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Implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

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

I. Background

1. The present report is the thirty-third semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the implementation of the resolution since the issuance of my previous report on the subject, on 20 October 2020 (S/2020/1032) and covers developments until 1 April 2021.

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 in its implementation. A number of provisions, including with respect 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 strengthen respect for 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. On 22 October, the President, Michel Aoun, held binding parliamentary consultations resulting in the appointment of the former Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, as Prime Minister-designate, with 65 votes out of 120 members of Parliament (eight members having resigned). Mr. Hariri vowed to quickly form a Government of non-partisan specialists, whose mission would be to implement economic, financial and administrative reforms. Since then, there has been a sustained deadlock over the formation of a new Government. Despite domestic and international efforts to break the impasse, positions appear entrenched and political rhetoric has steadily heightened.



5. As a result, the Government of the Prime Minister, Hassan Diab, has performed its functions as a caretaker cabinet in the eight months since its resignation on 10 August 2020. This has aggravated the pre-existing socioeconomic crisis as urgent structural reforms and the engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the preparation of a comprehensive stabilization and reform programme have been kept on hold. In a speech on 6 March, the Prime Minister warned that Lebanon was on the brink of explosion after the collapse. In his words, the “equation is clear: we cannot solve the social crisis without resolving the financial crisis; we cannot solve the financial crisis without resuming negotiations with the IMF; we cannot carry on negotiations with the IMF without undertaking reforms and we cannot carry out reforms without forming a new Government”. On 12 January 2021, the World Bank approved a loan of \$246 million for a three-year emergency social safety net programme to provide emergency cash transfers and access to social services to approximately 786,000 poor and vulnerable Lebanese people. The Lebanese Parliament approved the loan on 12 March. On 29 March, the Parliament passed an advance payment of \$200 million for the national electricity company to avert a total power blackout, although the amount will reportedly cover fuel import costs for two months only.

6. On 2 December 2020, in Paris, France and the United Nations co-chaired a conference in support of the Lebanese population. In the conclusions, the co-chairs stated that participants had expressed concern about the delays in the investigation into the blasts of 4 August 2020, the worsening socioeconomic situation and the emerging humanitarian crisis, and “strongly recalled the importance of effective implementation of the reforms expected by the population and the international community”. They reiterated that there was an urgent need for Lebanese political leaders to agree as soon as possible on the formation of a credible Government. The reform, recovery and reconstruction framework and its financing facility (a multi-donor trust fund) prepared by the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Union were endorsed.

7. On 23 March 2021, the League of Arab States called all on political factions in Lebanon to “raise the national interest and to act to put an end quickly to the political stalemate that is exacerbating the suffering of the Lebanese people”. The League also affirmed its readiness to support in overcoming the deadlock.

8. Popular frustration at the continuously deteriorating socioeconomic situation, the restrictions imposed in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the lack of accountability the political class is facing for the explosion that occurred at the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020 and the stalemate in the formation of a new Government erupted into several protests and security incidents during the reporting period. Some were accompanied by political, sectarian-based slogans. Starting on 25 January 2021, residents of Tripoli, one of the poorest areas of Lebanon, protested over the course of four days and the Internal Security Forces followed by the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed heavily to contain the situation. In that context, on 26 and 27 January, two protestors died, with 246 protesters and 81 security personnel injured, when protesters stormed local government buildings and clashed with security forces. On 2 March, the Lebanese pound reached a record low of 10,000 to the dollar. That day, demonstrators gathered and heavy roadblocks were erected in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the Biqa' Valley and South Lebanon. On 3 March, the President asked the Governor of the Central Bank, Riad Salamé, to determine the reasons that led to the rise of the United States dollar, especially in the preceding days. The protests have continued since then, while the value of the Lebanese pound has continued to decrease, reaching 15,000 to the dollar on 16 March.

9. In a meeting in Beirut on 11 March 2021, members of the International Support Group for Lebanon noted the “precipitating socioeconomic crisis” in Lebanon,

compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. They expressed concern at the increasing tensions in the country, including the recent protests. Having recalled “with consternation” that seven months had elapsed since the resignation of the previous Government, the Group reiterated its urgent call for Lebanon’s leaders to delay no longer the formation of a fully empowered Government capable of meeting the country’s urgent needs and implementing critical reforms.

