

Middle East

No major conflict broke out in the Middle East in 2009–2010. Violence continued in many areas, however, and the region’s outstanding conflicts remained unresolved. Tensions have, if anything, increased in 2010.

Bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations restarted under US auspices in September 2010, but quickly broke down when Israel refused to renew a freeze on settlement construction that had been in place for ten months. The Palestinians remain internally divided, with Hamas in control of Gaza, and efforts by Egypt and others to secure Palestinian reconciliation have so far been fruitless.

Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad is implementing an institution-building program in the West Bank. The program has attracted substantial donor support, and Israel and the United States have praised Fayyad’s efforts to enhance Palestinian security. The West Bank economic situation has improved slightly, though Israeli closures continue to impede progress.

Israel’s continued blockade of Gaza contributed to a further deterioration of economic and humanitarian conditions there. International pressure to end the blockade intensified. In May, the Israeli navy attacked a Turkish-registered aid flotilla bound for Gaza, killing nine activists. Turkey withdrew its ambassador to Israel, describing the Israeli military action as “totally contrary to the principles of international law” and “inhumane state terrorism.”

In Lebanon, 2009 ended on an optimistic note with the formation of a national-unity government and prime minister Saad Hariri’s visit to Syria. During 2010, friction between government members increased and Hezbollah continued to accumulate weapons. Speculation

that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon will indict Hezbollah members has contributed to tensions.

Iraq is unstable, and despite successful elections a government has not been formed. Violence continues with severe consequences for Iraqi civilians. Iran’s nuclear program continues to be a source of major concern to regional players and to the Security Council.

The lack of political progress in the region has been accompanied by important security developments, including Iran’s continued refusal to submit to international pressure regarding its nuclear activities and the buildup of Hezbollah’s arsenal. Israel regards both these developments as grave threats to its security. The work of international peace operations in mediating between parties and ensuring that incidents do not trigger broader conflict has become increasingly important in this context.

Iran continues to defy international efforts to control its nuclear activities. The United States is using diplomatic channels to address the Iranian nuclear issue, working via the Security Council, the P5+1 group, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Turkey and Brazil launched an alternative diplomatic track and in May reached an agreement according to which Iran would send low-enriched uranium to Turkey in return for high-enriched uranium for use in a research reactor. The United States rejected this deal and in June succeeded in establishing further Security Council–endorsed sanctions against Iran. In July, the European Union imposed additional sanctions against Iranian energy and banking sectors.

Israeli prime minister Netanyahu maintains that a nuclear Iran would constitute an existential



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threat to Israel and transform the region. In Netanyahu's view, if Iran acquired nuclear weapons its "militant proxies would be able to fire rockets and engage in other terror activities while enjoying a nuclear umbrella," raising the stakes

of any confrontation with Israel. Israeli leaders continue to discuss an aerial attack against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Israel claims that Hezbollah—which it considers one of Iran's proxies—has crossed

several “red lines” this year. One such line was Hezbollah’s alleged acquisition of Scud missiles from Syria, which Israeli president Shimon Peres announced in April 2010. Hezbollah neither confirmed nor denied this claim. Israel also expresses concern about the alleged buildup of Hezbollah military infrastructure south of the Litani: in July 2010, it released declassified analysis of southern Lebanon that it claimed showed Hezbollah has “turned over 100 Southern Lebanese villages into military bases” during the past four years “in gross violation of UN Resolution 1701.” Israel uses these points to justify its own violations of Resolution 1701, mainly through continued overflights of Lebanese territory.

Hezbollah, for its part, claims that it has accomplished a strategic shift: it can respond in kind to any attack by Israel. In speeches in February and May 2010, the Hezbollah secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, vowed that Hezbollah would match any damage Israel might inflict upon Lebanon with equal damage, and that it would attack all Israel-bound ships were Israel to subject Lebanon to a naval blockade. According to its revised political charter, released in December 2009, Hezbollah “has developed from a liberation power to a balance and confrontation one, to a defence and deterrence one.”

Hezbollah’s military buildup is taking place in a context of increasing tension within Lebanon. Regional involvement in Lebanese politics is, as usual, extensive: in July, Syrian president Bashar Assad and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia made a joint visit to Beirut to pledge their support for Lebanese stability and unity. Assad’s visit—his first since the withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005—was widely interpreted as one of several signs that Syrian influence over the domestic politics of Lebanon is increasing. Other indicators include Hariri’s visits to Damascus and his statement exonerating Syria for involvement in his father’s killing. The Iranian role in Lebanon may also be rising: President Ahmedinejad visited Lebanon in October.

