



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Israel

Israel – ISR37462 – South Lebanon – South
Lebanon Army – State protection –
Hezbollah – Internal relocation – UNIFIL –
Naqoura
29 October 2010

1. Are Arab Israeli-born women with prior family connections to the South Lebanon Army at risk of harm in south Lebanon at present?

It is unlikely that a woman with this profile (Israeli by birth, prior family connection with the SLA) would be subject to any systematic or serious mistreatment in south Lebanon at present. No specific information was located on the treatment of Israeli-born Lebanese women whose families have a past association with the South Lebanon (or Lebanese) Army (SLA). The general security situation in Lebanon has reportedly been stable since 2009, including south Lebanon. Available information suggests that former SLA members who served prison sentences for collaboration with Israel after the 2000 withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from south Lebanon continue to live and work in the Hezbollah-dominated south. Nonetheless, many Lebanese citizens have been arrested in a crackdown on alleged spies for Israel, which began in April 2009. Some of these alleged spies were reportedly detained and interrogated by Hezbollah before being handed over to Lebanese security forces, which may indicate that Hezbollah is accusing Lebanese citizens in their area of collaborating with Mossad.

General security situation in Lebanon

Reports covering the period 2009-10 indicate that the general security situation in south Lebanon is stable. In its July 2010 report on the situation in Lebanon, the UN Security Council stated that “the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally stable”. The report further states that the region is experiencing “the longest period of stability in their recent history”, owing to relatively stable relations between Israel and Lebanon.¹

Lebanon was largely free from political violence in 2009, but many Lebanese citizens have been arrested for alleged spying for Israel since a crackdown began in April 2009.² However, the extent to which crimes are politically motivated by opposition groups is

¹ UN Security Council 2010, *Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, Reliefweb website, 1 July
[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-87BMXP-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-87BMXP-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) – Accessed 20 October 2010 – Attachment 1.

² Freedom House 2010, *Freedom in the World – Lebanon (2010)*, June
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010&country=7859> – Accessed 10 September 2010 – Attachment 2.

difficult to determine because of lack of government control over some areas of Lebanon, and inadequate investigation of most incidents. Groups operating outside the area of government control, including Hezbollah (which dominates southern Lebanon, the southern suburbs of Beirut and the Bekaa Valley) violate the privacy rights of citizens and use “informer networks and telephone monitoring to obtain information” on individuals suspected of being adversaries. During 2009 Hezbollah “directed strong rhetoric against Israel”, and its television network, *Al-Manar TV*, broadcast anti-Semitic material.³ Detailed information on Hezbollah activities in the south is difficult to source, due to its close control of journalists in areas controlled by the organisation.⁴

Arrests of alleged Israeli spies in Lebanon

It may be of interest to note an ongoing crackdown against alleged Israeli spies in Lebanon which began in April 2009. Among those arrested are former members of the SLA, and low-profile Lebanese citizens from villages in south Lebanon. More than 70 people had been arrested up to June 2010, and some of those arrested were reportedly detained by Hezbollah for questioning before being handed over to the Lebanese authorities.⁵ Two of those arrested (in September 2009 and February 2010) were former SLA members, both for allegedly continuing to work for Israel after serving sentences for collaborating with the Israeli armed forces prior to the 2000 withdrawal.⁶ Local men from villages in southern Lebanon such as Marjayoun, Qolayaa and Ghandouriyeh (all within 50km of Naqoura) were also arrested, and these included a maths teacher, a sweet shop owner, a stone mason, a petrol station owner and a man in the construction business.⁷ The arrests reportedly prompted “a collective paranoia” in south Lebanon, given the history of local collaboration with the Israeli armed forces between 1978 and 2000, in the form of membership or support of the SLA.⁸

Hezbollah has been outspoken in its condemnation of those charged with spying for Israel, and spokesmen for the organisation have called for the death penalty to be imposed on those found guilty. A July 2010 article distributed by *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, and sourced from the Hezbollah-run *Al-Manar TV* website, claims that three death sentences have already been imposed this year and that “many more” are expected to follow. This article also mentions the SLA, in the context of the “minimum sentences” received by SLA “collaborators” after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. The article implies that this, along with the families of jailed SLA members being allowed to collect compensation payments from Israel, encouraged others to collaborate with Israel with little fear of

³ US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Lebanon*, 11 March – Attachment 4.

⁴ Freedom House 2010, *Freedom in the World – Lebanon (2010)*, June <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010&country=7859> – Accessed 10 September 2010 – Attachment 2.

