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

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29. In the letter Prime Minister Siniora addressed to me on 8 October, the Government of Lebanon provided further details on Fatah al-Islam and affirmed that the Government maintained extreme vigilance in pursuing members of Fatah al-Islam who might still be at large, as well as other associates of Fatah al-Islam. However, as the Prime Minister also wrote in his letter, "the fact that Government security authority does not yet extend to all of Lebanon's territory, including Palestinian refugee camps which have been outside Government control since 1969, is undoubtedly a complicating factor".

30. The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly affirmed to me that it has a vital interest in controlling its borders to prevent the smuggling of arms, munitions and personnel into its territory. However, the Government and the Lebanese Armed Forces have also remained constrained in their ability to effectively extend governmental control over all Lebanese territory owing to the various security crises in the country that have placed a huge strain on the Lebanese Armed Forces, which over the past six months had to fight militants in Nahr al-Bared; maintain its large deployment in South Lebanon; provide internal security, in particular in the light of the continued blockade of the capital's city centre, where regular economic life has been disrupted substantially; prepare for traditional territorial defence; and engage in anti-smuggling activities.

31. In this context, I renew my call on donor countries to come forward and help the Lebanese Armed Forces meet its obligations concerning the extension of the Government of Lebanon's control over all of the territory of Lebanon and the establishment of the democratically elected Government's monopoly on the legitimate use of force throughout Lebanon, in fulfilment of the provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). The urgency of my call is underpinned by the prolonged battle at Nahr al-Bared, which has highlighted and exacerbated the substantial needs of the Lebanese Armed Forces in training, weapons and ammunition.

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

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35. During the standoff between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam, Lebanon paid a heavy price for the reassertion of governmental control and the successful effort to contain and eradicate a hostile militia that had engaged in terrorist acts in the country.

36. In his letter of 8 October 2007, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, on the basis of the information obtained by the Lebanese authorities from the interrogation of detained Fatah al-Islam members and from captured software data, indicated that many Fatah al-Islam members were "genuine" jihadists who thought they were being trained to fight in Iraq. According to the Prime Minister's letter, most non-Lebanese members of Fatah al-Islam entered Lebanon illegally by land from the Syrian Arab Republic, although a few individuals with no previous record arrived through Beirut airport. The arrival of Fatah al-Islam militants in Lebanon is believed to be the consequence of efforts to circumscribe the infiltration of such fighters into Iraq. According to the Government of Lebanon, many Fatah al-Islam members not only passed through Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada bases on Lebanese soil but also underwent military training there. According to the Lebanese authorities and other Member States in the region, there are ties between Fatah al-Islam, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and Fatah al-Intifada; the latter, in particular, acted as a facilitator for Fatah al-Islam in Syria and Lebanon.

37. The United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the information contained in the Prime Minister's letter or information received from Member States in the region. In its response to the specific issues raised by the Prime Minister of Lebanon in his letter to me of 8 October, the Syrian Arab Republic asserted that

"the Prime Minister of Lebanon knows better than anyone that it was the Syrian Arab Republic that provided generous support to the Lebanese Army in its confrontation with the terrorists at Nahr al-Bared. It also had closed its borders in order to support the operations of the Lebanese Army. Contrary to the lies contained in that letter, the Syrian Arab Republic has stressed that Fatah al-Islam was as much an enemy to Syria as it was to Lebanon. In that regard, we should like to refer the Prime Minister of Lebanon to statements made by senior Lebanese Army commanders in which they confirmed that Fatah al-Islam was a branch of Al-Qaeda and had no link to Syrian intelligence."

In the letter from the Syrian Arab Republic, it is further stated that "it is well known that Syrian security forces have had numerous confrontations with Fatah al-Islam in which they succeeded in killing a number of its members, among them its vice-president, Muhammad Twayrah, who was killed near the Syrian-Iraqi border at the time the Nahr al-Bared battles were commencing".

38. The Lebanese authorities have charged more than 330 militants in connection with the fighting in and around the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.

39. According to the Government of Lebanon, Fatah al-Islam militants also confessed to the bombing of two commuter buses in the village of Ain Alaq, north-east of Beirut, on 13 February 2007. In June, the Lebanese State prosecution filed charges against 16 Fatah al-Islam suspects in relation to the bombing; nine of the defendants were in custody. The group reportedly comprised 10 Syrian nationals, two Lebanese, three Palestinians and one Saudi. In its letter to me of 19 October 2007, the Syrian Arab Republic asserted that "it should be noted that while the Lebanese Prime Minister identified the nationalities of some of the terrorists, he dared not identify those of the rest, who constituted the majority, for reasons that are known to all". I reiterate that the United Nations does not have the means to

independently corroborate the information received from either the Lebanese authorities or from Syria, or from other Member States in the region.

