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Thirty-eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. The present report is the thirty-eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and assessment of the implementation of the resolution since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (S/2023/280), on 17 April 2023, and covers developments until 19 September 2023.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) by the Security Council on 2 September 2004, limited progress has been made on its implementation. A number of provisions, including with regard to the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, remain pending.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

3. Through the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council sought to help strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in accordance with the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon had committed themselves. That objective has remained the priority of my efforts.

4. In Lebanon, a president has not yet been elected to succeed former President Michel Aoun, whose term in office ended on 31 October 2022. On 14 June, at the twelfth parliamentary session convened by the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, to elect a successor, neither Jihad Azour, a director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the former Minister of Finance of Lebanon, nor Suleiman Franjeh, the leader of the Marada Movement, secured the necessary majority. Of the 128 votes cast, Mr. Azour received 59 and Mr. Franjeh 51. Mr. Azour was supported by the Lebanese Forces, the Kata'ib Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, a majority of the Free Patriotic Movement and a number of parliamentarians representing independent and emerging groups. Mr. Franjeh was supported by Hizbullah, the Amal Movement,



the Marada-led bloc, Hizbullah-aligned Sunnis and some independent parliamentarians. Michel Moawad had withdrawn his candidacy earlier in favour of Azour.

5. On 16 June, the International Support Group for Lebanon issued a statement from Beirut urging “the political leadership and Members of Parliament to assume their responsibilities and prioritize the national interest by electing a new President without further delay”.

6. Following an initial meeting in Paris on 6 February (see [S/2023/280](#), para. 8), the second quintet meeting on Lebanon was held in Doha on 17 July. In a joint statement, the participants noted that “representatives from Egypt, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United States met to discuss the urgent need for Lebanon’s leadership to expedite presidential elections and implement imperative economic reforms in order to fulfil their responsibilities to their citizens”. As part of efforts to encourage dialogue among Lebanese political leaders, the envoy of France, Jean-Yves Le Drian, met with representatives of political parties in Beirut from 21 to 24 June and from 25 to 27 July. He then wrote to Members of Parliament seeking their responses by 31 August regarding the characteristics desired of a new president and his/her priorities. Mr. Le Drian visited Beirut again from 12 to 15 September. France hosted a meeting of the quintet on 19 September on the margins of the General Assembly in New York.

7. The Parliament of Lebanon convened, exceptionally, on two occasions in its legislative capacity during the reporting period. On 18 April, Parliament adopted a law extending the mandate of the municipal councils and mukhtars until May 2024, effectively postponing for the second time municipal elections, which were slated to be held in May 2023. The Lebanese Forces and the Kata’ib Party, together with independent parliamentarians and parliamentarians representing emerging groups, boycotted the 18 April parliamentary session and filed separate appeals with the Constitutional Council disputing the extension of the mandate of the municipal councils and mukhtars. The Constitutional Council rejected the appeals on 30 May.

8. On 19 June, Parliament approved the opening of a 37.4 billion Lebanese pound credit line to fund the disbursement of public sector salaries and allowances for June and beyond. That session was boycotted by the Lebanese Forces, the Kata’ib Party and independent and emerging group parliamentarians, who maintained that Parliament is not constitutionally allowed to legislate in the absence of a president. A legislative session scheduled for 17 August to consider a draft capital control law and the oil and gas sovereign fund draft law did not take place owing to a lack of quorum, with only 52 of the 128 members present. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati convened the caretaker Cabinet on 14 occasions during the reporting period to address “pressing matters related to citizens’ needs”. Such matters included, inter alia, the draft state budgets for 2023 and 2024, electricity sector measures and public sector employee salaries. The eight ministers affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement boycotted these sessions.

9. On 16 August, the caretaker Cabinet adopted the draft 2023 budget, under which the deficit is projected to be 23.57 per cent, compared with 18.5 per cent in 2022. The caretaker Cabinet also approved a draft bill that would allow it to open credit lines of up to 10 billion Lebanese pounds from the reserve budget until the official budget for 2023 is approved by Parliament. On 7 September, the caretaker Cabinet commenced discussions on the draft 2024 budget.

10. In May, Lebanon received International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Red Notices for the arrest of then-Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh following the issuance of arrest warrants by France and Germany. On 31 July, Mr. Salameh concluded his term as Central Bank Governor, with First Vice-Governor Wassim Mansouri assuming the functions of Interim Governor on 1 August. After

conducting a forensic audit of the Central Bank for the period 2015 to 2020, the advisory firm Alvarez and Marsal presented a report to the caretaker Government of Lebanon on 11 August in which it noted that there was a “lack of overall good governance and risk management arrangements”.