⁵ ‘Israel controls Lebanese telecoms – Hizbollah’ 2010, *The Jordan Times*, (source: *AFP*), 30 June <http://www.jordantimes.com/index.php?news=27911> – Accessed 26 October 2010 – Attachment 5; ‘Lebanon’ 2010, in *Amnesty International Annual Report 2010*, 28 May – Attachment 3.

⁶ ‘ISF detains Lebanese citizen on espionage charges’ 2009, Lebanese Press website, (source: *The Daily Star*), 1 September <http://lebanesepress.com/isf-detains-lebanese-citizen-on-espionage-charges/> – Accessed 28 October 2010 – Attachment 8; ‘Prosecutor Indicts 3 Men With Spying For Israel’ 2010, CLDH Human Rights Press Review website, (Source: *The Daily Star*), 25 February <http://cldhpressreview.blogspot.com/2010/02/daily-star-prosecutor-indicts-3-men.html> – Accessed 28 October 2010 – Attachment 9.

⁷ ‘Rifi sees more arrests ahead in spy probe; “We have not completed the mission”’ 2009, *The Daily Star*, 3 June – Attachment 7.

⁸ Daou, R. 2009, ‘‘I-spy’ alert sweeps south Lebanon after arrests’, *The Jordan Times*, (source: *Agence France-Presse*), 28 May <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=17059> – Accessed 26 October 2010 – Attachment 6.

serious punishment.⁹ Lebanese President Michel Sleiman has stated that he would sign death penalties against Israeli spies if they were found guilty by the judiciary.¹⁰

Treatment of ex-SLA members and supporters

Ex-SLA members and supporters are generally able to live in south Lebanon without fear of systematic monitoring or harassment, although isolated instances cannot be ruled out. Returning ex-SLA members, however, remain at risk of arrest and imprisonment for collaboration with Israel.

According to the UK Home Office's June 2009 *Operational Guidance Note* there are no reports of recent or current actions relating to ex-SLA members in Lebanon.¹¹ Former SLA commanders and members live and work relatively peacefully in villages in south Lebanon, having served their prison sentences for collaboration with Israel. Nonetheless, some residual anger toward former SLA members remains for the violent acts committed against their fellow Lebanese citizens during the occupation.¹²

It is not the formal position of Hezbollah to harass former members of the SLA, according to March 2010 advice sourced from Human Rights Watch (HRW) by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT), but this does not stop isolated instances of harassment occurring. HRW noted the cohabitation of a former SLA prison guard and one of his torture victims in the same village in south Lebanon, but noted that this situation was merely tolerated and not enthusiastically embraced. The DFAT report also contains advice from United Nations officials, who state that while they are not aware of monitoring or harassment of former SLA members by Hezbollah, "such treatment cannot be ruled out".¹³ According to a July 2010 statement from the former head of the Military Court in Lebanon, a "large portion" of former SLA members who were convicted of collaboration with Israel in 2000 "have been under surveillance" since that time. The nature of this surveillance is not specified.¹⁴

SLA members continue to return to Lebanon from Israel, despite the threat of imprisonment and possible mistreatment. Two former SLA members returned to Lebanon in December 2009 after nine years in Israel. The men were handed over to the Lebanese Armed Forces, and no further information was located on their subsequent treatment.¹⁵

⁹ 'Hezbollah's Al-Manar website urges execution for Israeli spies in Lebanon' 2010, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, (source: *Al-Manar TV* website), 22 July – Attachment 10.

¹⁰ 'Sleiman willing to sign death sentences against Israel spies' 2010, Lebanese Kataeb website (source: *The Daily Star*), 1 July <http://www.elkataeb.org/enArticleDetails.asp?articleId=6528§ionid=4> – Accessed 26 October 2010 – Attachment 11.

¹¹ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note: Lebanon*, 10 June – Attachment 12.

¹² Luca, A. 2010, 'The point of no return', *NOW Lebanon*, 3 June <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=174068#> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 13.

¹³ Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade 2010, *Lebanon: Country Information Report: CISQuest No. LBN10080: South Lebanon Army*, 11 March – Attachment 14.

¹⁴ 'Hezbollah's Al-Manar website urges execution for Israeli spies in Lebanon' 2010, *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, (source: *Al-Manar TV* website), 22 July – Attachment 15.

¹⁵ 'Two former South Lebanese Army helpers return from Israel' 2009, *People's Daily Online*, (source: *Xinhua*), 30 December <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90854/6855802.html#> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 16.

