



Lebanon - Last Call for UNIFIL

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Beirut, Lebanon – August 29, 2025. The United Nations Security Council has approved a resolution that, while extending the mandate of the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another 16 months, decrees its definitive conclusion at the end of 2026. The decision, reached after months of pressure from Israel and the United States, marks the end of one of the UN's longest peacekeeping missions, initiated in 1978.

The resolution, unanimously voted, established that UNIFIL will begin an "orderly and safe withdrawal" of its 10,800 peacekeepers starting in December 2026. Although the Lebanese government expressed relief for the immediate extension, which avoids an abrupt interruption of the mission, the news of the definitive withdrawal has raised concerns in Beirut, which has long relied on the UN force to maintain a fragile balance at the border with Israel.



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UNIFIL: a historic and controversial mission

Initially created to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon, the UNIFIL mission has played a crucial role for nearly half a century in monitoring compliance with the "Blue Line," the de facto demarcation between the two countries. Its soldiers are tasked with patrolling the border area and reporting ceasefire violations, allowing the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to enforce agreements.

The withdrawal, however, comes at a time of extreme tension. Despite the November ceasefire between Hezbollah and Lebanon, Israel continues to maintain the occupation of at least five locations in southern Lebanon and conduct hundreds of airstrikes, claiming to prevent Hezbollah from rebuilding its military infrastructure. The UN resolution explicitly calls on Israel to withdraw its forces but does not set deadlines.



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Political pressures and criticisms of the mission

The end of the UNIFIL mission has been a priority for the governments of the United States and Israel. The U.S. ambassador to the UN, Dorothy Shea, stated that this is the last extension the U.S. will grant, emphasizing that the acronym UNIFIL stands for "Interim Force in Lebanon" and that it is time to end its mission.

The Israeli representative to the UN, Danny Danon, also welcomed the decision, calling it "good news coming from the UN." Israel has long argued that UNIFIL has not adequately fulfilled its task of disarming the Hezbollah militia in southern Lebanon and that its presence effectively provided political cover to the group.



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Despite UNIFIL's purely monitoring role and its soldiers being able to use force only for self-defense, the mission has suffered attacks from both sides. Israel has struck UNIFIL positions during conflicts, while local residents loyal to Hezbollah have often obstructed the peacekeepers' patrols with stone-throwing and assaults.

The uncertain future of southern Lebanon

The resolution approved by the United Nations has the declared goal of making the Lebanese government "the sole guarantor of security" in the south of the country. The Lebanese Prime Minister, Nawaf Salam, while praising the resolution for its repeated call for Israel to withdraw, emphasized the importance of international support for the national army, which is under-equipped and struggling.

Countries like France and Italy, which have historically contributed to the mission, have expressed objections to the withdrawal, fearing it could compromise the Lebanese army's ability to assert control over the south. The Lebanese army announced that next week it will present a plan for the disarmament of Hezbollah, but the undertaking appears extremely complex and risky, with the potential to trigger new tensions and jeopardize Lebanon's fragile civil stability.

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