11. Nearly 18 months after the signature of the staff-level agreement between IMF and Lebanon on 7 April 2022 (see [S/2022/556](#), para. 50), most prerequisite actions for a board-level agreement remain outstanding. Following its article IV mission to Lebanon, IMF observed, in its concluding statement of 23 March, that there had been “limited progress in implementing the comprehensive package of economic reforms,” adding, “without rapid reforms [Lebanon] will be mired in a never-ending crisis”. Following a staff-level delegation visit to Lebanon from 11 to 14 September, IMF issued a statement in which it indicated that “Lebanon continues to face enormous economic challenges, with a collapsed banking sector, eroding public services, deteriorating infrastructure, worsening poverty and unemployment conditions, and widening inequality ... The mission impressed upon the authorities and parliamentarians the urgency of implementing a comprehensive reform program”.

12. There has been no progress in the investigation into the Beirut port explosion. On the eve of the third anniversary of the explosion, the International Support Group for Lebanon issued a statement in Beirut on 3 August lamenting “the lack of progress in the judicial proceedings” and calling on “the Lebanese authorities to lift all obstacles hindering the pursuit of justice and [to] facilitate the completion of an impartial, thorough and transparent investigation”. The Group also stated that “[e]nsuring judicial accountability and combatting impunity is integral to restoring the credibility of Lebanon’s state institutions. The stalemate in the port explosion investigation underscores the urgent need to safeguard the independence, impartiality and integrity of the Lebanese judiciary. The members of the ISG call on the Lebanese Parliament to accelerate the adoption of necessary legislation to strengthen the independence of the judiciary in line with international standards”.

13. On 19 April, the Permanent Military Court issued rulings against 36 individuals in the case of the armed clashes that occurred in Khaldah on 1 August 2021. A total of 25 individuals (all men) were convicted of murder and inciting sectarian strife, with 9 sentenced to death in absentia and 16 sentenced to prison, while 11 individuals (all men) were acquitted. On 5 May, the Permanent Military Court postponed until November 2023 the trial session in the case of a Syrian refugee who died in August 2022 in a State security centre in Bint Jubayl, southern Lebanon (see [S/2022/858](#), para. 63).

14. There has been no progress in the prosecution of 68 individuals in the case of the deadly clashes that occurred in Tayyunah on 14 October 2021 (see [S/2021/953](#), para. 57). No progress has been made in the investigation into the killing of Lokman Slim on 4 February 2021 (see [S/2021/240](#), para. 46).

15. Elias Hasrouni, the former Lebanese Forces coordinator for Bint Jubayl District, South Lebanon, was found dead on 2 August in Ayn Ibil municipality, Bint Jubayl District.

16. The two-track dialogue process between women from traditional political parties and emerging groups continued, alongside 11 local women’s mediation networks, to support inclusive dialogue and non-violent conflict resolution. Prior to the postponement of the municipal elections, more than 500 women had benefited from capacity-building to strengthen their participation and representation in elected bodies, including through the adoption of temporary special measures. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), together with two national women’s rights non-governmental organizations, KAFA and Female, issued an alert concerning the growing number of disappeared women and

girls in Lebanon. In 2022, the number of women and girls reported missing increased by more than 50 per cent, to 129 from 81, in 2021.

17. In its resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request of the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border, noting that such measures would constitute a significant step towards asserting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon and improving the relations between the two countries.

18. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain critical to enable proper border control and management and to prevent smuggling, including with regard to the movement of people, goods and, potentially, arms. While border delineation is a bilateral matter, progress on the issue remains an obligation for Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#).

19. Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, in violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

20. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area, and incidents in the occupied Shab'a Farms contributed to heightened tensions between Lebanon and Israel. In addition, neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) of 30 October 2007 ([S/2007/641](#)).