41. The Government of Lebanon has further informed me that, while Fatah al-Islam has been uprooted from Nahr al-Bared, there are documented links between it and other extremist groups in other parts of Lebanon. Reports in October this year indicated that the Lebanese authorities had arrested some 30 Islamist militants who were allegedly plotting to bomb the main police headquarters in Beirut and attack Arab and European diplomats in Lebanon. The militants were arrested in and around Sidon in August. Some of them belonged to Fatah al-Islam; others were members of another Al-Qaida-inspired group. There have been allegations that some of the militants were connected with the 16 July attack on UNIFIL.

42. Information that has been shared with me by other regional Member States indicates that the threat from Al-Qaida-inspired militias in Palestinian refugee camps remains undiminished. While Fatah al-Islam has been curbed, other such groups remain active and may indeed be drawing lessons from the mistakes and failures of Fatah al-Islam.

Situation in Palestinian refugee camps

43. Palestinian refugee camps continue to pose a major challenge to stability and security in Lebanon. Tension has increased between Palestinian refugees and some parts of the Lebanese population. In addition, a variety of Al-Qaida-affiliated or inspired groups appear to have established themselves in the camps. Besides Fatah al-Islam, groups such as Jund al-Sham and 'Usbat al-Ansar with military experience and ties to Al-Qaida are active in the camps. According to information provided to me by regional Member States, these groups draw on fighters recruited to join the insurgency in Iraq. By and large, however, the Palestine Liberation Organization and Fatah retain control of most of the refugee camps and curb the influence and activities of such groups.

44. On 4 June, violence erupted in the 'Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp. The extremist militant group Jund al-Sham, which is known to espouse an Al-Qaida-oriented ideology and to also operate in Syria, was apparently involved in the incident. Despite fears that the incident might signal a spreading of the violence from Nahr al-Bared to other refugee camps, the fighting was contained and remained a singular occurrence.

45. The fighting between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces signified the first time that LAF entered a Palestinian refugee camp. In an exception to the terms of the 1969 Cairo Agreement, under which Lebanese security forces generally do not enter Palestinian refugee camps, the Palestine Liberation Organization fully agreed to and supported the Lebanese Armed Forces engagement. The Palestine Liberation Organization, through its resident representative and through its Chairman, remained in close contact with the Lebanese authorities throughout the crisis and has continued to do so since. The Palestine Liberation Organization has also expanded its representation in Lebanon in order to be effective under the given circumstances. Through my Special Coordinator in Lebanon, I have also maintained my dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization representative in the country.

46. In the course of the fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam, more than 32,000 Palestinian refugees were displaced from Nahr al-Bared. The overwhelming majority fled to the nearby Baddawi refugee camp, which saw its population nearly double as a result and where needs of the displaced refugees could be addressed, though rudimentarily in some instances. Close to 5,000 refugees from Nahr al-Bared were displaced to refugee camps in Tyre, Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon. On 29 June, protests erupted among the displaced refugees in Baddawi refugee camp, with some 1,000 among them demanding to return to Nahr al-Bared. As approximately 100 of them broke off and marched towards LAF checkpoints, trying to force their way past them, gunfire erupted. Three protestors were killed; approximately 32 were injured.

47. The situation within Palestinian refugee camps remains precarious. There have been occasional armed clashes between Palestinian militias, including against the background of the Palestinian internecine violence in the Gaza Strip, specifically between Fatah on the one hand, and the Damascus-headquartered Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command on the other. Most recently, in early October, two people were wounded in a night-time gunfight between armed supporters of Fatah and those of Hamas in the Miyah-Miyah refugee camp near Sidon.

48. There remain fears, however, that both the precarious state of intra-Palestinian relations and continued poverty and suffering in Palestinian refugee camps, and the emergence of new militant groups in that context, may give rise to renewed violence in the camps and beyond them. Given the obvious detrimental effects of living conditions in the camps on the wider security situation in Lebanon, it is imperative that progress be made not only towards disbanding and disarming Palestinian militias in Lebanon, but also towards improving the conditions in which the refugee population lives, without prejudice to the settlement of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

49. An initial flash appeal by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for over \$12.7 million was fully met in June. A number of Member States also pledged and provided significant aid to the Government to improve the situation of the affected Palestinian refugees. Since then, a three-pronged relief, recovery and reconstruction plan has been developed. Its first element is an UNRWA flash appeal for over \$55 million, with a focus on the provision of basic services to the refugees from Nahr al-Bared, temporary shelter, and the clearing up of rubble and debris inside the old camp before any infrastructure rehabilitation. The second part of the plan is an emergency appeal for \$28 million for socio-economic assistance issued by the Higher Relief Council of the Government of Lebanon, which addresses the needs of affected Lebanese families and businesses in the vicinity of Nahr al-Bared. The third element is the establishment of an international donors' trust fund under World Bank auspices for the reconstruction of the camp's physical infrastructure and for employment-generating programmes for Palestinian refugees. I call on all Member States to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to rebuild Nahr al-Bared and improve living conditions in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon more broadly. I urge donors to respond particularly to the latest flash appeal of UNRWA. In the meantime, the first families have begun returning to their homes in Nahr al-Bared.

