

What is UN Security Council Resolution 1701?

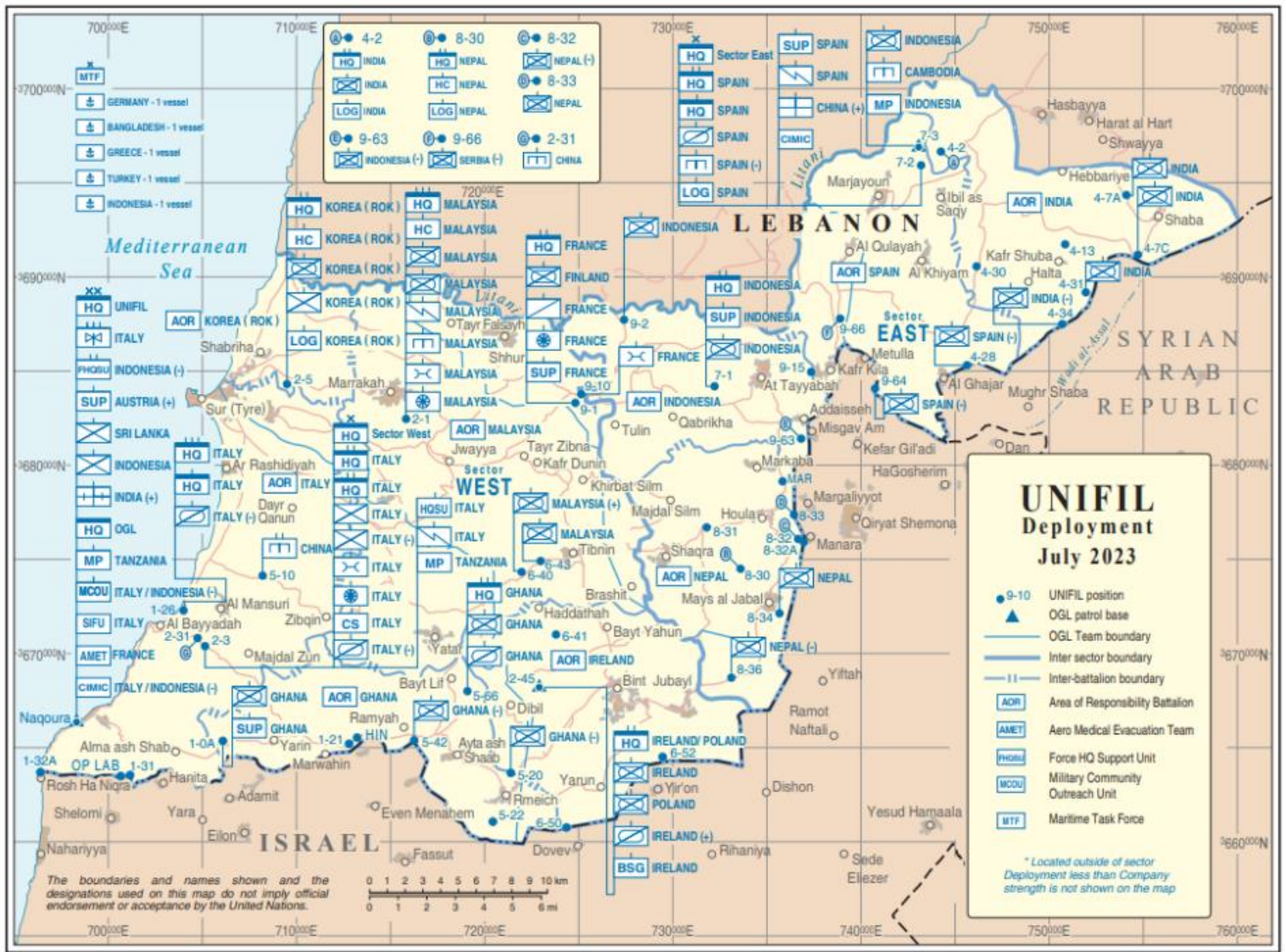


Hezbollah forces violating UN Security Council Resolution 1701 on the Israel-Lebanon border. Left: Hezbollah documentation of a drill conducted by its Al Radwan unit simulating taking over an Israeli post | Center: Lebanese youth encouraged by Hezbollah attempt to breach the Israeli-Lebanon border wall during the May 2021 Operation Guardian of the Walls (X@alishoeib1970) | Right: Hezbollah operatives harass Israeli and UNIFIL forces along the border (X@alishoeib1970)

