



Statement by M. Jacques CHIRAC, President of the Republic, on the situation in Lebanon

Paris, 19 July 2006

Ladies and gentlemen, I have just had a meeting with the main ministers concerned, following the Council of Ministers, to take stock which we are doing regularly of the situation in Lebanon, a tragic one which worries us enormously.

My first point is that, in the framework and spirit of what was decided, notably on France's initiative, at the St Petersburg G8 Summit, it seems to us essential to make the requisite gestures to restore peace.

These gestures are clear. On the one hand, the release of Israeli soldiers which either Hamas or Hezbollah is currently holding prisoner, and halting of the rocket attacks, particularly Qassam rockets, against Israel. And, on the other, the halting of the bombing which is both destroying infrastructure essential to the life of Lebanon and, sadly, killing and injuring people.

In this situation, it is essential, as regards Palestine, to resume the dialogue with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr Mahmoud Abbas. And as regards Lebanon, really implement UNSCR 1559, on the clear understanding and all the Lebanese have to understand and recognize this that there cannot be a politically stable Lebanon shouldering her responsibilities and pursuing her development, a democratic Lebanon, if part of her territory is occupied by militia who do not obey the central Lebanese government.

Lebanon's authority, stability and sovereignty must be re-established. It's in the interest of all Lebanese whoever they may be. It's also in the interest of democracy and morality.

This is a humanitarian situation which worries us enormously. It was the subject of the ministerial meeting I have just held. It's a grave humanitarian situation because of the deaths, injured people, large number of displaced persons, the total insecurity reigning over Lebanon, the destruction not only of the infrastructure essential for life, but also, including today, of factories producing infant food and milk. There's a problem here which justifies, I would say, the Lebanese government's appeal for help which we are supporting. This appeal for aid concerns a number of immediate needs to which France definitely intends to respond.

Consequently, we have decided to charter today a high-capacity aircraft which will leave in the next few hours, carrying what the Lebanese government has asked us for, i.e. essentials, in particular drinking water equipment and power



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generators necessary for the normal operation of the hospitals, large supplies of medicines which have become vital, especially for the survival of the injured, for the children, for all the men and women who need them.

This plane will leave in the next few hours. It will land in Larnaca from where a boat will take its cargo to Beirut. This is the boat which is also repatriating a number of French nationals, people with dual French and Lebanese nationality and foreigners who want to return to France.

We have also decided to mobilize French military transport capabilities which are now arriving in the area to facilitate transport between Larnaca in Cyprus and Beirut and also other places in Lebanon if this proves necessary.

Let me add that there are two requirements which must be immediately addressed:

- There must be a humanitarian truce. This situation can't be allowed to go on developing as it is at the moment. There has to be a humanitarian truce and everyone must help work out the details of this truce. This is why we have mobilized the international community, have mobilized Europe.
- Humanitarian corridors must also be established inside Lebanon to allow people who need to to move around Lebanon and do so in some security. And there must also be humanitarian corridors between Lebanon and the outside world, i.e. for the moment essentially between Lebanon and Cyprus.

Those are the measures we have decided to take. We are doing this in close cooperation with the Lebanese government. And I can tell you that we are putting all our resources and our hearts into this effort. Thank you./.

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