcomings, while pledging to address the latter.

## **H. Meeting with the heads of national commissions and governors**

24. Members of the Security Council were briefed by a representative of the National Commission for Transitional Justice, which had been established by Presidential Decree No. 20 on 17 May 2025. The Commission's mandate was to uncover the truth about grave violations that had been committed in past years, ensure accountability for perpetrators, provide restitution and compensation to victims and embed the principles of non-recurrence, peacebuilding and reconciliation. He reported that the Commission's internal regulations and a code of conduct had been finalized, and its membership, comprising 13 individuals representing all segments of Syrian society, had been announced in Decree No. 149 on 25 August 2025. The Commission had established six specialized committees to address accountability, truth-seeking, compensation, peacebuilding, national memory and institutional reform. The Commission had held consultations with victims' families, civil society organizations and international bodies, and it had conducted visits to various governorates, including Dayr al-Zawr, Aleppo, Homs and Hama. A draft transitional justice bill that was aligned with international humanitarian law and human rights standards was reportedly nearing completion and would be submitted to the Government for approval by the People's Assembly. The representative of the Commission called for international technical and financial support and emphasized that the process would be driven by victims' voices, in order to ensure that the tragedy experienced by the Syrian Arab Republic was never repeated.

25. A representative of the National Fact-Finding Committee concerning the Incidents that Occurred in the Coastal Region of Syria, which had been established by a Presidential decree on 9 March 2025, briefed members of the Security Council on the Committee's investigation into the violence that had occurred in the country's coastal region on 6 March 2025. The representative said that the Committee had worked for four months in accordance with international standards, gathering more than 900 accounts and examining physical and digital evidence. It had submitted its report to the President and publicly announced its methodology and findings. Two lists of suspects had been transmitted to the Public Prosecutor, one comprising 298 individuals accused of violations against civilians and another comprising 265 individuals accused of assaults on security personnel and public property. The trials of 14 defendants had reportedly commenced, with full guarantees of defence rights, public hearings and international observation. The representative of the Committee noted that extraordinary legislation enacted under the Assad regime had been abolished, and that military courts now operated under the supervision of civilian judges affiliated with the Ministry of Justice. He affirmed that accountability processes were ongoing in accordance with the Constitutional Declaration and the relevant legal frameworks. He stressed that those steps reflected the commitment of the Syrian Arab Republic to justice and transparency and requested that the briefing he had delivered be considered a document of the Security Council.

26. The Governor of Tartus informed members of the Security Council that, since his appointment, his administration's priority had been restoring security and civil peace. He described the challenges that his administration faced, including widespread poverty, deteriorating services, lack of investment and the spread of

rumours through fake social media accounts. He said that remnants of the former regime had attempted a coup on 6 March, resulting in chaos and civilian harm. Measures had been taken immediately to stabilize the situation and prevent a recurrence. Initiatives had included opening communication channels between communities and institutions, organizing dialogue workshops to strengthen civil peace and providing material and financial assistance to the poorest families across the governorate. Current efforts were aimed at rebuilding trust, restoring dignity and ensuring that residents lived a life that was befitting of their resilience and sacrifice.

27. The Governor of Ladhqiyyah emphasized that the State stood equidistant from all sects and components of Syrian society and sought inclusive participation in building the country's future. He described the tensions that had preceded the March incidents, including the formation of an "Alawite Islamic Council," which was reportedly opposed by many religious leaders for promoting sectarianism and undermining stability. The Governor said that security efforts were focused on arresting individuals who were inciting violence and forming armed groups, including some linked to the former regime. He stressed that dialogue initiatives and field visits aimed at rejecting sectarianism and promoting coexistence had culminated in a public call by the President on 27 November to reject division and external interference, which had been followed by mass demonstrations in Ladhqiyyah affirming unity. The Governor also noted steps that had been taken to restore homes, provide assistance to affected families and address severe infrastructure and service deficits.

28. A representative of the National Committee to Investigate the Suwayda' Incidents briefed members of the Security Council on the Committee's mandate to uncover the truth, restore trust among communities and prevent the recurrence of violations, noting that the Committee had adopted a professional methodology that adhered to United Nations best practices for evidence-gathering and a victim-centred approach emphasizing confidentiality, neutrality and transparency. There had been strong engagement with the Committee by Suwayda' residents and individuals from the internal security forces and the Ministry of Defence had been placed in preventive detention and formally investigated, reflecting the State's commitment to accountability regardless of rank or affiliation. He stressed that the Committee's objective was to restore trust among communities and guarantee the non-recurrence of violence. He concluded by emphasizing that Syrians had paid a heavy price and that uncovering the truth and ensuring justice were indispensable to building a safe and united future.