10. The investigation into the causes and circumstances of the explosion at the port of Beirut continued. On 10 December 2020, the judge in the case, Fadi Sawan, announced his intention to question as suspects the caretaker Prime Minister, together with the former Minister of Finance, Ali Hassan Khalil, and two former Ministers of Public Works, Ghazi Zeiter and Youssef Fenianos. On 17 December, Mr. Khalil and Mr. Zeiter requested the Court of Cassation to transfer the case to another judge. On 18 February 2021, the Court of Cassation removed Mr. Sawan from the investigation. A new judge, Tareq Bitar, was appointed the next day. As at 19 February, 37 individuals had been charged; of those, 25 were detained. Victims and their families have staged protests at what they perceived as political interference in the investigation and a lack of accountability. As at 30 March, a total of 95,300 individuals had signed an online petition requesting, *inter alia*, a professional, independent, transparent and timely investigation into the explosion.

11. On 4 February, Lokman Slim, a political activist and publicist known for his critical stances in relation to Hizbullah, was found shot dead in his car near Nabatieh, South Lebanon. Mr. Slim’s killing was condemned across the political spectrum. The President and the caretaker Prime Minister called for the investigation into the killing to be expedited. Some political leaders and civil society activists and organizations expressed concern that Mr. Slim’s killing could be a prelude to a return of targeted killings in Lebanon. Prime Minister-designate Hariri stated on 14 February that “the series of assassinations continues, taking away the most precious people, [the] last of whom is martyr Lokman Slim, who followed the path of Mohamad Chatah, Gebran Tueni and Samir Kassir, the path of firm stances and freedom of thought”. Hizbullah condemned the killing and called for the perpetrators to be found, while denouncing accusations against the party. Shortly after Mr. Slim’s killing, protests were held in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon and Zahle.

12. The Deputy Special Coordinator, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon urged a “thorough, quick and transparent investigation and judicial process as to bring all those responsible for this outrageous act to justice”. Three Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council stated on 22 March that the Government should urgently implement measures to guarantee the independence and the impartiality of the investigation and ensure that those responsible were identified and held accountable, and that it should consider requesting international technical assistance to investigate the killing of Mr. Slim. In its statement of 11 March 2021, the International Support Group for Lebanon called for full accountability and justice to be served, through credible, transparent and swift investigations of the explosion in the port of Beirut and the killing of Mr. Slim.

13. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to significantly affect the Lebanese population throughout the reporting period despite several lockdowns aimed at preventing its spread. Many residents defied lockdown measures and complained of their impact on an already strained economy. Two members of Parliament died of complications related to COVID-19 on 31 January and 8 February 2021, respectively, bringing the number of parliamentarians in the 128-member Parliament down to 118; eight members had already resigned following the explosion in the port of Beirut. With emergency funding from the World Bank, Lebanon received its first shipment of vaccines on 13 February 2021. With additional COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility supplies, the Government aims to vaccinate at least one third of

the population, including refugees and migrant workers, by December 2021. On 23 February 2021, news that 16 individuals comprising members of Parliament and their staff had jumped the queue to get vaccinated was met with a backlash in the media and among the wider public. The United Nations country team has noted that the rollout of the vaccine is slow and registrations to get vaccinated are low.

14. Surveys conducted during 2020 by the United Nations Children's Fund indicate that the effect of the pandemic on young people has mainly been economic, as their salaries and working hours have been reduced and jobs have been lost.

15. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women published its list of issues and questions in relation to the sixth periodic report of Lebanon ([CEDAW/C/LBN/Q/6](#)). In the report ([CEDAW/C/LBN/6](#)), submitted on 27 July 2020, Lebanon described its efforts to implement the Committee's recommendations contained in its concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5](#)) and to implement the articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In its list of questions, the Committee took note of the fact that women occupied 30 per cent of ministerial posts in the Government and comprised 49.3 per cent of the country's judges and 64 per cent of the country's diplomats. It also noted, however, that women remained particularly underrepresented in Parliament and on municipal councils. It asked Lebanon to provide information on the steps envisaged to increase the number of women in elected and appointed decision-making bodies in order to achieve the equal representation of women and men in political and public life, including through the adoption of temporary special measures. Specifically, the Committee inquired about measures to introduce a system of quotas aimed at reaching a minimum of 30 per cent representation of women in Parliament and to support the campaigning of women candidates for elected positions.