21. During the reporting period, uncrewed aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israel Defense Forces continued to fly over Lebanon, in violation of Lebanese territorial sovereignty and resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

22. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 19 June ([S/2023/459](#)), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations stated: "The Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory continues in the Shab'a Farms, the Kafr Shuba hills and the outskirts of the town of Mari, which includes the expanded part of the town of Ghajar. The Israeli side has been conducting excavations, building concrete structures and installing fences in these occupied lands." She added, "[Lebanon] stresses the need for Israel to withdraw from all occupied Lebanese territories, namely the Shab'a Farms, the Kafr Shuba hills and the outskirts of the town of Mari, which includes the expanded part of the town of Ghajar". With respect to the issue of the tent (see [S/2023/522](#), para. 7), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. stated, "The media blows out of proportion minor issues, such as the erection of a small tent in the Shab'a Farms south of the Blue Line (which is currently being addressed), when the root of the problem is the ongoing violation by Israel of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#)".

23. In identical letters also addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 22 June ([S/2023/465](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that "Israel will not accept any violation of its sovereignty and retains the right to take all necessary measures to protect its territory". He further stated: "I call upon the Security Council to unequivocally condemn Hezbollah and its Iranian patrons' ongoing violations of UNSC resolutions, including [1701 \(2006\)](#) and [1559 \(2004\)](#), and denounce the latest infringement of Israeli sovereignty in the area of DOF 692. The Security Council must demand the Lebanese authorities act immediately and without further delay to dismantle and remove these structures."

24. On 10 July, the Speaker of Parliament issued a statement in which he said: "The tents are located on Lebanese land. What is required of the international community is to compel Israel to implement resolution 1701 and to withdraw from the northern

part of the village of Ghajar, the Shab'a farms, and the Kafr Shuba hills." In a public speech on 12 July, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, stated, "Where we placed our tent is Lebanese territory". He added that "Israel does not dare to take a step towards the tent because it knows the response would not be silent".

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

25. The Government of Lebanon continued its efforts to extend the authority of the State over all Lebanese territory, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

26. On 1 June, the first military investigation judge issued indictments against seven suspects and search warrants against six more in the case of the fatal attack against a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) convoy in the vicinity of Aqibiyah on 14 December 2022 (see [S/2023/184](#), para. 2). One indicted suspect is in detention, with an arrest warrant issued and implemented. The first trial hearing was held on 30 August, having been postponed from 14 July for procedural reasons. The next hearing is scheduled for 15 December 2023. In response to a request for judicial cooperation, UNIFIL has shared the findings of its own investigation with the judicial authorities of Lebanon and facilitated access to witnesses within the framework of the UNIFIL status-of-forces agreement. The Force also facilitated interaction between the Lebanese authorities and the national authorities of the relevant contingent in connection with their respective investigations (see [S/2023/280](#), para. 21).

27. In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 27 July ([S/2023/564](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel stated, "Over the past months, Hezbollah – with Iran's funding and directive – has become more brazen, increasing its actions and presence along Israel's border". He added: "All of these actions are part of a clear pattern of escalation and intensification. Hezbollah is attempting to initiate friction along the Blue Line through provocations and increasing hostility, all while increasing the terror group's readiness and military capabilities. This dangerous pattern is leading the way towards outright conflict and the consequences of such a conflict will be disastrous for the entire region."

28. In identical letters addressed to me and the President of the Security Council dated 17 August ([S/2023/616](#)), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations stated, "Lebanon once again calls upon the Security Council to put an end to the daily Israeli violations of Lebanese territory by air, land and sea, which constitute an infringement on Lebanese sovereignty and demonstrate a lack of regard for the Charter of the United Nations and international resolutions". She added: "The violations committed by the Israeli side cannot be compared, in terms of number or seriousness, with violations committed by the Lebanese side. The throwing of a stone over a fence, a shepherd crossing the Blue Line with some of his sheep or the setting up of a tent in the occupied Lebanese Shab'a Farms do not compare with the annexation of Lebanese territory, or with Israeli military aircraft roaming around Lebanese airspace or even bombing another State, Syria, from above Lebanon, an action that also threatens the safety of Lebanese civil aviation."

29. In a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 14 September 2023 ([S/2023/672](#)), the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations "categorically reject[ed] all unwarranted and unjustified references to Iran, as well as the unsubstantiated accusations levelled against my country, by the representative of the Israeli regime in documents [S/2023/504](#) and [S/2023/564](#)".

30. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued their operations to maintain security and stability in the country, including through counter-terrorism and anti-trafficking activities. During 16 counter-terrorism operations conducted between 25 March and 30 August, Lebanese security forces arrested 20 individuals across Lebanon on terrorism-related charges. On 19 May, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested an individual in north Lebanon, stating that he was “one of the most prominent leaders of Al-Qaeda and founder of its cells in Lebanon [...] and played a key role in establishing the terrorist Fath al-Islam organization”.

