

# UNITED NATIONS



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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL  
Thirty-fourth year

Letter dated 8 March 1979 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon  
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I am writing to protest very strongly against a most serious incident which involved a Lebanese Army liaison officer on Tuesday, 6 March 1979, near the village of Srobbine, within the area of UNIFIL operations, and near the village of Haris, the Command Headquarters of the French battalion.

Early in the morning some unidentified armed elements, coming from south of the area of operations, tried to force their way through a UNIFIL road-block. The command of the French battalion was alerted immediately, and three commanding officers rushed to the scene, accompanied by the Lebanese liaison officer, Lieutenant Fawzi Sbaity. UNIFIL troops had to surround the road-block and take defensive positions, as tension was mounting and there was a great display of arms and various threats by the armed elements.

An Israeli officer, reportedly Major Abraham Roukayel, was on the scene leading the group and initiated an argument, in the most improper terms and the most offensive manner, with the French colonel and his group. He also indicated that a certain "Abou-Emile" would be coming soon to discuss the passage of the armed "convoy" past UNIFIL lines and across the road-block to the village of Srobbine.

In the meantime, some of the followers of the said Israeli major tried to set fire to the UNIFIL officers' jeep, but were forcefully prevented from doing so by UNIFIL soldiers present on the scene.

New arrivals of armed elements from south of the area of operations caused a further flare-up, wherein the legitimacy of the Lebanese presence in the area, the legitimacy of the Lebanese officer and of the army and central Government, was discussed by the Israeli major and his group in the most abusive terms.

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\* A/34/50.

The Lebanese officer, Lieutenant Sbaity, was physically assaulted, the military jeep in which he was riding was attacked by the Israeli major and the windshield was smashed. When the French officers finally rescued Lieutenant Sbaity, Major Roukayel aimed his gun at the Lebanese officer and his party, but was finally stopped from shooting by the UNIFIL officers, who had to dissuade him with their own weapons.

Fifteen minutes later the Lebanese officer was returned to the scene because he was told that "two persons were going to apologize to him and consider the incident closed, to avoid further complications and probably bloodshed". The Israeli major showed up again to pursue his threats and intimidations, telling Lieutenant Sbaity that "he should either join forces with Major Saad Haddad, as the only representative of the State and its legitimate authorities, or return to Yarzé" (the Lebanese Ministry of Defence). Major Roukayel added that Haddad would be waiting for him either in Naqoura or Saff-el-Hawa and that he had to discuss this whole matter with him personally.

Lieutenant Sbaity refused and instead was returned by the French officers to their headquarters in Haris. Orders were immediately issued by the UNIFIL commanders to close the road and reinforce their blockade.

The incident lasted over three hours.

This incident acquires particular significance as it comes at a time when the Lebanese Government is sparing no effort to fulfil its obligations in conformity with Security Council resolution 444 (1979) of 19 January 1979.

In response to the statement by the President of the Security Council (S/13043) on 19 January 1979, the Government of Lebanon, after extensive and very constructive discussions - particularly with the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, Mr. Brian Urquhart, and Major General Emmanuel Erskine, was already in the process of implementing measures of the "phased programme of activities" called for by resolution 444 (1979).

My Government wishes to draw particular attention to the fact that the incident of 6 March 1979 is not the first incident of its kind in which Israeli officers and troops have infringed upon Lebanese sovereignty and acted aggressively against UNIFIL and Lebanese authorities. This is yet further proof of Israel's obstruction of UNIFIL's mandate and its blatant defiance of Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 425 (1978) and 444 (1979). It also belies arrogant claims by Israeli officials at the United Nations and elsewhere that Israel had completed its withdrawal from south Lebanon by 13 June 1978.

My Government wishes further to commend the valour of the officers and men of the French battalion who were involved in the incident of 6 March. Their firm and wise attitude is a further testimony of UNIFIL's contribution and its efforts towards the restoration of peace and security.

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My Government wishes to reiterate its appreciation for your vigilance and the personal concern which you have once more demonstrated for the success of the role of the United Nations in the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty.

You are kindly requested to have this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under item 25 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ghassan TUENI  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

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