Israel regards with concern the apparent growth of Syrian and Iranian influence in Lebanon, combined with the weakening of the March



UN Photo/Pasqual Gorriz

Officers of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and members of the Lebanese Armed Forces verify the exact position of the Blue Barrel BP-12 in Rumaysh, South Lebanon. Blue Barrels determine the Blue Line, or line of withdrawal, marked between Israel and Lebanon after the pull-out of Israeli forces from South Lebanon in 2000, 7 October 2010.

14 coalition. Hamas’s continuing control of the Gaza Strip, periodic rocket attacks from Gaza, and the possibility that Hamas is acquiring more substantial military capabilities are also sources of worry for Israeli policymakers.

Egypt remains calm, but President Mubarak’s failing health is contributing to speculation about a successor regime and the transfer of power. Egypt plays a crucial role in the region, not least because of its relationship with Israel and the role it plays in dealing with the situation in Gaza. Political turmoil in Egypt would have widespread regional consequences.

The overall picture is of a veneer of calm overlaying an increasingly tense and militarized situation. In August 2010, the Middle East was described as “exceptionally quiet and uniquely dangerous” by the International Crisis Group. The group opined, “The build-up in military forces and threats of an all-out war that would spare neither civilians nor civilian infrastructure, together with the worrisome prospect of its regionalisation, are effectively deterring all sides” from initiating conflict. Unexpected

UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

Authorization and Start Date	19 March 1978 (UNSC Res. 425/426)
Force Commander	Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas (Spain)
Budget	\$518.7 million (1 July 2010–30 June 2011)
Strength as of 31 October 2010	Troops: 11,881 International Civilian Staff: 330 Local Civilian Staff: 657

For detailed mission information see p. 240

events could, however, trigger a military escalation that would be very difficult to control.

Background

UNIFIL, the Interim Force in Lebanon, is the largest UN peace operation in the region. First established in 1978 by Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426, UNIFIL was tasked with confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces and helping the government of Lebanon to re-establish control over the south. In May 2000, UNIFIL assisted in the withdrawal of Israeli forces behind a line—the Blue Line—identified by the UN.

The Lebanese government was unable to deploy forces in the south, and in 2004 the Security Council again demanded extension of Lebanese government authority throughout Lebanon. It also called for withdrawal of Syrian troops (accomplished in 2005) and “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.”

War erupted in Lebanon in July 2006 when Hezbollah attacked an Israeli patrol and abducted two soldiers. Israel bombed Lebanon and invaded Lebanese territory; Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets into Israel. More than 1,000 Lebanese and 161 Israelis were killed, and thousands were displaced on both sides.

The war ended with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1701. This resolution

established a new mandate for UNIFIL, adding to its original responsibilities the tasks of monitoring the cessation of hostilities, ensuring that no foreign forces would be present in Lebanon without government consent, assisting the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in taking steps toward the establishment of an area free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets, and weapons between the Blue Line and the Litani River, and authorizing UNIFIL to take all necessary action as it deems within its capabilities to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind. Resolution 1701 allowed for the expansion of UNIFIL up to 15,000 troops and a Maritime Task Force. The latter is currently without a flagship or admiral, which is a source of concern to UNIFIL.

In September 2010, the government of Lebanon agreed to establish a Strategic Dialogue Mechanism, the purpose of which is to “review regularly the correlation between the capacities and responsibilities of UNIFIL and those of the Lebanese Armed Forces” (LAF), with a view to identifying LAF requirements “for the accomplishment of tasks mandated in resolution 1701 (2006).” This is one outcome of the joint technical review undertaken last year by UNIFIL and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

Key Developments

The year has been a challenging one for UNIFIL. There was a change of leadership: A Spaniard, Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas, took over the post of force commander from Lieutenant-General Claudio Graziano in January. There was renewed focus on Ghajar, a village on the Blue Line, the northern part of which is occupied by Israel. Increasing tensions in the mission area and the broader region also affected UNIFIL.

