

UN resolution on Lebanon: blueprint for intensified war and colonial occupation

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The US-French resolution that is to be voted on by the United Nations Security Council early this week represents an imperialist diktat to the people of Lebanon and an attempt by Washington to legitimize and consummate the geo-strategic goals pursued in the month-long US-Israeli war of aggression.

It is deliberately written in such a provocative manner as to ensure its rejection not only by Hezbollah, but by the Lebanese government itself. Not a single Lebanese grievance is addressed. What it demands, essentially, is that Hezbollah enter a suicide pact with its enemies and that Lebanon accept its transformation into a semi-colony.

The aim is to provide prior justification for the continued massacre of the Lebanese people. The inevitable mantra that will be played out by government officials and the mass media in the days and weeks ahead will be that bleeding Lebanon has only itself to blame for its suffering because it would not accept “peace.”

National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley spelled this out, declaring at a press conference Sunday that a rejection of the resolution “will tell you something about who wants peace and who does not, and that will be a clarifying moment.”

Both US and Israeli officials have made it clear that this resolution signals not an end to the carnage and destruction in Lebanon, but rather their brutal escalation.

Speaking Sunday at President Bush’s ranch in Crawford Texas, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed that fighting would likely continue for “some time to come.” She said that while she hoped to see “an end to large-scale violence” in the short run, “these things take a while to wind down.”

During the last month of slaughter, Rice has engaged in a ghoulish version of “shuttle diplomacy” aimed not at halting the bloodshed, but at staving off calls for a cease-fire and allowing the Israeli military to continue its work of demolishing Lebanon’s infrastructure and using mass terror to drive the impoverished Shiite population out of south Lebanon.

It is clear that the US-French resolution is aimed at achieving essentially the same objectives. At Washington’s insistence, it calls not for an immediate cease-fire, but only for a “cessation of hostilities” within an unspecified time frame.

While demanding an end to all military activity by Hezbollah, the document calls upon Israel merely to halt “all offensive military operations,” a vague formulation that would essentially allow the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to continue their scorched-earth campaign in Lebanon under the pretext of “self-defense.”

It makes no demand for the immediate withdrawal of the more than 10,000 Israeli troops that have invaded Lebanese territory, nor does it propose any timetable for their leaving the country.

This one-sided document demands the “unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers,” while only “encouraging the efforts aimed at settling the issue of the Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel.”

The resolution essentially imposes the stated US-Israeli war aims,

demanding the “establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani river... an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Lebanese armed and security forces and of UN mandated international forces” as well as the “disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon deployed in this area.” It provides no prescription, however, for ending Israeli occupation of either the Lebanese Shebaa farms region or the Syrian Golan Heights.

One section of the document provides for “reopening airports and harbors [now closed as a result of Israeli bombardment and an air and naval blockade] for verifiably and purely civilian purposes.” What is the meaning of such verification? By whom? Essentially, the UN resolution is aimed at robbing Lebanon of any semblance of sovereignty and reducing it to a semi-colonial protectorate dominated by Washington and Israel.

Once the Security Council passes this measure, a second resolution is to be prepared spelling out the composition and rules of engagement of a UN “peace-keeping” force. This force is expected to consist of at least 15,000 combat troops—up to a third of them French—backed by armor, which will be authorized to utilize massive and deadly force to disarm and expel the Hezbollah resistance fighters from the proposed buffer zone south of the Litani River.

According to published reports, agreement on this second resolution could take another two weeks of talks, during which Israel will continue its war of annihilation against Lebanon. Washington has engineered the diplomatic process at the UN precisely in such a way as to provide Israel with the opportunity to continue its assault. Asked on Sunday whether President Bush believed there was still a long way to go before the fighting ended, White House spokesman Tony Snow answered, “I don’t think he has any delusions about what lies ahead.”

Senior Israeli officials reacted to the draft resolution with either indifference or vows to intensify the war against Lebanon. Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog, a member of the security cabinet, indicated that the proposed UN measure would prompt an immediate acceleration of Israeli attacks. “Until the resolution enters into force, the army will continue to act,” he said in an Israeli television interview. “We have the coming days for lots of military moves. But we have to realize the timetable is getting shorter. It is a fact that we have to accept and act in accordance with.”

Justice Minister Haim Ramon, speaking on army radio, dismissed the significance of the resolution. “This is just a draft,” he said. “So we must continue fighting ... We still have goals to achieve militarily.” He added that Israel would continue its military operations in south Lebanon until the UN security force was deployed in the area.

There is every indication that Israel has already begun this escalation. Over the weekend it carried out a massive bombardment of at least 15 villages in an area along the border, leveling most of them. One village, Aitaroun, was pounded by a barrage of over 2,000 shells. Israel’s immediate aim is to carve out a four-mile-deep “security zone” along its border by driving out all its inhabitants.