31. Lebanese security forces arrested 10 individuals in at least 13 operations to counter drug smuggling. On 7 June, in Yammunah, Biqa', eastern Lebanon, the Lebanese Armed Forces seized several drug-manufacturing factories. The Internal Security Forces thwarted several attempts to smuggle drugs out of Lebanon, including on 14 April in Tripoli, northern Lebanon. On 3 June, in Mount Lebanon, an alleged drug smuggler was killed during an exchange of fire with the Internal Security Forces. As at 30 August, the Lebanese Armed Forces had arrested 18 individuals of Lebanese or Syrian nationality in seven operations conducted since 25 March to combat the smuggling of people by sea.

32. Member States continued to provide bilateral support to the Lebanese Armed Forces and State security institutions, given the ongoing economic crisis in the country. The livelihood support programme for the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces commenced on 18 April with the first monthly disbursement for Internal Security Forces personnel. Disbursements to Lebanese Armed Forces personnel commenced on 23 June. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution [2650 \(2022\)](#), the programme is funded through a financial transfer and accountability mechanism managed by the United Nations Development Programme, under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, for a period of six months.

33. In March, the Lebanese pound depreciated to 140,000 pounds to the United States dollar in the parallel market. Following Central Bank foreign exchange interventions, the unofficial rate subsequently stabilized at around 94,000 pounds to the dollar. By September, the unofficial rate was around 89,000 pounds to the dollar. In a report entitled “Lebanon Economic Monitor: Normalization of Crisis is No Road for Stabilization”, published on 16 May, the World Bank cited a growing dollarized cash economy estimated at \$9.9 billion, or 45.7 per cent of gross domestic product, in 2022, as a major impediment to the economic recovery of Lebanon. The World Bank also reported that inflation in Lebanon averaged 171.2 per cent in 2022, attributable in large part to the country's nominal food price inflation rate of 352 per cent, the highest in the world. Demonstrations, roadblocks and strikes to protest against the deteriorating economic conditions continued, mostly in Beirut and North Lebanon.

34. At the seventh Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, which was held on 14 and 15 June in Brussels, caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon, Abdallah Bou Habib, said “Lebanon is facing political and economic issues that are enlarged by the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon despite the donor countries' support to Lebanon”. He added, “Lebanon needs tangible support to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis so that Lebanon does not become a massive refugee camp in the Mediterranean”. As at 31 July, 806,967 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon, including 795,322 Syrian refugees and 11,645 refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities. New registrations of Syrian refugees by UNHCR were suspended by the Government of Lebanon in 2015. As indicated in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for 2023, the Government estimates that there are 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. UNHCR

is aware of 30 actual or attempted irregular movements by sea from Lebanon, involving 1,781 passengers, of which the majority are Syrians, from January through August.

35. On 5 April, the Lebanese Armed Forces commenced security operations targeting Syrians in urban residential areas and informal tented settlements across Lebanon. According to reports, more than 100 raids were conducted and more than 2,200 people were arrested. Of the 2,200 persons arrested, more than 1,800 were deported. On 26 April, the caretaker Prime Minister convened the interministerial committee overseeing the Syrian refugee file, which reaffirmed the 24 April 2019 decision of the Higher Defence Council (see [S/2019/574](#), para. 42). Significant protection concerns have been reported, including family separations. Following engagement with the Lebanese authorities by the United Nations and partners, no group deportation following targeted security operations has occurred since 11 May. However, deportations and pushbacks of Syrians across the land border with the Syrian Arab Republic following arrests at checkpoints in North Lebanon continued to be reported, increasing substantially since July. On 8 August, the Government of Lebanon and UNHCR agreed that UNHCR would share data on Syrian refugees in Lebanon with the Government. UNHCR stated that “[t]he Lebanese Government committed not to use any data shared for purposes contrary to international law”.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

36. In its resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#), the Security Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. The provision reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Accords.

37. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continued to operate outside the control of the Government, in violation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside government control, Hizbullah is the most heavily armed militia in the country.

38. There has been no tangible progress made towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias during the reporting period. Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle that crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon.

39. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside of a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, which consider that those issues are destabilizing factors in the country and undermine democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat that they could be used within Lebanon for political reasons.

40. The self-acknowledged maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups and the alleged increase by Hizbullah of its arsenal pose a serious challenge to the ability of the State to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory.