29. The Governor of Suwayda' stated that his priority had been restoring trust between citizens and the State. He described his administration's efforts to promote civil peace by engaging all components of society, including the Druze, Bedouin tribes and Christians, and reviving government sectors. He had held daily meetings with families and community leaders to foster dialogue, despite attempts to assassinate him and threats from armed gangs exploiting religious identity to obstruct rapprochement. The Governor condemned the crimes that those groups had committed, including the killing and mutilation of religious figures who had sought humanitarian engagement with the State. He called for accountability for the perpetrators, protection of those working to rebuild institutions and the restoration of the rule of law. He affirmed that civil peace in Suwayda' depended on ending gang influence and safeguarding the dignity of all citizens. He urged the Security Council to support efforts to hold those gangs accountable and ensure that civil peace prevailed as the foundation for the future of the Syrian Arab Republic.

30. The Governor of Dar'a expressed hope for rebuilding a dignified life after the fall of the Assad regime and outlined major challenges in that regard, notably Israeli incursions and shelling, which had resulted in civilian casualties, destruction of

infrastructure and loss of agricultural crops, thereby hindering the return of refugees. He highlighted efforts to strengthen ties with Suwayda' Governorate, which was historically linked to Dar'a Governorate, and described initiatives to resolve intercommunal tensions between Druze residents and Bedouin tribes. An emergency committee had been formed to contain escalation, and humanitarian assistance, including shelter, bedding, food and medical care, had been provided to all displaced persons, without discrimination. In addition, the Governor stressed that the data confirmed the equality of treatment of all sects. He lamented the fact that progress towards reconciliation remained limited, despite the mediation of efforts of national figures. He reiterated his administration's commitment to unity and cooperation in rebuilding the homeland and called for continued support to overcome obstacles to stability and development.

## **I. Press stakeout**

31. Speaking to the press at the conclusion of the mission, the co-leads of the mission expressed their appreciation for the meetings with Syrian interlocutors, which had been "greatly enlightening, as much as painful to listen to, but at the same time presenting the reality of the situation in Syria." The range of issues that had been discussed throughout the day included the political transition, justice and reconciliation, inclusivity and national dialogue, humanitarian issues, reconstruction, economic development, counter-terrorism and the need for the Syrian Arab Republic not to be a source of threat to the security of other countries. In conducting the mission, the aim of Security Council members had been to demonstrate the international community's solidarity with and support for the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular the country's sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity. Security Council members recognized the aspirations of and challenges facing the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led path to a better future, and they expressed support for a strong United Nations presence in the Syrian Arab Republic, so that the Organization could assist the country in moving forward to a better future.

32. At the conclusion of the delegation's visit to the Syrian Arab Republic and prior to departing from Damascus, members of the Security Council, accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, viewed the city of Damascus from Mount Qasiyun. The delegation then departed for Lebanese territory, crossing the Syrian-Lebanese border at Masna'/Judaydat Yabus.

## **III. Visit to Lebanon**

### **A. Briefing on the political and security situations by the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, and the Department of Safety and Security**

33. The United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Imran Riza, informed members of the Security Council that discussions and preparations were under way for the future implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) after the withdrawal of UNIFIL, taking into account the Council's request that the Secretary-General explore options in that regard by June 2026. He emphasized that efforts were being made to ensure there was no vacuum following the withdrawal of UNIFIL peacekeepers, owing to the risk that gaps could be filled by actors outside State authority. Some aspects of the current mandate would

need to continue beyond the mission's closure, including monitoring and reporting, liaison functions and support to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Deputy Special Coordinator noted that a significant development had occurred on 3 December 2025; the President of Lebanon, Joseph Aoun, had formally appointed retired Ambassador Simon Karam as the country's political representative in the meetings of the pentilateral Cessation of Hostilities Implementation Mechanism, alongside the Senior Director for Foreign Policy of the National Security Council of Israel, Uri Resnick. He characterized the appointment as a positive step towards taking the discussions beyond military-to-military engagement. The Deputy Special Coordinator observed that, in southern Lebanon, significant portions of the population had historically depended on Hizbullah for political representation, as well as social services. He noted that rhetoric from non-State armed groups, including Hizbullah, had initially been more measured under the new Government of Lebanon, but the rhetoric had recently escalated, creating pressure on the authorities. However, he said that there remained a window of opportunity for political engagement. Regarding plans for reconstruction in southern Lebanon, he noted that financial support previously provided by Hizbullah had been exhausted, while Government ministries lacked the resources to compensate for that. Commenting on Lebanese-Syrian relations, the Deputy Special Coordinator said that, a short time ago, the Deputy Prime Minister and other Cabinet members had met to discuss projections for refugee returns over the coming year and related planning efforts.

