



STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. Mr. TAMMAM SALAM
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LEBANON**

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OF THE

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

***Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 531, New York, NY. 10017***

Mr. President,

Allow me first to congratulate you for your assumption of the presidency of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, and wish you a successful mandate.

As I would like to thank Dr. John Ash for the efforts exerted during the 68th session of the UN General Assembly.

Our appreciation are also extended to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his annual report on the Work of the Organization.

We meet today, on the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which my country had the honor to contribute to. This milestone remind us of the need to draw lessons and explore the best ways to fend off wars and violence, and activate the international efforts to combat terrorism and terrorists.

Mr. President,

I am here today to convey the concerns of my country, Lebanon, which finds itself in the middle of a turbulent region, and is threatened by a fierce terrorist onslaught carried out by obscurantist and criminal groups that have attacked various Lebanese regions, and caused the loss of military and civilian lives, in addition to considerable material damage.

Only last month, the terrorists kidnapped a number of soldiers and police officers in order to pressure and blackmail the authorities. They executed three of the detainees in a monstrous manner.

These crimes have obstructed the undergoing indirect negotiations that my government was conducting with the help of friendly countries. I would like to stress here that we will never give in to such pressure, and will remain focused on the release of our soldiers, while preserving our country, its sovereignty and its security.

In their battle against terrorism, the Lebanese people stand united with the armed forces which represent the main pillar of the safeguard of our national sovereignty, security, and peace. Our government is striving to rally the support needed by these forces to fulfill their duty.

In this regard, Lebanon values the generous donation extended by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as the initiative of the secretary general in launching the International Support Group for Lebanon last September here in New York City. We are also satisfied with the meetings held by the ISG in Paris and Rome earlier this year.

The present international mobilization against terror, reflects the awareness of the international community of the alarming situation in our region and the urgency of extinguishing the blazing flames.

Lebanon stresses the need for regional and international cooperation in fighting terrorism, and welcomes UNSC resolutions, namely resolutions 2170 and 2178, and call upon its brothers and friends around the world to safeguard and protect Lebanon from regional power struggles.

Our fight against terrorism is not new; for years, Lebanon has suffered from the terrorism of political crimes that have targeted many of its leaders, namely former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and prominent media figures and intellectuals.

We are following the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and look forward to the unveiling of the truth, to put an end to impunity, and for justice to be served.

Mr. President,

The events unfolding in vast areas of Syria and Iraq represent human crimes which cannot be understood nor accepted by any mind or religion.

These crimes, perpetrated in the name of Islam, have cost the loss of tens of thousands of moslem civilians and caused waves of unprecedented displacement of people. In addition, these crimes have destabilized national entities, divided societies and destroyed human and material resources.

This terrorist attack is targeting religious groups that have always been an essential component in the social fabric of the region, and a fundamental part of its social and cultural diversity, which has long characterized the Eastern Mediterranean. In the past few months, the whole world has witnessed the attacks against Christians and Yazidis in Iraq, their forced expulsion and the destruction of their properties and holy sites.

Lebanon considers that any offensive against religions, their followers and sacred places, is an offensive against human dignity and a violation of freedom of religious belief and practice, enshrined in the UN Charter and the International Bill of Human Rights, which is guaranteed by our Lebanese Constitution.

Lebanon is proud to be the only country in the Arab and Islamic world where the President of the Republic is a Christian citizen .This confirms that our country - despite its political crises - was and still is a paragon of diversity in the Middle East; an exceptional pattern of coexistence and interaction between believers of different religions and sects, a model totally opposed to the notion of the racist state.

I seize the opportunity to reiterate before you, the Lebanese government's call on the need to elect a new Christian President of the Republic as soon as possible.

Mr. President,

The distressing war in Syria, which has been ongoing for nearly four years, has driven to Lebanon nearly one and a half million displaced Syrians. A number equivalent to one third of the Lebanese population.

