



## A Path to Lasting Peace

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Op-Ed

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For the past month the United States has worked urgently to end the violence that Hezbollah and its sponsors have imposed on the people of Lebanon and Israel. At the same time, we have insisted that a truly effective cease-fire requires a decisive change from the status quo that produced this war. Last Friday we took an important step toward that goal with the unanimous passage of U.N. Resolution 1701. Now the difficult, critical task of implementation begins.

The agreement we reached has three essential components:

First, it puts in place a full cessation of hostilities. We also insisted on the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers. Hezbollah must immediately cease its attacks on Israel, and Israel must halt its offensive military operations in Lebanon, while reserving the right of any sovereign state to defend itself. This agreement went into effect on Monday, after the Israeli and Lebanese cabinets agreed to its conditions.

Second, this resolution will help the democratic government of Lebanon expand its sovereign authority. The international community is imposing an embargo on all weapons heading into Lebanon without the government's consent. We are also enhancing UNIFIL, the current U.N. force in Lebanon. The new UNIFIL will have a robust mandate, better equipment and as many as 15,000 soldiers -- a sevenfold increase from its current strength. Together with this new international force, the Lebanese Armed Forces will deploy to the south of the country to protect the Lebanese people and prevent armed groups such as Hezbollah from destabilizing the area. As this deployment occurs, Israel will withdraw behind the "Blue Line" and a permanent cease-fire will take hold.

Finally, this resolution clearly lays out the political principles to secure a lasting peace: no foreign forces, no weapons and no authority in Lebanon other than that of the sovereign Lebanese government. These principles represent a long-standing international consensus that has been affirmed and reaffirmed for decades -- but never fully implemented. Now, for the first time, the international community has put its full weight behind a practical political framework to help the Lebanese government realize these principles, including the disarmament of all militias operating on its territory.

The implementation of Resolution 1701 will not only benefit Lebanon and Israel; it also has important regional implications. Simply put: This is a victory for all who are committed to moderation and democracy in the Middle East -- and a defeat for those who wish to undermine these principles with violence, particularly the governments of Syria and Iran.

While the entire world has spent the past month working for peace, the Syrian and Iranian regimes have sought to prolong and intensify the war that Hezbollah started. The last time this happened, 10 years ago, the United States brokered a cease-fire between Israel and Syria. The game of diplomacy was played by others, over the heads of the Lebanese. Now Syria no longer occupies Lebanon, and the international community is helping the Lebanese government create the conditions of lasting peace -- full independence, complete sovereignty, effective democracy and a weakened Hezbollah with fewer opportunities to rearm and regroup. Once implemented, this will be a strategic setback for the Syrian and Iranian regimes.

The agreement we reached last week is a good first step, but it is only a first step. Though we hope that it will lead to a permanent cease-fire, no one should expect an immediate stop to all acts of violence. This is a fragile cease-fire, and all parties must work to strengthen it. Our diplomacy has helped end a war. Now comes the long, hard work to secure the peace.

Looking ahead, our most pressing challenge is to help the hundreds of thousands of displaced people within Lebanon to return to their homes and rebuild their lives. This reconstruction effort will be led by the government of Lebanon, but it will demand the generosity of the entire world.

For our part, the United States is helping to lead relief efforts for the people of Lebanon, and we will fully support them as they rebuild their country. As a first step, we have increased our immediate humanitarian assistance to \$50 million. To secure the gains of peace, the Lebanese people must emerge from this conflict with more opportunities and greater prosperity.

Already, we hear Hezbollah trying to claim victory. But others, in Lebanon and across the region, are asking themselves what Hezbollah's extremism has really achieved: hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes. Houses and infrastructure destroyed. Hundreds of innocent lives lost. The blame of the world for causing this war.

Innocent people in Lebanon, in Israel and across the Middle East have suffered long enough at the hands of extremists. It is time to overcome old patterns of violence and secure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. This is our goal, and now we have laid out the steps to achieve it. Our policy is ambitious, yes, and difficult to achieve. But it is right. It is realistic. And ultimately, it is the only effective path to a more hopeful future.

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