34. The Deputy Special Coordinator informed members of the Security Council that the security and safety of populations and strengthening the capacity of the Government of Lebanon to build trust with communities long affected by conflict remained urgent priorities for the United Nations in Lebanon. He emphasized that recovery was now a central concern, yet funding was severely constrained. The transition from humanitarian to development programming had become increasingly difficult, in particular as vulnerable Lebanese and displaced populations continued to rely on external support. He noted that the Ministry of Social Affairs has expressed its readiness to provide internally displaced persons with cash assistance for shelter, potentially reducing the reliance of such persons on non-State actors. The Deputy Special Coordinator also informed members of the Council that the refugee situation remained complex. Although the official caseload of Syrian refugees had decreased from 1.5 million to approximately 1 million following the inactivation by UNHCR of 400,000 case files of refugees who had returned to the Syrian Arab Republic, that reduction had been offset by new arrivals since December 2024, including members of the Alawite, Shiite and Druze communities, many of whom reported that they had no intention of returning home soon. He noted that some of the new arrivals were not *prima facie* refugees, but rather combatants and persons affiliated with the former regime. Lebanon did not have a refugee status determination system, leaving registration and documentation gaps unresolved. He also noted that development and humanitarian work was being carried out with diminishing resources. As a result, humanitarian agencies had been forced to reconfigure programmes, particularly in healthcare for Syrian refugees, including maternal healthcare, risking loss of lives. He stressed that while the United Nations did not wish for reductions in assistance to be perceived as being pressure for repatriation, such a perception might arise.

35. With regard to the economic situation, the Deputy Special Coordinator said that the formal economy accounted for only 35 per cent of the economic output of Lebanon. Efforts were under way to increase the number of work permits available to refugees and migrants. He stressed that Lebanon needed a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction plan, and pointed to institutional challenges, including the lack of a ministry of co-operation or a ministry planning, as structural obstacles. The United Nations was supporting the efforts of the Office of the Prime Minister to lead recovery

planning, while encouraging reintegration strategies that targeted the base of Hizbullah in the south as part of the effort to expand State authority. With regard to the drawdown of UNIFIL, the Deputy Special Coordinator noted that the peacekeeping mission's presence had had a strong socioeconomic impact in southern Lebanon, and that its drawdown would have significant consequences. Lastly, he said the prevailing sentiment was that escalation was imminent, although there was uncertainty as to when that would occur. However, the appointment of a political representative to participate in the meetings of the Cessation of Hostilities Implementation Mechanism offered some reassurance.

36. With regard to the security situation, a Department of Safety and Security official said that, in recent weeks, there had been a marked increase in Israeli air strikes. In total, such strikes had resulted in 127 confirmed civilian deaths from 27 November 2024 to 24 November 2025. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces indicated that more than 6,000 violations by Israeli forces had been recorded, in addition to more than 200 demolitions, in particular in villages along the Blue Line. Unexploded ordnance and cluster munitions had been identified as being the most significant risk for civilians and United Nations operations in the south. While the Lebanese Armed Forces had cleared some areas, nine people had been killed and additional injuries had been reported during clearance operations. Moreover, there had been an uptick in acute rhetoric from Israeli officials, including statements that unilateral action would be taken should the Government of Lebanon fail to disarm non-State actors. Israel had accused the Lebanese Armed Forces of facilitating the regrouping and rearmament Hizbullah, which, for its part, had issued an open letter to the "three presidents" of Lebanon in which it reaffirmed its rejection of disarmament and direct negotiations with Israel. The Department of Safety and Security official noted that the Lebanese Armed Forces had deployed in 200 positions south of the Litani River, closed tunnels and seized missile launchers, and that the Lebanese Armed Forces would deliver another detailed report in that regard to the Cabinet within a few days. In addition, the Department of Safety and Security official reported that there had been increased drone activity, including in relation to the recent targeting of Hizbullah positions in Beirut, as well as reconnaissance and information collection activities. Lastly, the Department of Safety and Security official outlined four possible future scenarios: (a) the renewal of conflict between Hizbullah and Israel, a scenario that was assessed as being likely to occur; (b) the renewal of politically motivated terrorist attacks, a scenario that was assessed as being moderately likely to occur; (c) violent internal instability, a scenario that was also assessed as being moderately likely to occur; and (d) regional war involving Iran and Israel, a scenario that was assessed as being unlikely to occur.

## **B. Meeting with the President of Lebanon**

37. Mr. Aoun emphasized that ongoing efforts to establish the monopoly of the State over weapons were being made not for the sake of the international community, but rather for the sake of Lebanon. He provided an overview of what the Government had been able to achieve since he had taken office, including increased deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces south of the Litani River following the cessation of hostilities on 27 November 2024. The increased deployment had resulted in increased seizures of weapons outside State control and the deactivation or destruction of tunnels that had been used by Hizbullah. Mr. Aoun praised the cooperation of the Lebanese Armed Forces with UNIFIL. In the ensuing exchange with members of the Security Council, Mr. Aoun said that the Lebanese Armed Forces was responsible for numerous issues, including border security, counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics operations. He highlighted the achievements that had been made in 2025, including the interception

of drug shipments and the destruction of drug smuggling and terrorist cells, which had helped to improve the situation on the Lebanese-Syrian border.