2. Is Hezbollah known to be pressuring people in the south to co-operate with it in any way? If so, what types of people are being pressured, how does this manifest, and is there any information as to the consequences for those who do not co-operate?

No reports were located which indicate that Hezbollah pressure people in the south to cooperate with them and, consequently, no information was found on the consequences for people who do not cooperate. Nonetheless, Hezbollah are the dominant force in southern Lebanon, and are largely beyond government control, making it possible for them to pressure whomever they see fit for whatever purpose. The organisation is so omnipresent in the lives of people living in southern Lebanon that it seems unlikely that any continued, meaningful opposition to its wishes would be possible. By the same token, it seems unlikely that Hezbollah would need to pressure any individual to cooperate in their activities, when they have such a large and passionate supporter base in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah enjoys widespread public support in southern Lebanon, but as noted in an August 2010 International Crisis Group (ICG) report, this support is “not without its contradictions”. The ICG report notes that, while many Shiites resent Hezbollah’s religious fundamentalism and ties to Iran, they appreciate its defensive capabilities against Israel and the services it provides to local communities. Shiites living in Hezbollah areas “tend to back Hizbollah by default, given the absence of an effective state” to provide security and services. The presence of UNIFIL troops in southern Lebanon has not compromised the dominance of Hezbollah. While Hezbollah publicly cooperates with UNIFIL, recent attacks on UNIFIL troops by groups of unarmed civilians are interpreted by the ICG as “thinly veiled attempts to remind the peacekeeping force of boundaries it should not cross”.¹⁶

Reports emphasise the centrality of Hezbollah in the lives of Shiites in the districts it controls, and in which it is “a major provider of social services, operating schools, hospitals, and agricultural services”.¹⁷ Hezbollah runs a comprehensive system of youth recruitment programmes and a complete system of schools, from primary level to university, designed to produce a generation of loyal and passionate supporters of the movement.¹⁸ Hezbollah operatives reportedly have a constant presence in strategically important towns and villages, and interrogate foreigners and outsiders when they find them. A civic official in a southern Lebanese town is quoted in an October 2010 *New York Times* article stating that Hezbollah “is an organic, natural part of every house [and] village” in the area.¹⁹

¹⁶ International Crisis Group 2010, *Drums of War: Israel and the ‘Axis of Resistance’*, Middle East Report N°97, 2 August 2010 – Attachment 17.

¹⁷ Council on Foreign Relations 2010: ‘Backgrounder: Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu’llah)’, Council on Foreign Relations website, 15 July http://www.cfr.org/publication/9155/hezbollah_aka_hizbollah_hizbullah.html – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 18.

¹⁸ Worth, R. 2008, ‘Hezbollah Seeks to Marshal the Piety of the Young’, *The New York Times*, 21 November <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/21/world/middleeast/21lebanon.html> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 19.

¹⁹ Cambanis, T. 2010, ‘Stronger Hezbollah Emboldened for Fights Ahead’, *The New York Times*, 6 October <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/07/world/middleeast/07hezbollah.html?scp=2&sq=hezbollah&st=cse> – Accessed 27 October 2010 – Attachment 20.

3. Would the Lebanese government provide protection to such individuals?

As noted in Question 2 above, the Lebanese government and security forces are unlikely to be able to provide protection to a person at risk of harm from Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah enjoys near-total military and security control of its territories, including southern Lebanon, despite the presence of UNIFIL troops and a small contingent of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

In the abovementioned August 2010 ICG report, it is noted that the Lebanese army has disengaged from the south of Lebanon, and where it remains it is cooperating with Hezbollah. This is taken to indicate the strong position of Hezbollah in the south, and its ability to operate with freedom; there are fewer than 5,000 LAF troops in southern Lebanon, even though United Nations Resolution 1701 (the Resolution containing the terms of peace between Lebanon and Israel after the 2006 conflict) contains a target of 15,000 troops. UNIFIL officials are quoted in the report stating that an additional 1,500 troops, as promised by the Lebanese government in July 2010, would be inadequate for security needs and that Lebanese troops needed to be better trained and equipped.²⁰

Hezbollah is “solidly entrenched across the south” of Lebanon, according to the UK Home Office’s 2009 *Operational Guidance Note* (OGN) for Lebanon, and the document quotes a 2007 report from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies which claims that the Lebanese government “has only limited influence” over Hezbollah. The Lebanese government has not attempted to disarm Hezbollah, and the LAF does not have effective control over the former Israeli security zone in southern Lebanon, the area in which Naqoura is located. The OGN concludes that Hezbollah “retains a dominant presence in the area”.²¹