41. As reported in [S/2023/522](#) (paras. 2–4), rockets were fired from southern Lebanon towards Israel on 6 April and Israel conducted airstrikes inside southern Lebanon on 7 April. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 7 April ([S/2023/253](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that, “[y]esterday, a barrage of 34 missiles was fired from Lebanon at Israel ... by a Hamas terror cell”. He added, “Israel holds the Government of Lebanon responsible for all attacks emanating from Lebanese territory and demands that Lebanon fulfil its duties to prevent all hostile activity from its territory”.

In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me also dated 7 April (S/2023/258), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations stated, "Lebanon condemns the attacks that Israel carried out ... on ... 7 April ... against areas in southern Lebanon".

42. On 21 May, Hizbullah conducted a military drill with weapons, including rocket launchers, on display, while quadcopters simulated attacks on potential "Israeli targets", in Aramta, Jazzin district, southern Lebanon. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 30 May (S/2023/391), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that "Hezbollah's provocative exercise as well as its increased military capabilities and hostile activities have a growing potential for miscalculation which could lead to escalation".

43. On 9 August, two people were killed in an exchange of fire between Hizbullah members and residents of Kahhalah, in the district of Alayh, a predominantly Christian village 12 km south-east of Beirut, after a truck belonging to Hizbullah overturned in the village. On 10 August, the Lebanese Armed Forces issued a statement in which they noted that "[a]n army unit was dispatched to the scene and worked to contain the situation. The truck's cargo was transported to a military post, and an investigation was initiated under the supervision of the competent judicial authorities". In a public speech on 14 August, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah stated, with reference to that incident: "I always said openly that we are improving our preparedness and readiness and our arms in quality and quantity and that ammunition and arms are transported from one area to another ... We transport arms in trucks and other means. Of course we transfer them in civilian trucks."

44. On 18 August, a military court summoned four Kahhalah residents, and it summoned four Hizbullah members on 22 August.

45. On 26 August, Hizbullah showcased military equipment, including what were reported to be anti-aircraft missiles, at an exhibition in Baalbek, eastern Lebanon, to mark the sixth anniversary of operations to liberate the region from the presence of Da'esh. Media reported that equipment that seized by Hizbullah during the 1982, 2000 and 2006 wars with Israel and the 2017 battle with Islamist groups in Syria was displayed during the exhibition. The head of the political council of Hizbullah, Ibrahim Amin Al Sayyed, described the items displayed as "clear proof of the resistance's power and efficiency to defeat and weaken the enemy".

46. Unauthorized weapons, including light machine guns, assault rifles, pistols and hunting weapons, were observed by UNIFIL at the unauthorized firing ranges in Zibqin, Dayr Amis, Qantarah, Frun and Wadi Hamul in southern Lebanon. Those firing ranges are outside State control.

47. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the Palestine refugee camps continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 in the context of the national dialogue, confirmed at subsequent sessions, to disarm Palestinian militias outside the camps, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country. On 31 May, five members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command died in an explosion at its base in Qusaya, eastern Lebanon, near the border with the Syrian Arab Republic. The cause of the explosion has not yet been confirmed.

48. In July and August, at least 13 people were killed and dozens injured in armed clashes in the Ein El Hilweh Palestine refugee camp, near Sidon, South Lebanon. Clashes between the Fatah movement and Islamist groups erupted following reports of a failed attempt to assassinate an Islamist group leader on 29 July. A Fatah commander and his bodyguards were reportedly killed in retaliation on 30 July. In a

statement issued on 30 July, the caretaker Prime Minister of Lebanon said, “We call on the Palestinian leadership to cooperate with the army to control the security situation and hand over those meddling with security to the Lebanese authorities”. The Palestinian presidency denounced the “heinous massacre and terrorist assassination” of the Fatah movement members.

49. In a statement issued on 31 July, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said that, as a result of the clashes, “[m]ore than 2,000 people were forced to flee in search of safety. In response to the urgent needs for shelter, UNRWA, with volunteers opened its schools to accommodate displaced families and is providing basic humanitarian assistance. All UNRWA services in the camp have been temporarily suspended due to the violence. UNRWA urgently calls on all parties to immediately return to calm and take all measures necessary to protect civilians, including children. We urge all armed actors to respect all UNRWA premises and facilities in accordance with international law”.