Other Palestinian militias

50. In his latest briefing to the Security Council, my Special Envoy for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004) shared with the Council extensive information, which the Government of Lebanon provided after my previous report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) had been submitted. I also refer to the identical letters dated 12 June 2007 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Lebanon to myself and the President of the Council, which also transmitted this information in detail. According to this information, the militias of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada have remained active during the reporting period and have reinforced their positions in Lebanon, allegedly with assistance from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic has rejected the allegations, most recently in its letter to me of 19 October 2007. The United Nations does not have the means to independently corroborate the conflicting information received from the Government of Lebanon and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

51. I have also received additional information from regional Member States indicating that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command provided logistical support to Fatah al-Islam during its fight against the Lebanese authorities, remains on alert and is preparing for possible operations. According to such information, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command also continues to maintain particularly close ties with Syria and with Hizbullah, and is receiving material and training from Iran.

52. Beyond the Government's successful struggle against Fatah al-Islam, there has been no progress towards the disarming of Palestinian militias in accordance with the agreement reached in the Lebanese National Dialogue of 2006 that Palestinian militias outside the camps would be disarmed. I urge all parties in Lebanon to resume the political dialogue and to reaffirm their commitment to the disarmament of Palestinian militias in Lebanon, in fulfilment of the terms of resolution 1559 (2004).
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III. Observations

73. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), Lebanon has continued to suffer setbacks in its struggle to reassert, beyond dispute, its sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence. Once again I salute the brave Lebanese people and their political leaders, who stand firm in that struggle. The United Nations remains as committed as ever to helping them complete the historical transition that has been under way in Lebanon since September 2004. For this purpose, I have remained in close contact with all relevant parties in the region and beyond.

74. Over the past six months, Lebanon has lived through yet another difficult chapter in its efforts to assert its sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and

political independence, extend governmental control over all Lebanese territory and ensure that there are no weapons outside the Government's control. In combination, the explosions, assassinations, incidents in south Lebanon and the prolonged fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam have manifested the precarious state of security in Lebanon. Security conditions have combined with the political stalemate to create a climate of enduring crisis, with adverse effects more widely on Lebanese society and the economy. Many Members of Parliament are spending most of their time abroad. Member of Parliament Antoine Ghanem, for example, returned from a prolonged sojourn abroad just two days before his assassination. Overall, the conditions prevailing in Lebanon are not conducive to the reassertion of the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence.

75. In the context of prolonged political crisis, the challenge from militias and allegations of widespread rearming and paramilitary training, the authority of the Government of Lebanon has remained constrained and contested, as has its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. The most notable challenge during this period has come from Fatah al-Islam. I commend and congratulate the people and Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces for successfully weathering a critical test on the road to a truly free and sovereign Lebanon.

76. Yet, many challenges remain if Lebanon is to free itself from the vestiges of a captive past in a sustainable manner. First and foremost, I call for political dialogue in Lebanon to resume on all relevant matters, most notably the issue of the Lebanese presidency and the disarming and disbanding of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

77. In the aftermath of the victory over Fatah al-Islam, it is essential now that the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces maintain their vigilance and efforts, for the welfare and security of all people living in Lebanon. It is also paramount that political discussions resume among all Lebanese parties, leading them to reaffirm their commitment to the disarmament of Palestinian militias in Lebanon, in fulfilment of the terms of resolution 1559 (2004).

78. I am also deeply conscious of the conditions in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the challenges that arise from them. It is imperative that the close cooperation that has been established between PLO and the Lebanese authorities continue, for the welfare of the Palestinian refugees who already have too often paid the price for the misdeeds of others. I commend both the Government of Lebanon and PLO for their role in re-establishing security in the camps, but call on them to undertake tangible measures now to improve significantly the conditions in which the refugee population lives, without prejudice to the settlement of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of an eventual Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The United Nations family stands ready to work with our Lebanese and Palestinian partners towards this goal, while we also exert all efforts to help bring about an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement at the earliest time possible.

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