38. With regard to the cessation of hostilities, Mr. Aoun said that appointing a Lebanese political representative to the Cessation of Hostilities Implementation Mechanism had been a significant step. Recalling that the next meeting of the Mechanism would be on 19 December 2025, he expressed the hope that the appointment of a political representative would lead to a new phase of negotiations. It was regrettable that Israel continued to violate the sovereignty of Lebanon. Noting that Israel continued to conduct air strikes, occupy additional Lebanese territory, detain Lebanese citizens and make daily incursions into Lebanese territory, he said that Israel needed to break the cycle of hostility and demonstrate a measure of good faith, such as releasing some detainees who had been captured during the conflict or after the cessation of hostilities. The continued violations committed by Israel only fuelled the narrative of Hizbullah and undermined the authority of the Lebanese State. Responding to questions regarding the future of southern Lebanon, Mr. Aoun said that it was important to differentiate between Shiite citizens of Lebanon and supporters of Hizbullah, emphasizing that they were not identical. Acknowledging the scale of the challenge of rebuilding the south and helping affected communities to recover, he expressed support for the initiative to hold an international donor conference.

39. Turning to the future of UNIFIL, Mr. Aoun said that the peacekeeping mission's most important role had been as a platform for communication between the parties, noting that it had been successful in supporting efforts to delineate the country's maritime border. Asked about his expectations following the anticipated drawdown of UNIFIL, he emphasized that an international entity would be needed to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). In that connection, he wondered whether reinforcing other entities that had a presence in the region, such as Observer Group Lebanon, could fill in some gaps while the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to build its capacity and expand its presence south of the Litani River.

### C. Meeting with the Speaker of Parliament

40. The Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, said that Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2790 (2025) were vitally important, and he emphasized that the stability of Lebanon and the cessation of hostilities with Israel were grounded in resolution 1701 (2006). Any attempt to repeal or weaken resolution 2790 (2025) would be dangerous, as that resolution enshrined the cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces south of the Litani River and the removal of armed groups from that area. Lebanon had acted with determination to implement its obligations: the presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the south had increased from 3,000 to 9,300 soldiers, who operated in coordination with UNIFIL, and Lebanon had ensured that no gunfire emanated from its territory towards Israel. He emphasized that Lebanon has consistently used the Cessation of Hostilities Implementation Mechanism to press for dialogue, even agreeing to broaden the Mechanism's composition to include political representation, in order to demonstrate transparency and a commitment to fully implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions.

41. Mr. Berri said that, despite his country's compliance with the 2024 cessation of hostilities agreement, Israel had continued to violate the ceasefire through strikes, incursions and the construction of barriers in the south, undermining the spirit of the cessation of hostilities. He warned that Lebanon could not bear the withdrawal of UNIFIL without a credible alternative to replace it, because the Force's 12,000 peacekeepers remained indispensable to stability. Calling attention to the

efforts of Lebanon to advance the disarmament of non-State armed groups, he said that the Cabinet and the Lebanese Armed Forces had adopted a phased plan to clear weapons and military equipment from designated areas, beginning with the south and progressing towards Sidon, the Biqa' Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut. He cautioned, however, that continued Israeli violations risked reigniting war, despite the restraint of Lebanon. On the economic front, the Speaker said that the Lebanese diaspora and Arab partners had the capacity to rebuild the south rapidly, but reconstruction would be impossible owing to conditions of insecurity, noting that Israeli strikes had repeatedly targeted equipment and housing. He concluded by affirming that Lebanon had no territorial ambitions, sought peace and regarded the presence of UNIFIL to be essential until a durable settlement was achieved.

#### **D. Meeting with the Prime Minister**

42. The Prime Minister, Nawaf Salam, informed members of the Security Council the focus of the Government was on sovereignty and security, as well as governance and rule of law. With that in mind, in August 2025, the Government had taken the historic decision to develop a plan to ensure the monopoly of the State over weapons in its territory and had tasked the Lebanese Armed Forces with implementing that plan. With regard to the rule of law, the Government had spearheaded various reforms, including the adoption of banking legislation aimed at restoring confidence and ensuring that depositors were treated fairly. In addition, the Government was cooperating with the International Monetary Fund in order to bring about economic recovery.

43. With regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution [2790 \(2025\)](#), Mr. Salam made reference to the United Nations-led assessment process of exploring options for the future implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#). He emphasized that, while the Lebanese Armed Forces was strengthening its capacities and expanding its deployment and operations south of the Litani River, there would be a need to continue implementing various elements of the Force's mandate. In that connection, he said that such a responsibility should be assigned to a similar United Nations entity, which would be best suited to carrying out those functions owing to the lack of trust between Lebanon and Israel. Those functions included monitoring and verification, reporting and liaising between Lebanon and Israel. Although Mr. Salam did not offer specific proposals, he referred to the possibility of capitalizing on existing capacities in the region, including UNTSO and UNDOF. He said that he looked forward to the outcome of the United Nations assessment of options for the future implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), which would be published on June 1 2026 in accordance with resolution [2790 \(2025\)](#), and the Secretary-General's recommendations for the future of the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) after the withdrawal of UNIFIL. He expressed regret that both Hizbullah and Israel continued to use each other as a pretext for delaying progress on disarmament and withdrawal. Noting that there was no operational need for the Israel Defense Forces to have a physical presence at the five points that it had most recently occupied and the two buffer zones that it had established in Lebanese territory, he said that the only strategic objective of Israel was to occupy territory. What southern Lebanon needed, however, were security, recovery, reconstruction and the revitalization of life, all of which required concerted efforts by the Government of Lebanon and the international community.