16. The dire economic situation also had a severe impact on refugees, with 9 out of 10 Syrian refugees living in extreme poverty, which had led to more evictions from homes, more gender-based violence, more child labour and more school absenteeism. As at 31 March, there were 869,991 refugees and asylum seekers registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Lebanon, including 855,172 Syrian refugees and 14,819 refugees and asylum seekers of other nationalities.

17. The number of registered Syrian refugees continued to decrease owing to returns to the Syrian Arab Republic, resettlement to third countries, deaths and onward movements. The Lebanese General Security Directorate announced on 3 December 2020 that it had restarted registration for its facilitated group return movements for Syrian refugees, which had been on hold since February 2020 due to the pandemic.

18. At an international conference on facilitating repatriation of refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic, convened in Damascus on 11 and 12 November, the caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants and the caretaker Minister of Social Affairs stressed Lebanon's desire for an increase in the number of refugees returning to the Syrian Arab Republic. They referred to the policy on returns adopted by the Council of Ministers on 14 July 2020, which contains measures to accelerate the safe return of displaced people to the Syrian Arab Republic. Meanwhile, deportations of Syrians who entered or re-entered Lebanon irregularly after 24 April 2019 continued, without the application of legal procedural safeguards (see [S/2021/240](#)).

19. The European Union and the United Nations co-chaired the fifth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region on 29 and 30 March 2021. The international community confirmed \$4.4 billion in funding to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2021 for the response to the

crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. An additional \$2 billion was pledged to support activities in 2022 and beyond.

20. Growing tensions between host communities and Syrian refugees, driven by competition over jobs and the scarcity of social services, at times escalated into violent incidents. On 23 November, in Bisharri, North Lebanon, after a Syrian man shot and killed a Lebanese man, local Lebanese people reportedly attacked Syrians and their homes, injuring 13 and forcing some 338 Syrian families to move. On 26 December, following a personal dispute between Lebanese and Syrian nationals in Minniyah, North Lebanon, a local informal refugee settlement was torched, injuring four and forcing around 90 Syrian refugee families to relocate.

21. The Patriarch of the Maronite Church, Béchara Boutros al-Rahi, in a sermon delivered on 7 February 2021 reportedly stated that the situation in Lebanon was collapsing and that an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations was needed to strengthen the modern constitutional framework of Lebanon based on unity, neutrality and permanent guarantees for the country's existence by preventing encroachment or any attempt to undermine the country's legitimacy, end the multilateral control of weapons and address the absence of a clear constitutional authority. He reiterated that proposal on multiple occasions, insisting on the necessity of Lebanon's neutrality, as stated, in the Baabda declaration, among others. On 27 February, thousands of Lebanese people reportedly rallied at the seat of the Maronite Church in support of this call for the country's neutrality and for an international conference. In his sermon delivered on 28 February, the Patriarch reportedly called, *inter alia*, for the conference to support the Lebanese army as the sole defender of Lebanon.

22. The Secretary General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, in a speech delivered on 16 February, stated that internationalizing the situation in that sense would harm Lebanon and complicate the issues, would contradict the notion of sovereignty and could be a cover for another occupation. "We very clearly reject any form of internationalization. We consider it harmful to Lebanon and even dangerous to Lebanon, its present and future".

23. In its resolution [1680 \(2006\)](#), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request made by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. Such delineation remains critical in order to enable proper border control and management, including with regard to the movement of people and the potential movement of arms.

24. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. 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 \(2006\)](#).

25. 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 \(2006\)](#).

26. There was no progress on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. Furthermore, neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel responded to the provisional definition of the area contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#) of 30 October 2007 ([S/2007/641](#)).

27. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets, of the Israel Defense Forces continued to make overflights above Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#). In identical letters addressed the President of the Security Council and to me dated 9 October ([A/75/531-S/2020/999](#)) and 22 February 2021 ([A/75/794-](#)

[S/2021/182](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, on behalf of her Government, referred to several Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty and stated that, in the night of 24 and 25 December 2020, off the Lebanese coast, the Israeli side had fired several missiles through Lebanese airspace in the direction of Syrian territory. In the night of 29 and 30 December 2020, according to her letter, over the Sidon area, “Israeli Army warplanes launched several missiles at Syrian territory”. She added that the bombardment of Syrian territory via Lebanese airspace, in particular, endangered the safety of Lebanese territory and civilians. In identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and me dated 29 March 2021 ([A/75/835-S/2021/313](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, on behalf of her Government, stated that on 22 March 2021, four Israeli warplanes had violated Lebanese airspace just as air strikes were being carried out against military positions in the city of Hama, in Syrian territory.

28. In identical letters dated 12 January addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([A/75/714-S/2021/51](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, on instruction from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, stated: “Israeli enemy aircraft, whether reconnaissance aircraft or warplanes, have violated Lebanese airspace in a manner that is disturbing and provocative and aimed at terrorizing the inhabitants of Lebanon in all populated areas of the country.” In identical letters dated 31 March 2021 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me ([A/75/846-S/2021/331](#)), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon, on behalf of her Government, stated that, on 3 February 2021, an Israeli army Hermes reconnaissance aircraft had violated Lebanese airspace. A large explosion, the cause of which was unknown, had been heard as the aircraft circled over Lebanese territory, coinciding with “intense overflight” above Lebanese airspace by Israeli warplanes. She added that, on the same day, “Israeli army spokesman Avichai Adraee wrote on his official Twitter page that during a routine exercise over Lebanon, anti-aircraft fire was directed at a remote-controlled Israeli Defense Forces aircraft. The aircraft was not hit and continued to carry out its mission as usual”, thus acknowledging the Israeli violation of Lebanese airspace.

29. On 11 December, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon sentenced Salim Ayyash, who had previously been convicted to life imprisonment in the *Ayyash et al.* case in connection with the bombing on 14 February 2005 that killed 22 people, including former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, and injured 226 others. The Tribunal issued a renewed arrest warrant for Mr. Ayyash, who remains at large and was tried in absentia. On 12 January 2021, the prosecution, the defence and the legal representative of participating victims filed notices of appeal. On the date of commemoration of the assassination of his father, 14 February, Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri stated that the ruling of the Tribunal against Mr. Ayyash would be implemented and Mr. Ayyash would be brought to justice “no matter how long it takes”.

30. On 25 February, I extended the mandate of the Tribunal for a further period of two years starting 1 March 2021, or until the cases before the Tribunal are completed, or available funds are exhausted, whichever comes first. The extension was granted in accordance with Security Council resolution [1757 \(2007\)](#). Within the indicated two-year mandate period, it is anticipated that the Tribunal will progressively draw down its activities as the judicial work before the various chambers is completed.

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

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

32. In an address to members of the Military Council and the commanders of units of the Lebanese Armed Forces delivered on 8 March, Commander General Joseph Aoun of the Lebanese Armed Forces referred to the situation in the country as very dangerous. He noted that people were suffering from the high exchange rate of the United States dollar, that salaries had lost a great part of their value, and that citizens were poor and hungry. “We as an army are part of this people”, he said, adding that the overall budget of the Lebanese Armed Forces had been reduced.

33. Some level of insecurity continued to affect regions of the Bīqā‘ Valley, where the Lebanese Armed Forces enforced security measures with roadblocks and security patrols. On 22 November 2020, an exchange of fire and shelling took place between two families north of Hirmil District. The incident, which was related to an earlier shooting incident, resulted in the wounding of three individuals. In eastern and northern Lebanon, during the reporting period, several personal disputes escalated into shootings, resulting in 39 fatalities (including two children) and injuries to 108 persons. At least 16 personal disputes in Baalbek-Hirmil, eastern Lebanon, involved the use of rocket-propelled grenades. On 14 December, in Hrar, Akkar, a family dispute escalated into shooting. One person was reported killed and two others were injured. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to arrest individuals and groups suspected of smuggling goods, particularly fuel and basic goods subsidized by the Government, across the border with the Syrian Arab Republic. In January 2021, a series of armed clashes between border clans, kidnappings and armed robberies, including the killing of a soldier of the Lebanese Armed Forces, led to large anti-trafficking operations in the Hirmil area. Increased criminality sparked protests by citizens against lawlessness in Hirmil and Tripoli.

