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**Raising the issue of the Sheba'a Farms in the
proposed American-French Security Council
draft resolution for ending the fighting:
background information and significance**

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1. The issue of the Sheba'a Farms was recently raised again, this time in the American-French proposal for a draft of a Security Council resolution to end the current confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah (August 5, 2006).¹ The proposal calls, among other things, for Israel and Lebanon to support a viable ceasefire based on certain points, including the delineation of Lebanon's border in the "disputed or uncertain areas," such as the Sheba'a Farms (Mt. Dov).
2. The inclusion of the Sheba'a Farms as one of the "disputed or uncertain areas," to reopen it to diplomatic negotiations, is an achievement not only for the Lebanese government, but more importantly, for **Hezbollah**, which, since the IDF withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000, has turned the issue of the Sheba'a Farms into its **main pretext for attacking Israel** (although it has

¹ For further information see our Information Bulletin entitled "Analysis of the draft of the UN Security Council resolution proposed by France and the United States to end the hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/draft_accord_e.pdf or http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/draft_accord_e.htm.

other pretexts in its arsenal). **It has done so despite the unequivocal rejection by both the UN and the international community of the Lebanese claim to sovereignty over the Sheba'a Farms and their recognition of the area as belonging to the Syrian Golan Heights, which were captured by Israel in 1967.**

3. . The State of Israel, during the six years which have passed since the IDF withdrew from the security zone, has refused to hold negotiations regarding the Sheba'a Farms for a variety of reasons, the main ones, in our assessment, being the following:
 - A. **Israeli-Lebanese relations:** Israel, having fully implemented Security Council resolution 425, **refuses to surrender to terrorist pressure to accede to an unjustified demand which has already been rejected by the UN and the international community** (as opposed to Lebanon, which has implemented neither Security Council resolution 425 nor 1559). Raising the issue of the Sheba'a Farms yet again in the Security Council resolution will be represented as a "victory" by Hezbollah at the end of the current war and is **liable to reinforce its claim that continued attacks against the IDF forces at Mt. Dov are justified**. In addition, even if an arrangement is found for Mt. Dov, **Hezbollah still has other pretexts to continue the attacks against Israel.**²
 - B. **Israeli-Syrian relations:** Transferring the northern outskirts of the Golan Heights to Lebanon as a result of Hezbollah terrorist pressures, and not as part of diplomatic negotiations for a peace treaty, would set **a political precedent with strongly negative implications**. It would encourage the Syrian-Iranian strategy of using terrorism as a weapon to gain territory and extort political concessions from Israel.
 - C. **Security and strategy:** The Mt. Dov region (Jabel Ros) is strategically important for Israel's security because topographically it **dominates the Jordan River sources (Hatsbani, Banias and Dan)**. It should be

² From time to time, Hezbollah chooses other regions and claims they are part of the Lebanese-Israeli dispute. For example, on March 23-24, 2006, Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV broadcast commentaries to "remind" the Lebanese that there were other disputed areas in the sector east of the Sheba'a Farms, in the region of the "Lebanese Mr. Hermon."

remembered that at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s the area served as a base from which groups of Palestinian terrorists set out to attack Israel, a situation which prevailed until the IDF, after a long, hard struggle, succeeded in establishing its security control there.

4. . Syria, in the meantime, is trying to have its cake and eat it too: **on the one hand**, to preserve the pretext for Hezbollah's activities, it proclaims that the Sheba'a Farms are Lebanese (but avoids stating that the area is under Lebanese sovereignty), and thus supports the Lebanese position. **On the other**, it is doubtful whether it has a genuine interest in giving Lebanon sovereignty over the area, which would create a precedent by destroying the June 4 line in the Golan Heights. Therefore, **Syria can be expected to offer no genuine cooperation in an effort to neutralize the issue of the Sheba'a Farms, even if the international community raises it again.**

5. The Appendix contains **background information** about the issue of the Sheba'a Farms.

Appendix A

Background information about the Sheba'a Farms

Geography

1. The Sheba'a Farms are located in the area of **Mt. Dov** (Jabel Ros) on the slopes of Mt. Hermon near the border between the Golan Heights and Lebanon. The area has no particular geographical or historical uniqueness. It made headlines after the Israeli withdrawal from the security zone on May 24, 2000, when it became one of Hezbollah's main pretexts for its continued terrorism against Israel.
2. There is no exact, unequivocal delineation of the area in the documents Lebanon gave the UN on the eve of the IDF's withdrawal. It can be estimated that it refers to an area of about 40 sq km (about 24 sq miles) extending from the Blue Line (the IDF withdrawal line as delineated by UN cartographers) to Nahal Sion (See map, Appendix B). There are no civilian inhabitants in the area today, with the exception of the Alawi village of **Ghajar**, which lies in the southwestern corner of the area.

