

# arab news

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## Editorial: Cease-Fire Charade

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By the time the Israeli Cabinet meets today to consider Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's recommendation that the UN cease-fire resolution be accepted, Israel's major new thrust toward the Litani River in southern Lebanon will probably have expanded the conflict with Hezbollah. The slightest hint of a Hezbollah counterattack, under the one-sided terms of Friday's Resolution 1701, will permit the Israeli military to mount "defensive" operations and thus keep the conflict going. We can confidently expect that Olmert's Cabinet will willingly agree to the cease-fire — just as soon as Hezbollah stops its attacks. Israel is a past master at kicking its boot into the hive and then protesting that it must take action against the resulting swarm.

Will the Security Council allow itself to be manipulated into remaining silent about Israel's massive new push into Lebanese territory? And on the very eve of the council's vote, such a thing is custom-made to make an early cease-fire less likely. Security Council members should not forget the rebuke of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan after their vote. The resolution, he said, had taken far too long and as a result the reputation of the UN had been seriously tarnished. If the organization is to play a real role in the restoration of peace and Lebanese sovereignty, it must now be seen to be acting firmly in assessing who is doing what to sabotage and delay the cease-fire.

Resolution 1701 already rides roughshod over the legitimate concerns of the Arab world about protecting both Lebanese sovereignty and Lebanese civilians. It places immediate pressure on the cease-fire process which could cause the whole process to fail and thus allow Israel to continue with its own brutal solution, based on purely "defensive" grounds. How "defensive" does the UN Security Council consider the attack Friday on the hundreds of vehicles fleeing north from the Israeli-occupied Lebanese town of Marjayoun? At least seven people were killed when an Israeli drone fired rockets at the convoy which was heading away from the fighting. The Israelis knew that very well since they had watched it leave the town. And they also knew that in that long line of vulnerable vehicles were 350 members of the Lebanese Army and security forces, the very people whom the Israelis pretend they want to be in control of southern Lebanon.

As long as Israeli troops continue their incursions into Lebanon, they know those incursions will be resisted and, according to 1701, resistance will give them the excuse to continue their bloody depredations. It will also enable them to try to throw the blame for the worsening humanitarian crisis onto the Hezbollah fighters who oppose them. Even though it is Israeli weapons that have cut roads and bridges, Israeli warplanes that have destroyed vehicles — even those transporting innocent civilians who want only to flee to safety — the Israelis will deny the death and destruction are their responsibility.

Can the Security Council possibly accept so brazen a distortion of what the whole world knows is true?

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