

34. LEBANON

Background

In February 1984, Lebanese President Gemayel abrogated the May 1983 agreement with Israel which had sanctioned an Israeli security presence in Southern Lebanon. Later that spring, all US, British and Italian contingents of the Multinational Force withdrew from Beirut. The unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in early 1985 clearly established a shift in power towards Syria and the Shia community within Lebanon. By mid-1987, however, this had failed to produce agreement on the reforms necessary to end the twelve-year war.

Although the last phase of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon was completed in July 1985, Israeli forces continued to operate in a security zone in support of the South Lebanese army. Israel thus retained the right to intervene in Lebanon; a right which it has exercised on several occasions by bombarding Palestinian camps in both South and North Lebanon, particularly after July 1986.

At the end of September the UN Security Council passed a resolution requiring the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon.

In Tyr hundreds of demonstrators expressed their support for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, and denounced the attacks against it. This force had been set up in 1978 to supervise the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, restore peace and security and help the Lebanese government to re-establish its authority in South Lebanon.

In October 1986 there was particularly bitter fighting in Beirut, Tyr and Sidon between the Palestinians and the Shi-ite Amal militia. In early December efforts by Iran and the leader of the Amal, Nabih Berri, to reach a cease-fire intensified but the Palestinian guerillas refused to give up