

UN chief says Israel must end occupation of southern Lebanon



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (C), accompanied by UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander General Aroldo Lazaro Saenz (L), arrives at the forces' headquarters in Naqura in southern Lebanon, January 17, 2025. (Photo by AFP)

United Nations, January 18 (RHC)-- UN chief Antonio Guterres says Israel's military operations and occupation in southern Lebanon must cease, as the regime continues to violate the ceasefire agreement it clinched with the Arab country in November 2024.

"The continued occupation by the Israel (military) inside the UNIFIL area operations and the conduct of military operations in Lebanese territory are violations of resolution 1701... They must stop," Guterres said on Friday.

He was speaking on a visit to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) headquarters in Naqura, and referring to the Security Council decision that ended a 2006 war between Israel and the Lebanese resistance group Hezbollah.

Guterres is visiting Lebanon as the January 26 deadline approaches for full implementation of the November 27 ceasefire between Lebanon and the occupying Israeli regime. Under the November 27 ceasefire accord, the Lebanese army has 60 days to deploy alongside UNIFIL in south Lebanon as the Israeli army withdraws.

At the same time, Hezbollah is required to pull its forces north of the Litani river, around 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border.

A monitoring committee comprising representatives of Lebanon and some other states and UNIFIL is tasked with reporting any ceasefire violations. In the most recent aggression on Friday, Israeli forces blew up a residential block in southern Lebanon. The detonation took place in the town of Aita al-shaab in Bint Jbeil district. There is no information on the possible casualties caused by the explosion.

According to Lebanese authorities, there have been over 500 Israeli violations of the ceasefire deal. They include airstrikes on southern Lebanese towns and villages as well as detonation attacks and territorial incursions.

Hezbollah Resistance group opened a support front for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip after Israel unleashed a genocidal war on the besieged territory on October 7, 2023, launching numerous retaliatory attacks against targets in the occupied lands.

Israel was forced to accept the truce with Hezbollah on November 27, 2024, after suffering heavy losses on the battleground and failing to achieve its goals despite killing over 4,000 people in Lebanon.

The deal, due to expire on January 26, gave Israel 60 days to pull out its forces from the occupied areas and hand over control to the Lebanese army and UN peacekeepers.

Israeli officials have reportedly said that the regime's troops would not leave southern Lebanon past the deadline for pullout.

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