34. On 2 December, in Qartaba, Jubayl, a retired customs officer, Colonel Mounir Abou-Rjeili, was found in his house with a deadly head injury; a criminal investigation was launched. On 21 December, in Kahhalah, Alayh, Mount Lebanon, unidentified individuals reportedly shot dead a freelance photographer, Joe Bejjani, in his car.

35. On 1 February, the Lebanese Armed Forces stated that, during the previous two weeks, its units had arrested 18 Lebanese and Syrian individuals in Aarsal, Baalbek, over their alleged terrorist affiliation to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and confiscated various weapons and ammunition.

36. While there were no instances of violent and sustained armed clashes within Palestinian refugee camps during the reporting period, protests did take place in which attention was called to socioeconomic distress, and humanitarian and protection needs. The protests led to temporary closures of facilities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and disruptions of its services.

37. The expected funding shortfall for 2021 of the Agency’s programme budget is over \$200 million. In November and December 2020, its financial crisis prompted the Agency to defer staff salaries, putting at risk the delivery of critical services. In response, staff unions called for an Agency-wide strike from 3 January 2021 that was averted through negotiations between unions and management.

38. On 3 February, in Ein El Hilweh camp, Sidon, South Lebanon, Palestinian refugees escalated their protests against UNRWA, leading to the closure of the office and claims of neglect owing to the spread of COVID-19 inside the camp. The number of sit-ins and protests in the camp grew and spread to other camps in late February and March, including Burj Shemali camp, Tyre, South Lebanon; Burj Barajneh camp, Beirut, central Lebanon; and Nahr el-Bared camp, North Lebanon. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, visited Ein El Hilweh and Nahr el-Bared camps on 29 and 30 March, respectively, meeting with refugee representatives.

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

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

40. 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.

41. There has been no tangible progress made towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). 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. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, who consider those issues to be destabilizing factors in the country and ones that undermine democracy. Many Lebanese people view the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat that those weapons could be used within Lebanon for political reasons. During the reporting period, there were calls from protestors denouncing the maintenance of weapons by militias combined with the lack of accountability of the political class towards citizens as the main paradigm of Lebanese governance.

42. 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 State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In an interview with a Lebanese television channel on 27 December 2020, Mr. Nasrallah stated that "as we approach the end of 2020, the capabilities of the axis of resistance are multiplied many times compared to past years. This applies to Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Iran. ... The resistance now has double the number of precision missiles it had last year ... We can hit precisely all-important targets inside the Israeli entity that we need to throughout the area of occupied Palestine". He also stated, again, that "the killers of Hajj Qasem [Soleimani] and Hajj Abou-Mahdi [Mohandes] [would] be punished", a point he reiterated in his 3 January 2021 speech.

43. In an interview on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of General Qasem Soleimani, on 2 January, the commander of the Aerospace Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, said that "what we see today in Gaza and Lebanon in terms of the ability to produce missile forces was all with the support and backing of the Islamic Republic under the leadership and management of [General] Soleimani". In a speech on 3 January, the Secretary General of Hizbullah accused the Lebanese media of having distorted Mr. Hajizadeh's statements. He said that "in the headline, the media wrote: the Iranian Revolutionary

Guard says the missiles in Gaza and Lebanon are due to our support and represent our front line to confront Israel ... He did not say 'our front line' for confronting Israel. He did not say the front line for defending Iran to confront Israel. When Iran gave missiles to Gaza and to Lebanon, it was for the people of Gaza to defend Gaza and for the Lebanese people to defend Lebanon".

44. The Permanent Representative of Israel, in a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council and myself dated 12 January 2021 (S/2021/33), criticized Mr. Hajizadeh for what he had said in the interview. He stated: "Iran's proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization, acquire[d] more than 150,000 missiles and rockets with the capability to reach the entire State of Israel. The vast majority of these rockets were transferred from Iran in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions related to the Iranian nuclear programme, as well as resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004)", while Iran contributed to "the development of Hizbullah's "self-production capabilities". "Iran provides Hezbollah with advanced technologies and the expertise and know-how to develop upgraded missiles and deadlier rockets of increased range, accuracy and sophistication". He had raised similar concerns in his identical letters dated 16 November (S/2020/1120).