Several security incidents occurred in the mission area, including an exchange of fire across the Blue Line on 3 August that left four people dead. The incident occurred when the LAF responded with live fire to an Israeli operation to remove a tree, which was situated south of the Blue Line but north of the technical fence.

The exchange of fire lasted approximately three hours. An Israeli officer, two Lebanese soldiers, and a Lebanese journalist were killed as a result.

UNIFIL was in contact with both parties prior to the incident, seeking to secure Israeli postponement while mutually acceptable alternatives were explored. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) postponed the operation for a short period but then went ahead. The incident led to high tension in the mission area and to media speculation about an Israeli response that would trigger war. Significantly, the LAF (not Hezbollah) was responsible for the firing this time, and Nasrallah stated that he did not expect the incident to lead to renewed conflict. UNIFIL sought to calm tensions by clarifying that Israel had not invaded Lebanese territory. On the following day, the parties met in the Tripartite forum established by UNIFIL. They agreed to respect the Blue Line. UNIFIL is now investigating options for a code of conduct to regulate the work of Israeli and Lebanese forces in sensitive areas. UNIFIL is continuing to work with the parties in an effort to ensure that the incident remains an isolated one.

Several other significant security incidents occurred during the reporting period. In December 2009 and June 2010, UNIFIL found explosives in its area of operations. In April, a tense standoff between the LAF and IDF occurred near the Lebanese village of Abbasiya, as the IDF conducted work south of the Blue Line but north of the technical fence. On the following day, Lebanese civilians, led by a member of parliament, crossed the Blue Line in protest. A similar protest took place some days later in the Shebaa Farms area. On both occasions, UNIFIL liaison between the parties sought to restore calm.

Protests against UNIFIL took place in late June when the force was conducting a “maximum strength deployment” military exercise. Initially a joint UNIFIL-LAF exercise was planned, but the LAF chose not to participate. When UNIFIL went ahead with the exercise without the LAF, it faced protests from the local population, including stone throwing and impediments to movement. Peacekeepers were slightly

wounded. It is not clear whether the protests were organized or spontaneous expressions of annoyance at the presence of a large number of foreign troops in a densely populated area. There have been almost no popular protests against UNIFIL in the subsequent three months.

Four years have passed since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. UNIFIL’s credibility—and that of the UN in general—may be being eroded by lack of progress in implementing outstanding provisions of 1701. The Secretary-General noted that the discovery of weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations “underlines the fact that establishing a zone free of unauthorized weapons and armed personnel between the Litani River and the Blue Line . . . remains a long-term endeavour.” He further noted that the UN regularly receives reports “to the effect that Hizbullah has re-established its arsenal and military capabilities . . . a fact not disavowed by Hizbullah with regard to Lebanon north of the Litani River.” Israel also violates 1701, making “almost daily” intrusions into Lebanese airspace.

The UN has continued to seek Israel’s withdrawal from the divided village of Ghajar. In July, the Secretary-General reported that UNIFIL and UNSCOL discussions with the parties had “intensified with a view to reaching a conclusion regarding this long-standing issue.” No concrete progress has been made, however. Although Ghajar was a relatively minor issue in 2006, UN officials now refer to it as a potential catalyst for progress on other aspects of 1701—notably movement toward establishing a permanent cease-fire. On 17 November Israel’s security cabinet approved withdrawal of the IDF from the northern part of Ghajar and redeployment south of the Blue Line. In their place, UNIFIL peacekeepers were given responsibility over the area.

The new force commander and his team have been deployed into a highly tense and complex context. They have also had to adjust to the peculiarities of the UN system: the operative paragraphs of Security Council Resolution 1701 do not fall neatly into “military” and “political” categories, and neither the Secretary-General nor the Security Council has ever defined the

respective responsibilities of the force commander and the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL). UNIFIL and UNSCOL run parallel, if coordinated, processes on several issues, including Ghajar. They hold separate meetings with the parties, informing each other about the substance of discussions. UNIFIL describes its efforts and UNSCOL's as "complementary"; however, the parallel operation of both offices creates the potential, at least, for gaps and misunderstandings in the UN's efforts.

Political

In late 2009, the formation of a national unity government in Lebanon contributed to an atmosphere of optimism. By late September 2010, this optimism had been replaced by a sense of crisis, concern that the prime minister would be unable to hold his government together, and fear that Lebanon might once more descend into conflict.