44. Turning to regional dynamics, Mr. Salam said that he welcomed the improvement of relations with the Syrian Arab Republic, referencing recent high-level engagements and enhanced coordination between the countries. With regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he reiterated that Lebanon welcomed Security Council resolution [2803 \(2025\)](#), the plan that had been put forward by the President of the United States, Donald J. Trump and all diplomatic efforts towards a cessation

of hostilities in Gaza and Palestinian self-determination. He emphasized, however, that stability required a political horizon, and that the two-State solution remained the only recipe and guarantee for mutual security. In that connection, he emphasized the importance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for continued stability and security in Lebanon.

#### **E. Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants**

45. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Youssef Raggi, expressed his appreciation to the United Nations and the Security Council for their long-standing support for Lebanon, and he paid tribute to the military and civilian personnel who had lost their lives in pursuit of peace and security. He condemned in the strongest terms all attacks against the United Nations, stressing that such aggression, which the Government of Lebanon took very seriously, was unacceptable. He noted that arrangements similar to existing observer missions had been proposed at the ongoing discussions regarding possible successor arrangements for UNIFIL. Those discussions, however, remained inconclusive. Mr. Raggi said that Lebanon faced two principal challenges. The first challenge was the ongoing daily attacks by Israel and the illegal presence of Israeli forces in Lebanese territory. Drawing attention to the five points that Israel had most recently occupied and the two buffer zones that it had established, he insisted that Israel withdraw immediately and unconditionally from those areas. The second challenge was the slow progress in completing the handover of weapons held by non-State armed groups north of the Litani River, despite their obligation to do so pursuant to provisions of the Constitution, various ministerial declarations, the Taif Accords, Security Council resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#), and the decision adopted by the Government of Lebanon on 5 August 2025. Those two challenges fed opposing narratives and had led to a vicious circle of mistrust and violence, leaving the Lebanese Government and people to bear the brunt of it. He stressed that the retention of weapons by Hizbullah was a domestic issue and must be addressed as such. Lebanon, however, required significant international support with its effort to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Mr. Raggi acknowledged that Israel used the presence Hizbullah and the group's arms as a pretext for continued military action in Lebanese territory. Nonetheless, he reiterated that Lebanon was committed to a diplomatic solution and exercising full control over its territory. Turning to regional dynamics, Mr. Raggi said that the relationship of Lebanon with the Syrian Arab Republic had entered a new phase, noting that Damascus had pledged to respect sovereignty of Lebanon. In his view, that was a positive and encouraging development, although he acknowledged that several outstanding issues remained, including border delineation, refugees, prisoners and missing persons, which would all require time to resolve.

#### **F. Meeting with the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces**

46. Members of the Security Council heard a briefing by the Director of Operations of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Brigadier General George Rizkallah, who provided information on the security environment, recent operational gains by the Lebanese Armed Forces and counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism operations. Recalling the launch of the National Shield Plan on 5 September 2025, Brigadier General Rizkallah said that the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted some 60,000 missions per month, focusing on national security, including the Lebanese borders, as well as internal security and joint operations with UNIFIL. The aims of the National Shield Plan were establishing full State control over Lebanese territory, the gradual disarmament of non-State armed groups, the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from occupied

territory, the release of detainees apprehended by the Israel Defense Forces during the conflict, the reconstruction of the south and the modernization of the Lebanese Armed Forces, all in close coordination with UNIFIL and the Cessation of Hostilities Implementation Mechanism. As part of the first phase of operations, the Lebanese Armed Forces had swept areas south of the Litani in order to discover and confiscate any Hizbullah weapons, identify, inspect and secure tunnels, and clear unexploded ordnance. The relevant operations had been conducted partly in response to requests for assistance by the Mechanism and partly at the initiative of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In addition, Brigadier General Rizkallah showcased relevant achievements in the areas of counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics.