45. In response, the Permanent Representative of Iran, in a letter to the President of the Security Council and me dated 22 January (S/2021/72), denounced what he said was "the continuation of its unlawful occupation of Palestine and parts of Syria and Lebanon" by Israel and its "violation of hundreds of resolutions of the United Nations, including a large number of binding resolutions of the Security Council", including resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). He recalled "the continued threats by the Israeli regime" against his country and denied the "unfounded accusations" against his country contained in the letter of the Permanent Representative of Israel dated 12 January.

46. On 26 January, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, Aviv Kochavi, said that "every fifth house in Lebanon is either a missile warehouse or rocket warehouse", adding that, "we are going to attack military targets, but if a rocket is linked to a house, it's categorized as a military target". On 16 February, Mr. Nasrallah gave a speech in which he stated: "I say if you attack our cities, we will attack your cities, if you attack our villages, we will attack your settlements".

47. With reference to paragraph 42 of my report dated 20 October 2020 (S/2020/1032), the Permanent Representative of Iran, in a letter addressed to me dated 5 July 2020 (S/2020/651), stated that Israel's "continued occupation of territories of Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as parts of Lebanon, has been the main source of insecurity and instability in the Middle East", and mentioned "blatant violations of numerous resolutions of the Security Council", including resolution 1559 (2004). He "categorically reject[ed] all unfounded claims raised" in the letter contained in document S/2020/608.

48. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 in the context of the national dialogue and confirmed at subsequent sessions, to disarm Palestinian militias outside the camps within a six-month period, 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.

III. Observations

49. It is high time that Lebanese leaders live up to their responsibilities and form a Government able to undertake the necessary reforms to address the needs and

aspirations of the Lebanese people as a matter of urgency. Whether it is with regard to health, education, access to electricity or procuring food supplies, the population of Lebanon struggles daily. The frustration at the political paralysis and economic crisis is already visible in protests and could lead to further violence, jeopardizing the country's stability. In the face of such desperation, I urge Lebanese leaders to act in the interest of the Lebanese people and address the dire situation that the country faces effectively and without further delay.

50. The call for support to the Lebanese Armed Forces by its Commander, General Joseph Aoun, and his warning that the current situation is very dangerous are noteworthy. The role of the Lebanese Armed Forces and that of other security forces in preserving the country's security remains essential. I am concerned that Lebanon's current economic and financial crisis, the ever-increasing suffering of the population and the operational and budgetary pressures on the army may adversely impact its ability to maintain order and preserve stability. I encourage donors to continue to support the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces and to find creative ways to address the operational challenges they face and to preserve their readiness and capabilities.

51. I condemn the killing of Lokman Slim. It is essential that a thorough, swift and transparent investigation is carried out to bring the perpetrators to justice.

52. An impartial, thorough and transparent investigation into the explosion in the port of Beirut in line with the demands of the Lebanese people for accountability is of the utmost importance.

53. While the Special Tribunal for Lebanon must continue its important work and must be supported by the international community in the fulfilment of its mandate, I reiterate that it is in the interest of Lebanon and in line with its obligations under international law to ensure that those who are behind terrorist acts are held accountable and that violence is not committed with impunity.

54. I remain concerned about the outstanding provisions of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#). 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 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.

55. The widespread presence of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the existence of armed militias, continues to undermine security and stability in Lebanon. 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.

56. Calls from sectors of the Lebanese population for the full implementation of resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#) and for rejecting the possession of arms outside State institutions indicate that the maintenance of weapons by Hizbullah remains a divisive issue within Lebanese society.

57. I again call upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any military activity inside 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 in order 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. 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 and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolutions [1559 \(2004\)](#) and [1701 \(2006\)](#).

58. Countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah should encourage the disarmament of that armed 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.

59. 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 the 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 overflights above Lebanese airspace. The alleged use of Lebanese airspace by the Israel Defense Forces to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerning, owing to the risk it poses for regional stability.

60. It is essential that donors continue to provide funding to UNRWA, including in support of its request for cash assistance to address the deteriorating economic situation in Palestinian refugee camps, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, so that it can continue to perform its essential role and deliver services. The Agency's role in maintaining stability in Palestinian refugee camps is more critical now than ever and vital to the dignity and security of Palestinian refugees. Such efforts are without prejudice to the need for a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

61. The continued commitment of the Government of Lebanon to its international obligations is essential. All parties and actors must 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.
