

**Question for written answer P-004979/2013
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

Marietje Schaake (ALDE)

Subject: VP/HR - Fulfilling full UNIFIL mandate in Lebanon and EU assistance to Lebanese Armed Forces

The ongoing civil war in Syria is having an increasing effect on its neighbouring countries. The influx of Syrian citizens seeking refuge from the war and the violence is placing a particular strain on its neighbours' resources. Currently, one in five people in Lebanon is Syrian. So far, the Lebanese population has showed resourcefulness in giving families somewhere to stay. However, this situation is unsustainable. Many colleagues and I wrote to you¹ calling for the EU to provide more assistance. The war in Syria is also having a political impact on Lebanon. Hezbollah has publicly acknowledged² that it is fighting alongside the Assad government against the opposition and Free Syrian Army. On Sunday, 5 May, Israel attacked weapons in Syria³ that were allegedly provided by Iran and en route to Hezbollah in Lebanon. In the meantime, Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) are being deployed⁴ to the northern Lebanese-Syrian border to ensure security and stability in that part of the country. The relocation of LAF forces has led to increased tensions⁵ between the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and Hezbollah. The current UNIFIL mandate was authorised by UN Security Council Resolution 1701 of 11 August 2006⁶, which stipulates that peacekeeping forces must cooperate with and work alongside the LAF. The deployment of the LAF to the north threatens to create a security vacuum in the south of Lebanon which could have serious consequences for both the domestic situation as well as Lebanon's neighbours, despite UNIFIL's primary objective to ensure security.

With this in mind:

1. Does the VP/HR agree that the full mandate of 15 000 UNIFIL troops – 10 807 troops are currently deployed⁷ – should be fulfilled by the international community as soon as possible, so as to optimise its effectiveness and ensure that its objectives are met? If not, why not?
2. Is the VP/HR willing to discuss the fulfilment of the UNIFIL mandate during the upcoming EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 27 May 2013? If not, why not?
3. Is the VP/HR committed to ensuring, along with EU Member States in the UNSC, a new authorisation of UNIFIL when the current mandate expires on 30 August 2012? If not, why not?
4. Does the VP/HR agree that the EU should seek ways to support the LAF to ensure that it can remain UNIFIL's key partner in Lebanon? If not, why not?
5. Can the VP/HR explain how the EU, under both the CFSP and the CSDP, is able to directly support the LAF?

¹ <http://marietjeschaake.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Letter-To-Ashton-Lebanon-DEF.pdf>

² http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/30/hezbollah-syria-uprising-nasrallah#_methods=onPlusOne%2C_ready%2C_close%2C_open%2C_resizeMe%2C_renderstart%2CConciled%2Conload&id=10_1367919320627&parent=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.guardian.co.uk&rpctoken=42737418

³ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/world/middleeast/israel-syria.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&

⁴ <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/167640>

⁵ <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/167640>

⁶ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1701%282006%29

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/facts.shtml>