While the UN resolution calls for “facilitating the safe return of

displaced persons,” the Israeli Defense Forces are already creating facts on the ground by turning much of south Lebanon into uninhabitable rubble. Israel is conducting a massive operation in ethnic cleansing, turning the estimated one million Lebanese driven from their homes into permanent refugees and forcibly removing the impoverished Shiite population from their land.

In its latest warning of mass slaughter the Israeli military dropped leaflets threatening to carry out a bombardment of the port of Sidon, a city with a pre-war population of 100,000, which has been swelled substantially by refugees pouring in from other parts of the devastated south. Many had seen it as a safe haven because it is predominantly Sunni.

The Lebanese government rejected the US-French resolution, calling for its amendment to include the demand for the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon.

A government source told Agence France-Presse that the resolution as it currently stands “will not resolve the crisis either for the good of Lebanon or for Israel. Israel will not have a guarantee of secure frontiers and Lebanon will not recover all its occupied territory.” The official added that the Lebanese government could not demand that Hezbollah lay down its arms as long as its territory remained under Israeli occupation.

Lebanon’s energy minister, Mohammed Fneish, a member of Hezbollah made the same point. “We are in a defense situation,” he said. “When the Israeli aggression ceases, very simply, we will stop (fighting) on condition that no Israeli soldier remains inside Lebanese land.”

By the count of the government in Beirut, over 1,000 Lebanese civilians have been killed, while many hundreds more are believed buried beneath the rubble of homes and apartment buildings demolished by Israeli air strikes and bombardments. The ratio of Lebanese to Israeli civilian casualties stands at 30 to 1, yet the UN resolution treats Hezbollah as the principal source of aggression.

Meanwhile, Israeli officials speak openly of assassinating Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah as a war aim.

The criminality and cynicism of Washington’s diplomacy found clearest expression in Secretary of State Rice’s explanation of why the war against Lebanon can be expected to go on for weeks more, with Washington’s approval. “We’re trying to deal with a problem that has been festering and brewing in Lebanon now for years and years and years, and so it’s not going to be solved by one resolution in the Security Council,” she declared.

This “fester” problem is not, in the eyes of Washington, the continuous Israeli seizure of land and use of military force against neighboring Arab countries, the plight of the Palestinians expelled from their homeland and subjected to decades of occupation, or Israel’s constant flouting of international law and United Nations resolutions. On the contrary, the problem is the failure of Israel’s 18-year occupation to defeat the Lebanese masses and the emergence of a powerful resistance movement. This is what Washington now proposes to crush by military force as part of its drive to assert US hegemony over the entire Middle East.

There is a strong element of desperation behind this strategy. US imperialism confronts deepening debacles in both Iraq and Afghanistan. There is as well growing concern within both US and Israeli ruling circles that the current intervention in Lebanon is confronting far greater resistance than had ever been anticipated, and that support within the Israeli population itself for the war is waning. In this sense, the UN resolution represents something of an insurance policy, proposing the formation of a “multinational force” that can be sent in to realize US-Israeli aims if the IDF proves inadequate for the task.

The collaboration of France in this enterprise has an unmistakable significance. Paris has reportedly offered to provide thousands of its own troops for this effort. The government of Jacques Chirac dropped its initial demand for a resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire and has now

accommodated itself to the US-Israeli strategy of continuing the slaughter in Lebanon under the cover of the UN “peace effort.”

The French government has developed a working relationship with Washington over the course of the last few years in relation to Lebanon, co-authoring the 2004 UN resolution demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country and co-sponsoring with the Bush administration the so-called “Cedar Revolution” that followed the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, with the aim of installing a pro-Western government.

As the former colonial power in Lebanon, France has no principled disagreements with the American Middle East strategy. It is merely asserting its own interests there and throughout the region. No doubt, it also hopes through its involvement to stave off a broader US “preemptive war” against Iran, where European capital has significant interests and which provides a substantial share of Europe’s energy supplies.

This policy of appeasement of US militarism will do nothing to deter Washington from widening its interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan into a broader regional war that threatens to engulf the entire planet. US imperialism is determined to establish its unfettered control over the world’s energy resources—including those of Iran, which possesses the second largest supplies of oil and gas, and from which American corporations have been excluded by Washington’s embargo of more than quarter-century against the country.

The US-French resolution on Lebanon has exposed, yet again, the United Nations as a pliant tool of US and world imperialism. Its inability to halt the carnage in Lebanon, followed by its blatant complicity in its continuation and escalation, recalls nothing so much as the League of Nations standing aside as fascist Italy conquered Ethiopia and imperial Japan ravaged China in the 1930s.

The struggle against the criminal aggression being waged against the peoples of Lebanon and Iraq and the fight against the growing danger of a far wider conflagration in the Middle East and internationally can be waged only on the basis of the independent mobilization of working people internationally on the basis of a common program directed against the economic and social system that produces war—capitalism.



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