Historical background

3. Until the Six Day War in 1967, the area belonged to **Syria**. The legal base for Syrian sovereignty was the edict (no. 318) issued by General Henri Gouraud, the French High Commissioner, on August 31, 1920. The edict defined the territory and boundaries of the "State of Greater Lebanon," separating it from Syria and defining its boundaries.
4. The borders between Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, as delineated by the Paulet-Newcombe Commission on March 23, 1923, were internationally recognized by the League of Nations in May 1935 and at the end of the French and British mandates, became the international borders between the State of Israel, Syria and Lebanon. On the other hand, the Syrian-Lebanese bounding was never exactly delineated by the French mandate or by Syria and Lebanon after the two became independent. That was because of both **political-**

ideological reasons (the Syrian refusal to recognize its boundary with Lebanon as an international border with an independent country) and **practical reasons** (the long-standing disputes over the border and the ownership of the lands).

5. The following are some of the milestones in the Syrian-Lebanese border issue:³

A. **August 31, 1920:** The High French Commissioner General Henri Gouraud issued Edict No. 318 in Beirut, which explained in general terms the boundaries of the “State of Greater Lebanon” within its “natural boundaries.” The order was not accompanied by maps. According to the order, the eastern boundary between Lebanon and Syria would pass along the eastern boundaries of the district of Baalbek, the Beka’a Valley, Rashaia and Hatsbaiya, as they had existed during the Ottoman Empire. That was done without specific description or delineation of boundary.

B. **1924-1925:** The government of the French Mandate issued edicts describing the Lebanese boundaries and detailing the administrative infrastructure of the “State of Greater Lebanon.” In an addendum to the order of April 9, 1925, a list appears of the villages belonging to the various regions and districts. In 1926, the Lebanese constitution ratified the northern and eastern boundaries of the country (on the basis of General Gouraud’s edict).

C. **During the 1920s and 1930s** joint Syrian-Lebanese commissions were set up to deal with local boundary disputes and to delineate the boundary between the two countries. Their activity produced a number of local boundary adjustments but many problems remained unsolved.

D. **1969-1979:** Syria and Lebanon held negotiations to delineate their mutual boundary and make it internationally accepted. To that end, a Syrian-Lebanese commission was established headed by the general secretaries of the foreign ministries of both countries. Beyond the formulation of general

³According to the book of Dr. ‘Issam Khalifa, Lebanese expert in water and borders at the Lebanese University, *Luban al-Miyah wal-Hudud* (1916-1975) (Beirut, 1996).

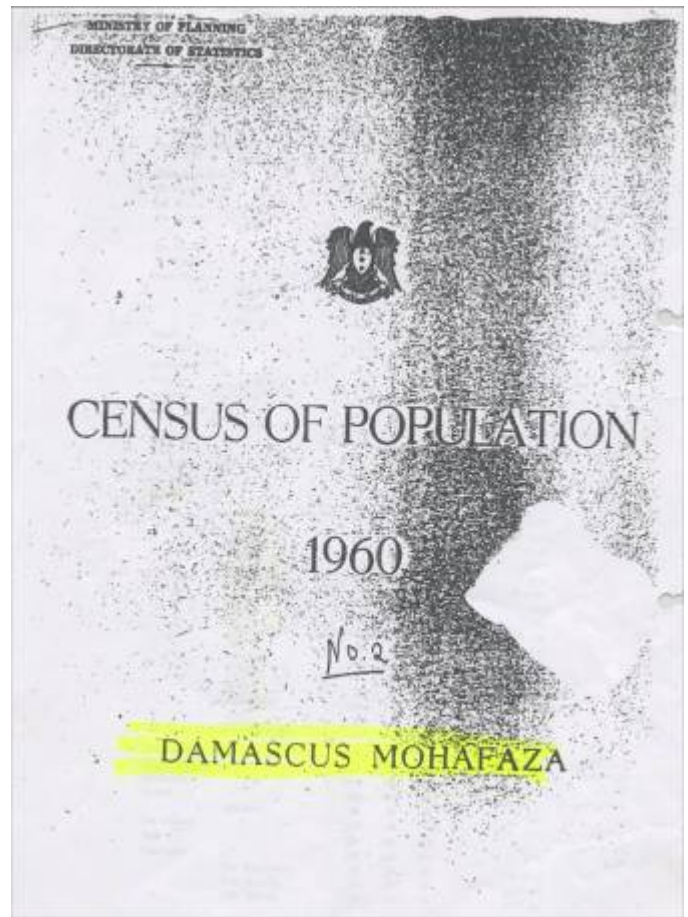
principles, the negotiations did not yield an agreement regarding the border and the issue remained unsolved.