50. A ceasefire was established on 31 July, however, it was later broken, with clashes in the camp continuing until 3 August. The Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Lebanon, Ashraf Dabbour, reportedly engaged with the commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces to secure a new ceasefire. The Speaker of Parliament, political party representatives and the chair of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, which is attached to the Office of the Prime Minister, also contributed to ceasefire efforts. While large-scale clashes ceased on 3 August, isolated incidents of armed violence stemming from the underlying inter-factional dispute, as well as the deployment of fighters within the camp, continued, limiting the access of UNRWA and other humanitarian actors to some parts of the camp.

51. On 18 August, UNRWA issued a statement in which it said that the Agency “has decided to suspend all of its services within the Ein El Hilweh camp today at 11:30 a.m. in protest against the continued presence of armed fighters in its facilities, including schools in the camp. The Agency does not tolerate actions that breach the inviolability and neutrality of its installations. These schools are unlikely to be available for 3,200 children at the start of the new school year given repeated violations, and significant damage reported. UNRWA reiterates its call on armed actors to immediately vacate its facilities, to ensure unimpeded delivery of much needed assistance to Palestine Refugees”.

52. On 19 August, UNRWA issued a statement in which it noted that the Agency had received reports that “another school compound has now been taken over by armed groups in the Ein El Hilweh Palestine refugee camp. This brings the total number of schools taken over by armed groups in the camp to eight, risking the start of the school year in time for 5,900 children”. The Agency also stated that it had received “credible reports of severe damage to the school buildings and looting of children’s education material and equipment from the schools”.

53. On 30 August, UNRWA appealed for \$15.5 million to repair infrastructure damaged in the clashes, provide alternate schooling locations for children and provide cash assistance to people whose shelters have been rendered uninhabitable or damaged, as well as to other conflict-affected Palestine refugees.

54. Since 7 September, at least 11 people were reported to have been killed and dozens injured in renewed clashes between the Fatah movement and Islamist groups, leading to the renewed displacement of hundreds of families from the Ein El Hilweh camp. Those clashes affected neighbourhoods in the camp’s northern, central and southern sectors, along with several areas adjacent to the camp. In addition to reports of damage within the camp, stray bullets and explosives caused one death and damage to property in Sidon. On 10 September, five Lebanese Armed Forces personnel were injured when shells fired during the clashes hit a Lebanese Armed Forces outpost

close to the camp. On 10 September, the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon used social media to call on those involved to “stop armed clashes, resume dialogue and allow UNRWA to provide education and other humanitarian services”. A ceasefire came into effect on 12 September following a meeting in Beirut between senior figures in the Fatah movement and Hamas. However, on 13 September, clashes resumed. On 14 September, another ceasefire came into effect following talks convened by the Speaker of Parliament and representatives of the Fatah movement and Hamas. That ceasefire remained in place as at 19 September. All UNRWA installations in the camp remained closed and two compounds containing eight UNRWA schools remained occupied by armed actors as at 19 September.

55. On 29 March, in Mieh Mieh Palestine refugee camp, a personal dispute escalated into shooting between two persons affiliated with Fatah and Hamas factions, resulting in one injury. On 6 May, armed clashes involving heavy weaponry between groups affiliated with Fatah and the Arab Liberation Front factions in the Beddawi Palestine refugee camp resulted in two injuries.

56. Palestine refugees continued to face food insecurity, restrictions on livelihood opportunities and barriers to gaining access to education and medical care, which pose particular risks for women and other marginalized groups. Quarterly cash assistance from UNRWA helped to lower the poverty rate among Palestine refugees to 80 per cent by March. Incidents of protests, sit-ins, violence and threats against UNRWA staff and facilities continued.

III. Observations

57. Lebanon has been without a president for nearly a year. This situation is regrettable. The country’s multi-pronged crisis can only be addressed through the election of a President of the Republic, the formation of a fully empowered government and the implementation of comprehensive reforms that respond to the needs and aspirations of the Lebanese people. I call on Lebanese leaders to prioritize the national interest and work together to break this protracted political impasse, in the interest of all communities and people in Lebanon. I appeal to Lebanese Members of Parliament to assume their constitutional duty to elect a new president without further delay. The importance of a free and fair presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence is noted clearly in resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). It is also vital that the actions previously agreed upon with IMF are also implemented in order for Lebanon to return to a path of prosperity and stability.

58. I remain concerned at the lack of progress towards the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). I again encourage relevant Lebanese actors to reinvigorate efforts towards an inclusive national dialogue to address the outstanding issues.