In May 2008 the *Ya Libnan* news service reported claims that Hezbollah was beyond the control of Lebanon’s Internal Security Forces (ISF) police service. According to this article, ISF members have complained that they cannot enter some Hezbollah-controlled areas, and that Hezbollah members are “untouchable”. The article quotes an ISF source, who claims that the relationship between the ISF and Hezbollah is well defined, as Hezbollah “has made clear that they should not be approached by state organs.” The article concludes that “the problem is not simply that Hezbollah has chosen to create a ‘state within a state,’ but also that it has been allowed to do so by the government”.²²

In January 2010, the Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) provided advice on the availability of state protection for people subject to death threats in Lebanon. The IRB referred to correspondence with the senior researcher and director of the Beirut office of Human Rights Watch, who was “not sure” whether the police would provide any protection to a threatened person if they are not high-profile. The IRB report also quotes the President of the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights, who claimed that the police

²⁰ International Crisis Group 2010, *Drums of War: Israel and the ‘Axis of Resistance’*, Middle East Report N°97, 2 August 2010 – Attachment 17.

²¹ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note: Lebanon*, 10 June – Attachment 12.

²² ‘Is Hezbollah untouchable?’ 2008, *Ya Libnan*, 2 May

http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2008/05/is_hezbollah_un.php – Accessed 8 September 2008 – Attachment 21.

generally do not provide effective protection to people who receive death threats, irrespective of whether Hezbollah is the source of such threats.²³

4. Would relocation be an option to avoid harm (if any is apparent).

As noted above, Hezbollah controls a limited area in Lebanon, namely the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon. Relocation outside of these areas is a viable option for those fearing Hezbollah, except in the case of people of particular interest to Hezbollah, in which case they are unlikely to be able to escape its attention by internal relocation.²⁴

The law in Lebanon provides for freedom of movement within the country, and the USDOS human rights report for Lebanon in 2009 indicates that the government generally respects this right for Lebanese citizens.²⁵

5. Is there a UN base or are there UN officials in or near Nakoura?

The headquarters of UNIFIL is located at Naqoura.²⁶ UNIFIL was established in March 1978, and has had a presence in Naqoura since then; the Naqoura base was reinforced and troop numbers increased following the 2006 conflict with Israel.²⁷ UNIFIL forces are presently deployed along the 'Blue Line', or border between Lebanon and Israel.²⁸ A June 2009 United Nations map of the UNIFIL presence in south Lebanon illustrates the location of UNIFIL bases (marked with pink arrows) near Naqoura, which is at the bottom left of the map, near the border with Israel²⁹:

²³ Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada 2010, *LBN103381.E: Lebanon: Availability of state protection for people who receive death threats; steps required to file a complaint*, 22 January – Attachment 22.

²⁴ UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note: Lebanon*, 10 June – Attachment 12.

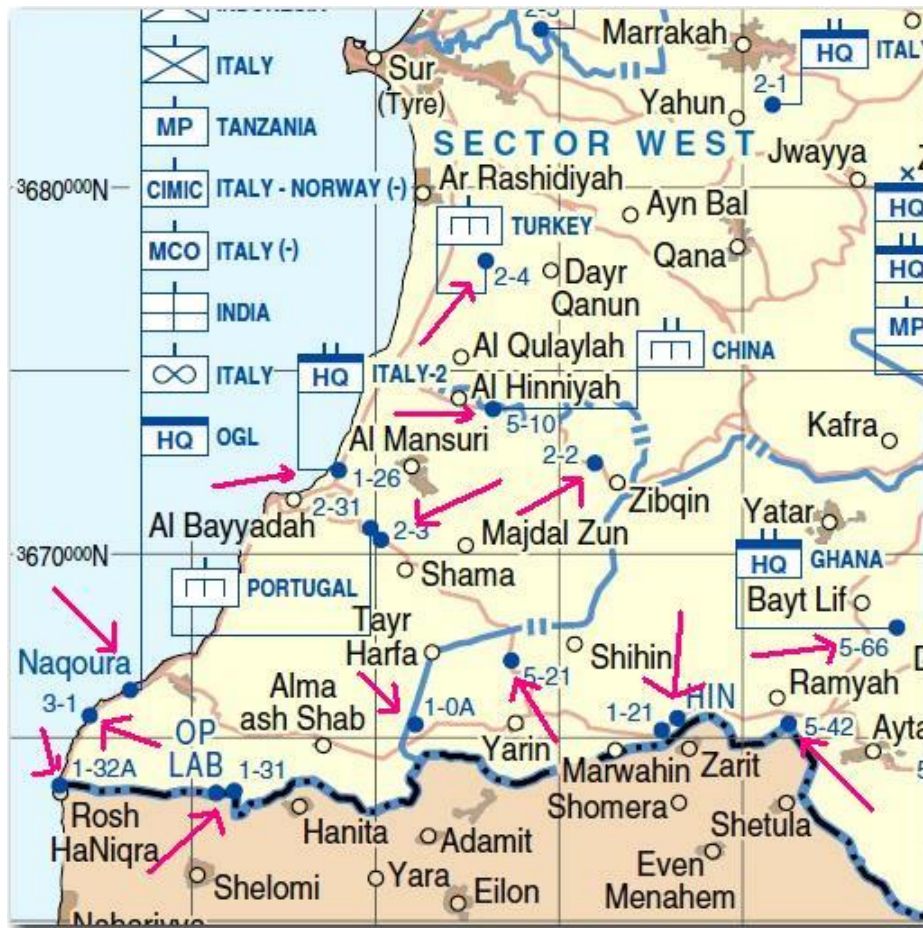
²⁵ US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Lebanon*, 11 March – Attachment 4.