47. Responding to questions by members of the Security Council, the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Rodolphe Haykal, said that UNIFIL carried out tasks in several categories, not all of which the Lebanese Armed Forces would be able to carry out following the drawdown of the Force. Those tasks were monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), liaising with Israel and providing support to communities in southern Lebanon. Some of the operational tasks could be carried out by enhancing the capacities of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In that connection, he said that the Lebanese Armed Forces would be strengthened through the addition of one regiment (approximately 1,100 soldiers) by mid-2026. The addition of another regiment in the future could fill some of the operational vacuum that would be left by UNIFIL following its drawdown. In addition to adding soldiers, it was necessary to develop plans to ensure that the Lebanese Armed Forces had the equipment, training and experience to fulfil that aspect of the mandate of UNIFIL. Progress in that regard had been slowed by funding shortages, but it had also been steady. However, other aspects of UNIFIL operations, such as monitoring and reporting to the Security Council and liaising with Israel and the Maritime Taskforce, could not be carried out by the Lebanese Armed Forces, even with enhanced capabilities. General Haykal said that UNIFIL continued to carry out its mandate satisfactorily, given that it had been not mandated with preventing a war or disarming non-State armed groups, but rather monitoring, reporting and liaising between Israel and Lebanon.

48. General Haykal said that, although 88 per cent of the areas designated for inspection in phase one of the National Shield Plan had been cleared, private property was another matter. Inspecting private property required, among other things, warrants based on credible intelligence. He emphasized that while it was important to address perceived threats communicated through the Mechanism, the Lebanese Armed Forces would not be acting as a proxy for Israel and intrude on Lebanese citizens' homes at a time when it was trying to engage in confidence-building with the battered population of the south. At the same time, the Lebanese Armed Forces had not observed any evidence of Hizbullah reconstructing or replenishing its capabilities. Israel also needed to offer a concession, in his view, such as committing to the cessation of hostilities or withdrawing from the five points that it had most recently occupied and the two buffer zones that it had established, while noting that Israel continued to occupy Ghajar and Shab'a. General Haykal added that the first phase of the National Shield Plan also included the disarmament of Palestinian groups and the dismantling of illegal camps, especially in the eastern part of the country, noting that weapons had also been confiscated in the Biqa' Valley and Mount Lebanon. Regarding the situation on the eastern border, General Haykal noted that progress was being made with the new Syrian Government and, notwithstanding differences in ideology, confidence needed to be built. Smuggling remained a challenge, but the Lebanese Armed Forces was committed to protecting the borders and internal security of Lebanon.

## **G. Meeting with the Chair of the Cessation of Hostilities Mechanism**

49. Members of the Security Council also met with Lieutenant General Joseph Clearfield, the Chair of the mechanism established under the Announcement of a Cessation of Hostilities and Related Commitments on Enhanced Security Arrangements and Toward the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) of 26 November 2024. During the meeting, Lt. Gen. Joseph Clearfield gave an overview of the Mechanism, its establishment and the prospects for its use in the future. In particular, Lieutenant General Clearfield emphasized the prospects for a renewed impetus following the designation of civilian and diplomatic representatives from Lebanon and Israel to participate in the Mechanism's work. He cautioned that it was too early to assess the possible outcomes, noting that only one meeting had been held thus far, which coincided with the Council's visit to Lebanon.

## **H. Meeting with acting Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

50. The acting Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Mourad Wahba, outlined the Commission's mandate and its evolving role in the region, noting that ESCWA covered the entire Arab world. While the primary focus of ESCWA had traditionally been on economic and social development, in recent years, it had increasingly become involved in governance issues, institution-building and civil society participation. In the context of the Syrian Arab Republic, the acting Executive Secretary said that ESCWA had facilitated dialogue between civil society organizations and government officials in settings where such engagement would not have been possible inside their countries. Those efforts had resulted in the creation of networks as resources for supporting stability and reducing tensions. ESCWA was also cooperating with ministries on institution-building, banking regulations and debt management. He said the Syrian Arab Republic needed support with the modernization of payment systems, including access to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication system, and the development of investment laws. He warned of the risks posed by illicit financial flows and emphasized the importance of countering such flows in order to safeguard economic recovery. Similar initiatives had been undertaken in Lebanon and other Arab countries. While those developments might not appear to be very significant, they provided opportunities for dialogue among actors who would otherwise lack such channels, thereby contributing to confidence-building and regional stability. He concluded his briefing by reaffirming the Commission's readiness to support the Syrian Arab Republic and the region through technical assistance, policy dialogue and institution-building initiatives, stressing the close link between socioeconomic development and long-term peace and stability.

## **I. Briefing by the Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon**

51. The Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL, Major General Diodato Abagnara, addressed the situation in the UNIFIL area of operations south of the Litani River, including recent developments along the Blue Line, the operational posture of UNIFIL, the status of Lebanese Armed Forces deployment and the functioning of the liaison and de-escalation mechanism. Major General Abagnara recalled that the Security Council, in its resolution 2790 (2025), had requested UNIFIL to cease operations on 31 December 2026 and, within one year from that date, conduct an orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal. In that resolution, the Council called for

intensified international support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and encouraged the Force Commander, within the existing mandate and rules of engagement, to prioritize operational activities aimed at discovering tunnels and weapons caches and mitigating incidents of denial of freedom of movement. In addition, Major General Abagnara noted that the Council had called on the Cessation of Hostilities Mechanism and UNIFIL to cooperate within their respective mandates and had emphasized the monitoring and verification role of UNIFIL.