59. Furthermore, the dire living conditions in Lebanon pose security risks to the country by exacerbating tensions and increasing the risk of social unrest. I commend the efforts of the State security institutions to meet those multiple security challenges throughout the country. In that regard, I stress the importance of increased international support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and other State security institutions, for the security and stability of Lebanon. I thank all those who have been assisting those institutions at a time of enormous pressure and encourage all partners to contribute to this effort.

60. The use of weapons outside the control of the State by groups and individuals, including the military drill conducted by Hizbullah in Aramta on 21 May, the fatal

shooting that occurred in Kahhalah on 9 August in connection with an overturned truck belonging to Hizbullah that was carrying unauthorized ammunition and the military display mounted by Hizbullah in Baalbek on 26 August, as well as the deadly clashes in the Ein El Hilweh Palestine refugee camp, highlight not only the prevalence of weapons and related materiel throughout Lebanon that are outside the control of the State, but also the inherent risks to security and stability, not to mention human life, posed by such unlawful activity. In addition, these incidents underscore the urgent need to implement all provisions of resolution 1559 (2004).

61. The self-acknowledged maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern. Calls from sections of the Lebanese population for the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) and for the rejection of the possession of arms outside State authority indicate that the maintenance of weapons by Hizbullah remains a divisive issue within Lebanese society.

62. The Lebanese State should increase its efforts to achieve a monopoly over the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout its territory. I continue to urge the Government and the armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah or any other group from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006).

63. I again call upon all parties concerned not to engage in any military activity in or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). It is critical that the Accords be preserved and implemented by all to avoid the spectre of renewed confrontation among Lebanese citizens and to strengthen the institutions of the State. All parties concerned must contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State.

64. The continued, self-acknowledged involvement of Hizbullah in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is not only in breach of the disassociation policy and the principles of the Baabda Declaration of 2012, but also carries the risk of entangling Lebanon in regional conflicts and undermining the stability of Lebanon and of the region. Furthermore, it demonstrates the failure of Hizbullah to disarm and its refusal to be accountable to the very State institutions that the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) was intended to strengthen. The reported involvement of Hizbullah and that of other Lebanese elements in fighting elsewhere in the region remains of concern.

65. Countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah should encourage the disarmament of the group and its transformation into a solely civilian political party, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004) and in the best interests of Lebanon and of regional peace and security.

66. In that regard, it is important that decisions taken from the 2006 national dialogue be implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

67. I strongly condemn all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as they undermine the credibility of Lebanese security and State institutions and give rise to anxiety among the civilian population. I renew my calls for Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and to immediately cease its violations of Lebanese airspace. The repeated alleged use of Lebanese airspace by the Israel Defense Forces to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerning and poses a risk for regional

stability. I also urge the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to respond to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) of 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641, annex).

68. The independence of the judiciary in Lebanon must be respected. Delays in the investigations of the Beirut port explosion, the assassination of Lokman Slim, the Tayyulah clashes and other cases only erode people's trust in State institutions and the rule of law. I therefore reiterate my call for a swift, impartial, thorough, and transparent investigation into each of these cases, to deliver justice to the victims and their families, to hold the perpetrators accountable, and to restore people's confidence in the judicial system of Lebanon. The ruling of the Permanent Military Court in the case of the armed clashes that occurred in Khaldah on 1 August 2021 is welcome. I note the commencement of trial proceedings in the case of the fatal attack against a UNIFIL convoy in the vicinity of Aqibiyah on 14 December 2022 in which one peacekeeper was killed and three were injured, and I look forward to the perpetrators of this attack being held accountable.

69. I am thankful to Lebanon for continuing to host the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. A robust and united response, including from the international community, is vital to address the rising needs of refugees and host communities. I call upon the international community to continue to provide the necessary support, including through increased resettlement quotas. Application of legal and procedural safeguards, including the principle of non-refoulement, remains vital.

70. The Palestine refugee community also continues to suffer, including because of security risks within the camps and the overall deterioration of their economic situation. It is therefore vital that UNRWA receives consistent and sufficient funding to meet the protection needs of the Palestine refugee community, including those affected by the Ein El Hilweh clashes. The role of UNRWA in maintaining stability in the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon is more critical now than ever and vital to the dignity and security of Palestine refugees. Such efforts are without prejudice to the need for a just resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

71. I count on the continued commitment of the Government of Lebanon to its international obligations, and I call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The United Nations will continue its efforts in support of the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.