To be fully aware of the implications of this situation, one should imagine a hundred million people .. Yes one hundred million people .. flocking massively into the United States and spreading randomly in cities, towns, schools and parks; with the related urgent needs and requirements, posing an

unbearable burden on economic, humanitarian, social, educational, health, and security levels.

This huge number of displaced people is weighing enormously on the Lebanese infrastructure that is already suffering from structural problems. It is putting pressure on the national economy, where growth has dropped to almost zero due to the regional situation, which has cost a loss of seven and a half billion dollars, according to World Bank estimates.

This reality is, for us, a national disaster.

The problem of the displaced Syrians, with all its serious economic, social and security implications, is not - and should not be - a purely Lebanese problem...

It is a major regional crisis which we put before the international community that must share, with Lebanon, this enormous burden which cannot be carried by any country, no matter how big.

Lebanon reiterates its concern on the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. In our governmental policy statement, we reaffirmed our commitment to the policy of the "self-distancing" in order to protect us against the repercussions of neighboring crises.

Mr. President,

On the eighth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1701, Lebanon asserts its commitment to implement this resolution with all its provisions, based on the belief that it will strengthen stability and security in southern Lebanon, and contribute to extending the State's authority over its entire territory.

We renew our appeal to the international community to compel Israel to fulfill its obligations in this regard, and stop violating Lebanese sovereignty from land, sea and air, and fully cooperate with the UN peacekeeping forces "UNIFIL" to demarcate what is left of the Blue Line and immediately withdraw from the area north to Ghajar, the Shebaa Farms and Kfarshouba Hills.

We also wish to reaffirm Lebanon's rights within its territorial waters and its natural oil and gas resources within its exclusive economic zone.

Lebanon cannot fail to acknowledge the role of the UNIFIL and the continuing cooperation and coordination between them and the Lebanese army, thanking all the contributing nations, their leaders and members, for their dedication in serving the civilians' stability and security in southern Lebanon.

Mr. President,

Last month, the Gaza Strip was subject to a new Israeli aggression which killed hundreds of civilians, displaced more than a quarter of the population, and destroyed homes, hospitals and infrastructure. Lebanon, which has paid dearly as a result of repeated Israeli attacks, calls for legal accountability for war crimes committed by Israel, holding it accountable for its actions, and preventing impunity.

Lebanon considers Israel responsible for foiling all efforts to reach a peaceful settlement based on the two-state solution. It stresses the need for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, the Madrid terms of reference for peace, and the Arab peace initiative adopted at the Beirut summit in 2002.

Mr. President,

Today the Levant provides an ugly platform where the latest form of human savagery are displayed.

Today the Levant seems to be a hostage of ignorance, extremism and obscurantism...immersed into hatred brought forth from distant past, guided by fanaticisms and instincts that only yield blood.

However, Ladies and Gentlemen, this troubled area was, is, will be made up of ordinary people having, like all other human beings, land, homes, tales, dreams and history... They are persons eager to live as free and equal citizens in free and stable countries... with sons and daughters looking for better opportunities and a better place in this world.

Humanity has a debt to our Levant, which gave mankind enlightenment when darkness, extremism and ignorance were crippling the other side of the world...It still has a lot to offer and add to the amazing march of human progress and creativity.

The world must stop counting our dead , and must rise to its obligation and seek to establish peace in this tormented part of the world; a Peace based on Right and Justice; Respect for the Sovereignty of Nations and Upholding their Security; Safeguarding the fundamental Rights of Individuals and Groups,

including the Right to enjoy their Wealth, and the Protection of Religious and Ethnic Diversity.

Mr. President,

We the Lebanese people, both at home and in every corner of the planet, look hopefully for your assistance. At the same time, we are determined to overcome the current crisis as we have done so many times before, and are confident that, together, we will not allow any person, or any circumstance, to extinguish the beacons of freedom, democracy, diversity, pluralism, knowledge, and human rights in Lebanon.

Thank you.