52. The Force Commander reported that UNIFIL currently fielded approximately 9,600 personnel, including some 9,091 military staff and 659 civilian staff, operated with 49 troop-contributing countries and maintained three vessels and six helicopters. In addition, UNIFIL patrolled 120 km of the Blue Line, sustained approximately 271 operational activities per day and supported 15 medical facilities. Major General Abagnara said that the Force's liquidity plan foresaw reductions in troop numbers over time, while maintaining essential operational capacity until the end of 2026.

53. Since the cessation of hostilities on 27 November 2024, there had been a sustained pattern of Israel Defense Forces activity north of the Blue Line, including the maintenance of positions and kinetic actions inside the UNIFIL area of operations, compounded by extensive air and uncrewed aerial vehicle operations that constrained the Force's freedom of movement and increased risks to peacekeepers. Specific incidents reported included a drone crashing inside UNIFIL position 1-21 on 16 November and a direct attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers south of Khiyam on 16 November, when a Merkava tank fired a machine gun round that impacted approximately 5 m from United Nations personnel on foot. Major General Abagnara said that, since 27 November 2024, UNIFIL had recorded 8,066 air violations, 1,019 trajectories from south of the Blue Line, 66 instances of aggressive behaviour, such as aiming of weapons or lasers and firing of warning shots, 4 direct attacks, 119 cases of direct fire across the Blue Line, 2,635 instances of military activities carried out by the Israel Defense Forces in the area of operations and 36 Blue Line violations. In addition, he noted that five positions and two buffer zones were currently occupied by the Israel Defense Forces, making UNIFIL movement at those locations impossible, and that Israel Defense Forces units maintained those locations inside the area of operations in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006).

54. Airspace violations remained a major concern. There had been 1,017 such violations in October 2025 alone. In addition, micro- and mini-uncrewed aerial vehicles and class I uncrewed aerial vehicles were being used in ways that created tangible risks for patrols, positions and aviation. Major General Abagnara emphasized that continuous tactical deconfliction had been required in order to avoid unsafe proximity.

55. The Force Commander said that the Lebanese Armed Forces maintained 137 positions south of the Litani River and had progressively reinforced its deployment, with troop numbers increasing from approximately 2,860 in November 2024 to 8,985 in September 2025. In addition, the Lebanese Armed Forces had a publicly declared objective of having 10,000 troops in place by the end of 2025. The Force Commander said that UNIFIL had observed no evidence of attempts to re-establish an organized military presence south of the Litani River by Hizbullah, and that Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL operations aimed at confiscating weapons or dismantling infrastructure had not been impeded, with minimal denial of freedom of movement.

56. UNIFIL continued to support the National Shield Plan of the Lebanese Armed Forces and disarmament-related tasks through three operational modalities to counter unauthorized weapons: (a) countering unauthorized weapons and arms (CUWA) 1, with 212 operations conducted on the basis of direct requests from the Lebanese Armed Forces; (b) CUWA 2, which involved reconnaissance of lines of interest and

sensitive areas, with 118 operations conducted; and (c) CUWA 3, which involved maintaining a permanent presence to monitor the area of operations, with 1,722 operations conducted during the period from 29 September to 28 November. In addition, UNIFIL conducted on average some 271 operational activities per day, including approximately 217 daily patrols, and leveraged its Liaison Branch for daily deconfliction of ground and humanitarian movements. Since 27 November 2024, the Liaison Branch had issued 990 letters and 12,514 notifications, including 6,235 to the Lebanese Armed Forces and 550 to the Israel Defense Forces, and had conducted 390 Blue Line patrols. Major General Abagnara noted that liaison and coordination between Lebanon and Israel had been continuous since the establishment of the Cessation of Hostilities Mechanism.

57. With regard to the recent hostilities, Major General Abagnara said that more than 86,000 people had been displaced as a result of the conflict, with most seeking refuge in Tyre and Sidon. Many villages along the Blue Line had been severely damaged or destroyed. In Naqurah, the population had reportedly fallen from more than 5,000 to fewer than 25, with only six houses still standing. Major General Abagnara said that UNIFIL had provided limited civil-military cooperation support within existing resources, such as water, food and education materials, while stressing that the Force's mandate was not humanitarian. He also said that, by the end of September 2025, UNIFIL had delivered 55,263 kg of food rations and 442,620 l of fuel to the Lebanese Armed Forces and gifted approximately 100 vehicles to the Lebanese Armed Forces and General Directorate of General Security.