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 is a resolution that marked the ending point of the **2006 War between Israel and Hezbollah** (“Second Lebanon War”), that was triggered following the abduction of 2 Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah from Israeli territory. The resolution was designed to prevent another conflict by keeping Hezbollah away from the Israel-Lebanon border. The resolution demands a full cessation of hostilities, the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and the deployment of 15,000 UN international troops to police the Lebanon-Israel border along with the Lebanese army¹. As of June 20, 2023, the number of UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon stands at 9,516 military personnel.²

The resolution also reiterates strong support within the UN for full respect of the **Blue Line**, and the territorial integrity of Lebanon within its recognized borders³. The Blue Line is a demarcation line between Lebanon and Israel published and approved by the United Nations on 7 June 2000, following Israel's full withdrawal from Lebanon on May 2000⁴. It has been described as: "temporary" and "not a border, but a “line of withdrawal”⁵.

The resolution also calls for full implementation of the provisions of the **Taif Accords** which outlines the basis for ending the Lebanese civil war and the implementation of UN resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), that all require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon other than those of



Map No. 4144 Rev. 56 UNITED NATIONS
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Geospatial Information Section

Deployment of UNIFIL forces in Lebanon, July 2023 (UN map)

the Lebanese state⁶." This accord is not enforced in practice in Lebanon, given that Hezbollah is not only continuing to operate as a prominent military force in parallel to the formal Lebanese army, but constitutes the most powerful combat force in the country by a significant margin.

In practice, however, 1701 failed to deliver its promise to maintain stability along the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah has controlled the area along the border, deployed there its

forces, including its elite Radwan commando unit, harassed UNIFIL to deter it from performing its mission, deployed thousands of rockets, used the guise of civil society organizations for operating in the south, constructed tunnels under the border to enable its terror units to penetrate Israel and finally carried out a series of terror operations and other provocations along the border since October 2022. During the recent war in Gaza Hezbollah's operations

increasingly violated Israeli sovereignty, and its militants launched hundreds of attacks on Israel undisturbed, including firing anti-tank missiles and a wide variety of rockets. International forces proved ineffective, even turning a blind eye to Hezbollah's continuous activity along the border, in blatant violation of 1701. Hezbollah's unchecked deployment along the border, raise serious doubts over UNIFIL's aptitude and willingness to enforce resolution 1701 and provide for stability along the border.

To prevent another escalation, **the international community must enforce UN Resolution 1701 to its full extent and make UNIFIL implement its role as a wedge between Israel and Hezbollah, by guaranteeing that Hezbollah has no ground presence in the near proximity of the Israel-Lebanon border.**

Reactions

On the same day August 11, 2006, as resolution 1701 passed unanimously, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah said that the Hezbollah militia would honor the call for a ceasefire and conditioned stopping Hezbollah's rocket firing and hostilities upon Israel's agreement to cease its attacks⁷. The Lebanese government approved the resolution on 12 August 2006. On the same day, Nasrallah said that Hezbollah would honor a ceasefire and that once the Israeli offensive stops, Hezbollah's rocket attacks on Israel would also stop⁸. In a UN 2015 report on the issue however, it states that: "the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and along

the Blue Line remained generally calm, despite the tense regional context",⁹ that without reaching an agreement on that final border. Most importantly though, there was no progress, on any of the outstanding obligations under the resolution and no movement towards a permanent ceasefire.