What went wrong? One problem is that the government has achieved little in practical terms. The prime minister has been unable to cut through the web of corruption and vested interests to deliver visible improvements in areas such as telecommunications, water, and electricity. Although Lebanon is a middle-income country, most areas of the capital still face daily power cuts. In August, an electricity crisis prompted popular protests.

Lebanon's leaders have also failed to make progress toward resolving the country's internal and external security dilemmas. The Dialogue resumed on 9 March, and the parties continue to sit at the table, but "a number of participants" have refused to discuss Hezbollah's weapons, arguing that "discussion in the National Dialogue should not serve to question the 'resistance.'" Without such discussion, the Dialogue is almost empty of content.

Speculation that the UN's Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) would indict Hezbollah members contributed to tensions. Throughout the spring and summer, Hezbollah rhetoric against the tribunal intensified: Nasrallah described it as an "Israeli project." Tension may have contributed to violence that broke out in Beirut in

August. Prime Minister Hariri's comments in September exonerating Syria for involvement in his father's murder were doubtless intended to ease friction within his government, and between the Future Movement and Hezbollah more broadly. As one commentator put it, Hariri had chosen "between competing priorities that have become increasingly impossible to pursue simultaneously: the drive to find his father's killers and the need to govern Lebanon." The September comments may have further weakened Hariri politically, however, and as the month wore on rumors intensified that he was losing his own people and would be unable to hold the government together.

The weakness of the government stands in clear contrast with the physical and political strength of Hezbollah. On 3 September, armed Hezbollah bodyguards entered the international airport without permission from the state authorities to receive former general security chief Jamil as-Sayyed, who was returning from detention by the STL and is wanted by the Lebanese judiciary. A Hezbollah spokesman described this incident, in which Hezbollah acted in defiance of the state, as "normal." Tensions between Hariri's Future Movement and Hezbollah have also manifested themselves in disagreement within parliament over Lebanese funding for the STL. The Future Movement has pledged to continue to support the STL, regardless of "threats and intimidation attempts."

With Saad Hariri's government looking increasingly fragile, Lebanon's regional neighbors are watching developments in the country with great interest.

UNDOF

The UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established in May 1974 to supervise the cease-fire and the Israel-Syria disengagement agreement. During 2010, the cease-fire was maintained and UNDOF's area of operation remained generally quiet.

UNTSO

The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was established in 1948 to monitor

observance of cease-fires negotiated between Israel and its neighbors. UNTSO provides observers and logistical and financial support to UNIFIL and UNDOF, as well as a small observer group in Egypt at the request of the Egyptian government. UNTSO did not undergo any formal changes to its mandate or authorized strength during the year; nor did it suffer any casualties.

EUBAM Rafah

The EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah (EUBAM Rafah) was established in 2005 to help implement the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on Movement and Access by providing a third-party presence at the Rafah crossing point. When Hamas forces took control of Gaza in June 2007, EUBAM suspended its operations, although the Council of the EU has continued to extend its mandate. Thirteen international and eleven local staff remain in post, but the work of the mission will remain suspended until the situation in Gaza changes.

EUPOL COPPS

The EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) was established in 2005 to support and advise the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP). A follow-up mission, EUPOL COPPS, began operating in January 2006. The operation trains Palestinian police in a number of areas, including traffic control, drugs interdiction, and public order. EUPOL COPPS has also improved police infrastructure, and fosters cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian police services. In October 2008 a rule-of-law section was inaugurated.

There was no review of the mandate within the reporting period. A program section has been added to support the mission's Rule of Law and Police Advisory components. The mission comprised 85 staff (33 local and 52 international). They work only in the West Bank at present.

TIPH

Established by Israeli-Palestinian agreement in 1994, the Temporary International Presence in the Hebron (TIPH) is mandated with providing

UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)	
Authorization and Start Date	31 May 1974 (UNSC Res. 350)
Force Commander	Major-General Natalio C. Ecarma (Philippines)
Budget	\$47.8 million (1 July 2010–30 June 2011)
Strength as of 31 October 2010	Troops: 1,043 International Civilian Staff: 41 Local Civilian Staff: 103
<i>For detailed mission information see p. 222</i>	

UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)	
Authorization and Start Date	29 May 1948 (UNSC Res. 50)
Chief of Staff	Major-General Robert Mood (Norway)
Budget	\$60.7 million (1 January 2010–31 December 2011)
Strength as of 31 October 2010	Military Observers: 152 International Civilian Staff: 89 Local Civilian Staff: 127
<i>For detailed mission information see p. 303</i>	

European Union Border Assistance Mission in Rafah (EUBAM Rafah)	
Authorization Date	5 November 2005 (Agreement on Movement and Access); 12 December 2005 (Council Joint Action 2005/889/CFSP)
Start Date	30 November 2005
Head of Mission	Colonel Alain Faugeras (France)
Budget	\$3.1 million
Strength as of 30 September 2010	Civilian Police: 4

security for Hebron residents and promoting stability through monitoring, reporting, and assistance. The TIPH is coordinated by Norway and staffed by personnel from Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey.

EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS)

Authorization Date	14 November 2005 (Council Joint Action 2005/797/CFSP)
Start Date	1 January 2006
Head of Mission	Commissioner Henrik Malmquist (Sweden)
Budget	\$9.1 million
Strength as of 30 September 2010	Civilian Police: 25

Temporary International Presence in the Hebron (TIPH)

Authorization Date	15 January 1997 (Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron); 12 January 1997 (Agreement on the Temporary International Presence in Hebron)
Start Date	January 1997
Head of Mission	Brigadier-General Einar Johnsen (Norway)
Budget	\$3.4 million
Strength as of 30 September 2010	Civilian Police: 21

Multinational Force and Observers (MFO)

Authorization Date	3 August 1981 (Protocol to the Treaty of Peace)
Start Date	April 1982
Head of Mission	Ambassador David M. Satterfield (USA)
Force Commander	Major-General Warren J. Whiting (New Zealand)
Budget as of 30 September 2010	\$76.3 million
Strength as of 30 September 2010	Troops: 1655

There have been no changes to TIPH's mandate since December 2009, although the mission has sought to increase its observations and reporting

on the Palestinian Security Forces (PSF) in order to monitor their compliance with human rights standards. The TIPH comprises sixty-six international and ten national staff.

MFO Sinai

MFO Sinai was established in 1981 following withdrawal of the UN Emergency Force II and conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. The MFO supervises implementation of security provisions of this treaty. On 1 September 2005, the MFO took on responsibility for monitoring the deployment of border guards along the Egyptian side of the Egypt-Gaza border. During the reporting period, there were no changes to MFO's mandate and no major changes to the force structure. In March, Major-General Warren Whiting, of New Zealand, was appointed force commander. The MFO suffered no casualties through acts of violence in 2010.

UNAMI

On 5 August the Security Council extended for another year the mandate of UNAMI, underscoring the importance of the mission in its support of the fledgling Iraqi government. The mission continued to assist the government and people of Iraq in achieving political and national reconciliation; providing support for elections; facilitating regional dialogue; providing support for refugees and internally displaced; and providing advice for economic and social development. Since the contested parliamentary elections in March 2010, UNAMI has been engaged in diplomatic efforts with the competing factions to seek a resolution to the impasse. On 12 November an agreement was reached by the parties that broke the deadlock on the formation of a new Iraqi government.

NTM-I

The NATO Training Mission Iraq (NTM-I) continued providing training, advice, and mentoring to the Iraqi armed forces in 2010. The mission is becoming increasingly crucial to building the long-term stability of Iraq as US forces drawn down. The training mission focuses on three

main areas of engagement: supporting the Iraqi command and control structures; professionalizing the armed forces through training and education; and professionalizing the Iraqi federal police.

UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI)

Authorization and Start Date	14 August 2003 (UNSC Res. 1500)
Budget	\$207.7 million (1 January 2011–31 December 2011)
Head of Mission	Ad Melkert (Netherlands)
Strength as of 30 September 2010	Troops: 221 Military Observers: 12 International Civilian Staff: 351 Local Civilian Staff: 467

NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I)

Authorization Date	8 June 2004 (UNSC Res. 1546), 30 July 2004 (establishment NATO Training Implementation Mission in Iraq [NTM-I]), 16 December 2004 (modified into full-fledged training mission)
Start Date	August 2004
Force Commander	Lieutenant-General Michael D. Barbero (USA)
Budget	\$23.0 million (1 October 2009–30 September 2010)
Strength as of 30 September 2010	Troops: 170