58. Major General Abagnara concluded his briefing by outlining capability gaps and support priorities for the Lebanese Armed Forces, noting shortfalls in some skills areas, explosive ordnance disposal and engineering competence, night and tactical operations, mission command and communications, and mobility and maintenance. He highlighted the need for support to the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy for maritime interdiction operations and capacity-building and noted that training the Lebanese Armed Forces was not explicitly mandated by resolutions [1701 \(2006\)](#) or [2790 \(2025\)](#), although practical cooperation in that regard remained essential. Major General Abagnara set out escalation scenarios that could arise if Israel assessed Lebanese disarmament efforts as being insufficient, if disarmament beyond the Litani River stalled, if Hizbullah continued to reject disarmament or if reactions to air operations or clashes between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces ensued. He reiterated that achieving an area free of unauthorized weapons and assets south of the Litani River was possible and that UNIFIL could verify the process in agreement with the parties and the Cessation of Hostilities Mechanism, while stressing that further progress in 2026 would require the fulfilment of obligations under resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), continued support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and the broader security sector, and support for recovery and the restoration of State authority in southern Lebanon.

## **J. Visit to and operational briefing at United Nations position 1-31**

59. Members of the Security Council travelled to United Nations position 1-31, where they directly observed one of the five illegal positions that the Israel Defense Forces had recently established in Lebanese territory, inside the UNIFIL area of operations. Along the way to the position, they were able to see the destruction that had been caused by Israeli air strikes to villages and their outskirts adjacent to the Blue Line. Hardly any houses were standing, let alone inhabited. The once lush vegetation had been burned or sprayed with chemicals to obstruct growth. At position 1-31, members of the Security Council heard a briefing on the operational situation in Sector West, including developments along the Blue Line, the posture of the Israel

Defense Forces and the activities of UNIFIL in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1701 \(2006\)](#) and [2790 \(2025\)](#). The briefing covered events that had occurred in the lead-up to and during the recent conflict, as well as developments following the announcement of the cessation of hostilities on 27 November 2024. UNIFIL maintained a solid presence at position 1-31, which was staffed on a 24/7 basis by 20–25 personnel, who were rotated every six months. The position included observation towers, bunkers, accommodation facilities and essential supplies.

60. The briefing included a review of the timeline of the escalation of hostilities, with a focus on the effect that the hostilities had had on UNIFIL. For example, on 6 October 2024, an air strike had occurred approximately 250 m from position 1-31, followed by direct fire that had damaged cameras and collapsed perimeter walls. Also on 6 October 2024, Israel Defense Forces soldiers had breached the T-walls of the Blue Line and, on 10 October, they had entered and fired at position 1-31, causing structural damage to the base. During the conflict, United Nations positions had been subjected to multiple incidents, including air strikes, artillery shelling and direct fire. Blast waves from air strikes on 15 February and 23 February 2024 had damaged solar panels and other infrastructure.

61. Following the cessation of hostilities, UNIFIL had observed significant Israel Defense Forces activity near position 1-31. Beginning in January 2025, the Israel Defense Forces had initiated construction of a forward operating base adjacent to the Blue Line, employing heavy earth-moving machinery around the clock. By February, earth barriers, trenches and sentry boxes had been established, and shelters had been positioned near the command post. In subsequent months, the Israel Defense Forces had put in place reinforced force protection measures, including trench-type perimeter walkways and remotely controlled weapon stations. Merkava tanks were confirmed inside the base, and patrols increased in frequency, including incursions into buffer zones. Israel Defense Forces training activities were documented, involving live-fire drills, drone reconnaissance and the use of laser targeting against United Nations positions. Aggressive behaviour was noted on 15 October 2025, when a Merkava fired into Lebanese territory over hill ZA2.

62. According to UNIFIL, no activity by other armed actors had been detected in the vicinity of position 1-31 following the ceasefire. Searches conducted jointly with Lebanese Armed Forces across Tyre and south of the Litani River had revealed weapons, ammunition and tunnels that had been destroyed during the war. The Lebanese Armed Forces has reportedly improved its presence in such areas as Alma al-Sha‘b, and it continued to cooperate closely with UNIFIL. Liaison mechanisms remained critical to de-escalation, with UNIFIL maintaining direct contact with Israel Defense Forces counterparts to address threat perceptions and prevent incidents. It was the assessment of UNIFIL that the Israel Defense Forces was likely to maintain a high operational tempo, in order to demonstrate readiness and exert pressure within the area of operations. UNIFIL emphasized the importance of a tangible and credible United Nations presence, in order to uphold the Force’s mandate and maintain stability along the Blue Line.

## **K. Press stakeout**

63. At the conclusion of the mission, the co-leads convened a press stakeout, at which they expressed support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon. They noted that the aim of the mission was to examine options for the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) following the departure of UNIFIL from Lebanon. The co-leads said that they looked forward to the Secretary-General’s recommendations in this regard. In addition, they reiterated that the safety

of peacekeepers must be guaranteed and called for intensified international support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, including in its sustained deployment south of the Litani River. They also expressed the support of the Security Council for the decision of the Government of Lebanon to ensure the monopoly of the State over arms.

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