Israel indicated that there was a risk of regional war if Hezbollah was not disarmed as called for in the resolution¹⁰. Israel honoured the ceasefire deadline mandated in the resolution, but Hezbollah continued what they called "defensive operations," and vowed not to cease their operations. Those include the possible continuation of their force buildup and military threat and deterrence vis-à-vis Israel. Hezbollah then agreed to disarm its forces south of the Litani River as required by 1701, but not to remove its forces from southern Lebanon, in spite of the resolution clause prohibiting any armed militias from operating within Lebanon at all¹¹. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said that the resolution did not require the UN to deploy the UNIFIL II force anywhere unless it was invited to do so by the Lebanese government.¹² In his statement, he confirmed that the Lebanese Government had to date not made any such request."

Initially, Dan Gillerman, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, said he was unhappy with UNIFIL being deployed to stabilize the region, since it sacrifices the interests of both Israel and innocent Lebanese civilians that Hezbollah uses as human shields, and provides Hezbollah with the international intervention it sought¹³. Israel's Security Cabinet recommended that the Israeli military expand its campaign against Hezbollah in southern

Lebanon instead¹⁴. Tzipi Livni, Israel's foreign minister, however insisted that Israeli troops would remain in southern Lebanon until a multinational UN force is deployed, implying that deployment of Lebanese forces would not be sufficient for Israeli withdrawal¹⁵.

Insufficient execution

Many key points in the resolution remain insufficiently addressed. The resolution calls for the release of two Israeli soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, whose capture by guerrillas Hezbollah ignited the conflict. In a special report from 2008, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon mentions that "Hezbollah continues to refuse to provide any information on the release or fate of abducted soldiers, and places conditions and demands for the release that are far outside the scope of resolution 1701¹⁶." The soldiers' bodies ended up being released by Hezbollah in July 2008 as part of a deal with Israel, in which Israel delivered a high-profile Hezbollah official Samir Kuntar and 5 other terrorists, alongside 199 bodies of Hezbollah operatives. The report also pointed out that Hezbollah had replenished its stock of rockets and missiles in South Lebanon¹⁷. The Lebanese government however, claimed that Israel had violated the resolution over 7,000 times "by crossing Lebanese airspace," waters, and border since the implementation of the resolution across the southern Lebanese region¹⁸.

In 2009, Israel filed a complaint with the U.N. that Lebanon was not complying with the resolution. This complaint was lodged after a Katyusha rocket was fired from Lebanon and landed next to a house in northern Israel,

injuring civilians¹⁹. Later in 2009, when weapons that Hezbollah was hiding in a Lebanese civilian home near the Israeli border exploded, both Israel and UNIFIL expressed concerns at the UN that Resolution 1701 was being violated by both Lebanon and Hezbollah²⁰. Two days later, fifteen Lebanese civilians crossed into the Israeli Shebaa Farms carrying Lebanese and Hezbollah flags²¹. The IDF took no action to this provocation, but again stressed that it was a violation of Resolution 1701. Israel has also admonished the Lebanese army, responsible for enforcing the resolution, for instead cooperating with Hezbollah to make sure evidence of the resolution's violations are cleared away before UN peacekeepers have time to collate sufficient evidence of violations²². In 2011, following the appointment of Najib Mikati as Prime Minister of Lebanon, the United Nations reiterated its call on Lebanon to adhere to the terms of Resolution 1701.²³

Main issues today

Hezbollah continues to flagrantly violate the resolution by deploying its ground forces in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL forces, on their part, proved ineffective in carrying out their duty to forcefully push Hezbollah away from the border into Lebanese territory, with increased Hezbollah presence passing undisturbed by UNIFIL forces. Hezbollah troops initially posed as environmental activists under the cover of a fraudulent shell company "Green Without Borders", making permanent presence in outposts and tours along the border. It was founded in 2013 and established dozens of outposts along the Blue Line, serving as military positions for Hezbollah

militants. In 2023, the US Treasury Department sanctioned the group for its affiliation with Hezbollah.²⁴

