



**Security Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

S/17168  
8 May 1985  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

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NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The annexed letter, dated 7 May 1985, concerning the situation in Lebanon, was addressed to the Secretary-General by His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

Annex

Letter dated 7 May 1985 from His Holiness Pope John Paul II  
to the Secretary-General

My special interest in Lebanon and the alarming news which constantly arrives from that blood-drenched land prompt me to write to you once more.

After so many years of confrontations which have brought nothing but devastation, intolerance and mourning, there seems to be reason to fear some even more tragic events.

Each day, deadly clashes, indescribable human tragedies and calls for help emanating from every place and from all communities only intensify the profound grief in my heart.

The Lebanese people, sorely tried by this long state of war, seems to have reached the limit of its endurance, and no one can remain indifferent to so much suffering and destruction. One cannot stand idly by at the shocking sight of these families forced to leave their homes and goods, harried and seemingly doomed to reprisals of every kind.

What is happening in the southern part of the country - I am thinking in particular of the Christian population and of the risks run by all those who have taken refuge at Jezzine - the random shelling of Beirut and the anarchy gradually taking over every sector of social life suggest that such a situation, if it continued, could become fatal for the survival of the country.

In that context, one cannot help sharing the fears of the Lebanese themselves - Christians and Muslims - that the gap between the different communities will widen, the various kinds of extremism will grow worse, and finally all national identity will disappear.

Convinced that such an outcome is not unavoidable, knowing the Lebanese people's will to live and trusting in the solidarity of so many men of goodwill, I am continuing to make every effort to appeal to the conscience of nations and of their leaders, in order that Lebanon may become itself once again. For me, this is a commitment which clearly arises out of my mission as a pastor concerned first of all for so many of his children who are suffering the greatest distress and often feel that they are unknown and forgotten. I also have a duty to be faithful to Him Who proclaimed for all men the blessing of peace and Who wishes thereby to help mankind attain an understanding that can animate all those who have some power of decision - both in Lebanon and elsewhere - to make a specific commitment in order to discourage hostility, fear and violence.

The United Nations, by reason of its importance and its international responsibilities, seems a particularly suitable forum for making an appeal which is intended, in a sense, to be the voice of all the Lebanese tempted by despair: Do not abandon Lebanon. Help its people to lay the foundations of a clear dialogue aimed at building a truly renewed country.

I am confident, Mr. Secretary-General, that the United Nations, up to its very highest levels, will be able to take my appeal to heart and do everything in its power to co-ordinate the specific and urgent initiatives that such a complex crisis demands. I am further convinced that the Organization will not hesitate to strengthen the action it is taking to bring peace to the area, through an expanded presence of the force which it has maintained for years in Lebanon and which is taking on a particularly important mission.

In sharing these reflections and aspirations with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I cherish the hope that they will be widely heard, so as to stimulate the goodwill of all those who, in the community of nations, still believe in the values represented by Lebanon and truly want to put an end to its long agony. Furthermore, confidence and courage will be given once again to so many Lebanese who long to see, both in their own country and throughout the Middle East, a coexistence based on mutual understanding between the communities and peoples of the region.

Counting on your influence and your moral authority, I take this opportunity to extend to you, Mr. Secretary-General, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) IOANNES PAULUS PP.II

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