

I am honored to be given the opportunity today to brief you and the Commission on the developments in Lebanon since the declaration by the Arab Syrian Republic that it completed its withdrawal from the Lebanese Republic last April. The evolution of events and the various political steps made in Lebanon since the March 14 Cedars Revolution's demonstration, shows that, despite some positive steps, UNSCR 1559 was not yet fully implemented. Furthermore, the non implementation of the said resolution, may lead to a crisis, even more dangerous than the previous stage with regards, Lebanon's freedom, the region's stability, international relations and US interests. Here are the main sketches:

The Cedars Revolution

As defined by the US Administration, and perceived by the international community, the democracy movement that rose against Syrian occupation as of last February and produced several demonstrations, including the 1.5 million men and women rally on March 14, 2005, was indeed a "Cedars Revolution." It showed the world, without any doubt that an overwhelming majority of Lebanese, from various religious and ethnic backgrounds wanted the Syrian withdrawal, the disarming of militias and terrorist organizations, and democratic elections. The People of Lebanon, not only wants the full implementation of UNSCR 1559, but has shown its clear intention for self determination, including with regards the pro-Syrian regime. All that was imposed by the Syrian occupation must follow the Syrian withdrawal: Military forces, intelligence, paramilitary forces, militias, imposed treaties, and imposed institutions. The Cedars Revolution, which was recognized by the international community as a response by Lebanon's civil society to UNSCR 1559, will be fulfilled only with the full implementation of the said resolution.

Implementation of the UNSCR 1559

The Syrian regime alleges that it has fulfilled its obligations towards UNSCR 1559. The US, France, the UN and many other countries have stated that the resolution wasn't fully implemented. Many civil society organizations Lebanon, such as Human Rights groups, educational associations, and popular movements, as well as the Lebanese Diaspora's official institution, the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) believe that the resolution wasn't implemented. Moreover, they believe that the steps that were made, aim at creating a wider mechanism of obstruction to freedom and sovereignty, and therefore to UNSCR 1559. I do believe, that less than 20% of the resolution was implemented.

UNSCR 1559 calls for three matters: 1) Full withdrawal of the Syrian occupation. 2) Disarming the militias. 3) Democratic elections. In fact, as of today, only on segment of the first obligation was implemented. The Syrian regime, pulled out its regular troops, hardware, and the visible infrastructure of the intelligence service. The *Mukhabarat* networks are still present in Lebanon with their sleeper cells. All armed militias and Terrorist organizations, which are under Syrian auspices –and therefore falls under UNSCR 1559- are still omnipresent. And finally, because of the presence of the Syrian intelligence, the presence of paramilitaries and Terrorist groups, and because of the influence of the current pro-Syrian Government, democratic elections slated for the end of May won't be fulfilled unless changes occur.

Syrian plans

The Syrian strategy to undermine the implementation of UNSCR 1559 is clear:

- a. Pulling out of the regular forces, not in implementation of 1559 but under the Cooperation and Brotherhood Treaty signed in 1991: Which means that a future pro-Syrian Government in Lebanon will be able to ask for these forces again.
- b. Maintaining intelligence, militias and terror networks such as Hizbollah, in Lebanon : Which would intimidate and put pressure on the civil society
- c. Forming a pro-Syrian Government to oversee the legislative elections
- d. Therefore, the upcoming elections will be impacted by the above elements, hence producing a pro-Syrian, Jihadist, majority in Parliament. This, in turn would bring back a pro-Syrian, Hizbollah influenced Government.

Recommendations

In order to upset the return of Syrian Baathist influence and the maintaining of Hizbollah's military power in Lebanon, and as a way to help the Democracy movement express itself freely, we recommend the following emergency guidelines:

1. Elections Security in Lebanon:

The United Nations must ask for the rapid deployment of the Lebanese Army at all polling stations in Lebanon, with the assistance of the UN observers. This deployment will insure the security and the freedom of the voters, especially in the areas controlled by the armed militias. The Lebanese Army deployment must be under UNSCR 1559 and protected by the United Nations. Any obstruction of that deployment and or any aggression against the Lebanese Army should be considered as an aggression against the United Nations. This measure can insure a minimal guarantee for the implementation of the third segment of UNSCR 1559, that is fair and free elections.

2. Lebanese votes overseas counted

As was the case with the Iraqi precedent, Lebanese citizens living abroad must be able to vote in the upcoming legislative elections. All holders of Lebanese nationality outside Lebanon, must be enabled to cast their ballots under UN supervision. The UN will carry their ballots to the respective ballot centers in Lebanon and would supervise their counting. This is a condition sine qua non for free and fair elections in Lebanon.

In a sum, the deployment of the Lebanese Army and the overseas vote, both under the auspices of UNSCR 1559, will give Lebanon's civil society a chance for participation in the democratic process, as a second step towards the full implementation of the said resolution and in fulfillment of the Cedars Revolution.