²⁶ 'UNIFIL – United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon' (undated), United Nations website <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/index.shtml> – Accessed 19 October 2010 – Attachment 23.

²⁷ Lederer, R. 2007, 'Crossing the blue line: UNIFIL and the people of South Lebanon', *Lebanon Wire*, (Source: *The Media Line*), 8 April <http://www.lebanonwire.com/0704MLN/07040812ML.asp> – Accessed 20 October 2010 – Attachment 24; and: International Crisis Group 2010, *Drums of War: Israel and the 'Axis of Resistance'*, Middle East Report N°97, 2 August 2010 – Attachment 17.

²⁸ 'Lebanon – Naqoura' (undated), Naqoura.com website <http://www.naqoura.com/> – Accessed 20 October 2010 – Attachment 25.

²⁹ 'Detail of UNIFIL Deployment June 2009' 2009, United Nations Department of Field Support Cartographic Section, Reliefweb website, June [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/\\$File/map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/$File/map.pdf?OpenElement) – Accessed 20 October 2010 – Attachment 26; for the full map of UNIFIL deployments in south Lebanon, see: 'UNIFIL Deployment June 2009' 2009, United Nations Department of Field Support Cartographic Section, Reliefweb website, June [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/\\$File/map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/$File/map.pdf?OpenElement) – Accessed 20 October 2010 – Attachment 27.



It may be of interest to note that the above-mentioned July 2010 United Nations Security Council report on Lebanon stated that an attempt was made to bomb the UNIFIL Sector East headquarters in Marjayoun (50km north-east of Naqoura) on 23 April 2010. The report also noted that 12 of 13 Palestinian defendants charged with “monitoring UNIFIL with intent to attack with explosive devices and weapons” were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms, although nine of those charged remain at large and were tried in absentia.³⁰

Attachments

1. UN Security Council 2010, *Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, Reliefweb website, 1 July [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-87BMXP-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-87BMXP-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) – Accessed 20 October 2010.
2. Freedom House 2010, *Freedom in the World – Lebanon (2010)*, June <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010&country=7859> – Accessed 10 September 2010.

³⁰ UN Security Council 2010, *Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)*, Reliefweb website, 1 July [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-87BMXP-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2010.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/EGUA-87BMXP-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) – Accessed 20 October 2010 – Attachment 1.

3. 'Lebanon' 2010, in *Amnesty International Annual Report 2010*, 28 May.
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<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/index.shtml> – Accessed 19 October 2010.
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<http://www.lebanonwire.com/0704MLN/07040812ML.asp> – Accessed 20 October 2010.
25. 'Lebanon – Naqoura' (undated), Naqoura.com website <http://www.naqoura.com/> – Accessed 20 October 2010.
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[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/\\$File/map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/$File/map.pdf?OpenElement) – Accessed 20 October 2010.
27. 'UNIFIL Deployment June 2009' 2009, United Nations Department of Field Support Cartographic Section, Reliefweb website, June
[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/\\$File/map.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullmaps_sa.nsf/luFullMap/6D9E98078426D2E4C12576190034A5FC/$File/map.pdf?OpenElement) – Accessed 20 October 2010.