Today, however, Hezbollah is unapologetically and bluntly maintaining a permanent militarized presence along the Israel-Lebanon border, with uniformed, armed Hezbollah members making regular tours and manning the territory. The organization's elite unit, the **Radwan force**, which has long boasted its role as a combat force designed to invade Israeli territory, take over towns and military bases and take Israeli hostages, **is openly surveilling the border.**

Hezbollah continues to openly harass and attack UNIFIL forces, making it almost impossible for the multinational force to carry out its duty. In the latest monitoring report filed by the UN Secretary General to the Security Council regarding the implementation of Resolution 1701, referring to February 21 to June 20, **the Secretary General firmly condemned the continuous violation of the resolution by Hezbollah** including the firing of rockets into Israel, its regular presence in the territory and the storing of weapons around the territory; **and the continuous harassment incidents and attacks by Hezbollah against UNIFIL forces**, including seven indictments

against individuals, an extremely conservative assessment. In December 2022, as noted in the report, an attack on a UNIFIL convoy killed one peacekeeper and injured three. The Secretary General stated he was **“seriously concerned about the presence of unauthorized weapons in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line,”** and highlighted the **lack of cooperation by the Lebanese Army, which he called “unacceptable”**.²⁵

Hezbollah has also been able to construct a vast network of border-crossing tunnels, specifically designed to facilitate a ground attack on Israel many of which Israel demolished during the 2018-19 “Northern Shield” operation. Hezbollah continues to deploy its rockets, missiles and arms around the villages and forests of southern Lebanon undisturbed. UNIFIL forces have not acted to prevent this force buildup by the terrorist organization.

For this reason, **Israel is concerned by this fully embedded permanent presence of Hezbollah troops, which are well-positioned to invade Israel at any given moment should they be given the order, with no telling signs on the ground.**

Endnotes

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- ¹ <https://press.un.org/en/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>
 - ² <https://israel-alma.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/230712-SG-report-on-SC-res.-1701-advance-copy.pdf>
 - ³ <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s-res-2650.pdf>
 - ⁴ <https://unifil.unmissions.org/it%E2%80%99s-time-talk-about-blue-line-constructive-re-engagement-key-stability>
 - ⁵ Ibid.
 - ⁶ <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/lookup-c-glkwlemtisg-b-2060965.php>
 - ⁷ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg835af.10>
 - ⁸ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg835af.10>
 - ⁹ <https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-background>
 - ¹⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-to-warn-un-security-council-of-regional-war-if-hezbollah-isnt-disarmed/#:~:text=Foreign%20Minister%20Eli%20Cohen%20has,group%20is%20not%20fully%20implemented.>
 - ¹¹ <https://press.un.org/en/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>
 - ¹² <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26296237>
 - ¹³ <https://press.un.org/en/2006/sc8789.doc.htm>
 - ¹⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/8/9/israel-to-expand-ground-offensive>
 - ¹⁵ <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/briefing-by-fm-livni-following-israel-s-acceptance-of-un-security-council-resolution-1701-13-aug-2006>
 - ¹⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20080302125514/http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/959592.html>
 - ¹⁷ Ibid.
 - ¹⁸ <https://www.haaretz.com/2010-12-27/ty-article/lebanon-army-says-iaf-jets-violated-countrys-airspace/0000017f-e333-d9aa-aff-fb7b881e0000>
 - ¹⁹ <https://www.haaretz.com/2009-09-11/ty-article/lebanese-report-israeli-phone-threats-following-katyusha-fire/0000017f-e8c4-d62c-a1ff-fcff43700000>
 - ²⁰ <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/IDF-Hizbullah-hiding-rockets-in-homes>
 - ²¹ <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/15-unarmed-Lebanese-civilians-cross-Israel-border>
 - ²² <https://www.jns.org/israel-to-present-evidence-proving-lebanese-army-is-helping-hezbollah/>
 - ²³ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/09/385752>
 - ²⁴ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1698#:~:text=Green%20Without%20Borders%20is%20a,the%20guise%20of%20environmental%20activism.>
 - ²⁵ <https://israel-alma.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/230712-SG-report-on-SC-res.-1701-advance-copy.pdf>