

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Nabil Shaath, Basil Jabir
FROM: NSU
DATE: July 21, 2001
RE: Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group Assessment

“Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG)” Assessment

The ILMG was established in April 1996, following Israel’s “Grapes of Wrath” operation in Lebanon. The US and France sponsored a ceasefire between Israel, Lebanon and Syria. The cease-fire terms were outlined in a written “Understanding;” it was neither a signed “agreement” nor a verbal exchange of assurances.

1. Limited Objective: The ILMG had as its main objective the protection of civilians during the fighting. The “Understanding” which created ILMG was not an attempt to resolve the conflict.

Assessment: The ILMG model did not aim to end violence nor did it aim to address the political roots of the conflict, which is the purpose of the Mitchell Committee Report. There was general consensus on the protection of civilians before the creation of the ILMG; it did not have to foster this.

Recommendation: Any monitoring mechanism for the Mitchell Report will need to foster agreement between the parties on implementation, and not only hear violations. Therefore, the monitoring mechanism requires a structure that is adequate for achieving the broad objectives of the Mitchell Report.

2. Composition: The ILMG effectively had multinational membership, with both France and the US as rotating chairs. The senior representatives of the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli delegations were military officers. The French and US representatives were civilians with military back-up staff.

Assessment: Multinational membership was a requirement of success.

Recommendation: Ensure multinational membership of the monitoring mechanism. Subordinate security or other technical staff to civilian political leadership.

3. Structure: The ILMG had a single tier of members as a forum to address violations.

Assessment: Each technical detail assumed political proportions, rather than being resolved in a technical context as a forum of first instance.

Recommendation: Ensure a two-tiered structure: one tier that is a political guarantor of the process, and one tier that performs the technical functions of monitoring.

4. Procedure: US and French delegations were based in Cyprus, while the other members sent delegations as required to meetings convened in Lebanon.

Assessment: Delegations located out of the area of conflict created a reactive process that could not prevent violations. Periodic and ad hoc meetings did not constitute an operational presence on the ground that could influence the parties to fulfill their respective obligations. They amounted to a reporting structure that could not determine responsibility for violations, as statements had to be passed on the basis of unanimity, including the parties to the conflict. The ILMG did not make recommendations or help implement them. Its statements did little more than to repeat the ILMG's aim, to protect civilians during the fighting.

Recommendation: Ensure the monitoring mechanism is located on the ground. Both political and technical levels need to meet on a regular and frequent basis. The monitoring mechanism needs to be more than a reporting structure; it has to drive the process of implementation of the Mitchell Report. The political will of international members of the mechanism have to guarantee that the parties fulfill their obligations.