- Between 1920 and the capture by Israel of the Golan Heights in the 1967 war, the Syrian territory of the Mt. Dov (Jabel Ros) area was settled and farmed. Today those farms lie **abandoned**. Most of the residents of the farms came from the Lebanese villages on the slopes of Mt. Hermon. They built houses, dug water sources and planted orchards. **The farms and their residents were registered as Syrian and as included in the district of Damascus** (for example in the Syrian census of 1960).

Inclusion of the Sheba'a Farms in the district of Damascus (“Damascus Mohafaza”) during the Syrian census of 1960

البلد	البلد	City or Village	Farm	عدد السكان			الجنسية	تاريخ التأسيس	التعليق
				الذكور	الإناث	المجموع			
				997	428	1425		سكان المنطقة	
				229	122	351		سكان المنطقة	
				---	---	---		البلد	
				746	227	973		سكان المنطقة	
				484	241	725		سكان المنطقة	
				442	202	644		سكان المنطقة	
				728	378	1106		سكان المنطقة	
				114	34	148		سكان المنطقة	
				770	380	1150		سكان المنطقة	
				222	126	348		سكان المنطقة	
				48	19	67		سكان المنطقة	
				158	81	239		سكان المنطقة	
				878	428	1306		سكان المنطقة	
				542	271	813		سكان المنطقة	
				373	188	561		سكان المنطقة	
				925	472	1397		سكان المنطقة	
				369	222	591		سكان المنطقة	
				1022	517	1539		سكان المنطقة	
				---	---	---		سكان المنطقة	
				861	469	1330		سكان المنطقة	
				1128	597	1725		سكان المنطقة	
				1828	922	2750		سكان المنطقة	
				728	412	1140		سكان المنطقة	
				857	422	1279		سكان المنطقة	
				228	98	326		سكان المنطقة	
				---	---	---		سكان المنطقة	
				221	104	325		سكان المنطقة	
				---	---	---		سكان المنطقة	
				39	18	57		سكان المنطقة	
				142	71	213		سكان المنطقة	
				13	22	35		سكان المنطقة	
				33	9	42		سكان المنطقة	
				49	21	70		سكان المنطقة	
				428	229	657		سكان المنطقة	
				81	22	103		سكان المنطقة	
				39	17	56		سكان المنطقة	
				373	178	551		سكان المنطقة	
				13	8	21		سكان المنطقة	
				---	---	---		سكان المنطقة	
				124	78	202		سكان المنطقة	
				286	129	415		سكان المنطقة	
				1012	788	1800		سكان المنطقة	
				389	129	518		سكان المنطقة	
				129	89	218		سكان المنطقة	
				141	90	231		سكان المنطقة	
				428	229	657		سكان المنطقة	
				104	243	347		سكان المنطقة	
				81	28	109		سكان المنطقة	
				48	22	70		سكان المنطقة	
				81	22	103		سكان المنطقة	

A list of Sheba'a Farms



IDF security activities in the area after the Six Day War

7. When the IDF captured the Golan Heights during the Six Day War, it took control of Mt. Dov (Jabel Ros). Until the beginning of the 1970s, the IDF fought the Palestinian terrorists who had located at Mt. Dov and with great effort succeeded in establishing Israeli control over the area.
8. During 1968 and 1969, the Palestinian terrorist organizations established themselves on the southwest slopes of Mt. Hermon, which the IDF nicknamed "Fatahland." "Fatahland" was dominated by Mt. Dov and therefore it was determined that the IDF would establish a permanent presence there. During 1970 roads were marked and paved from the direction of Mt. Hermon and from the west, and a permanent IDF post was established. Eventually other roads were built. The mountain was called Mt. Dov after First Lieutenant Dov Rodberg, a Golani Brigade officer who was killed while one of the roads to the post was being constructed.
9. The Mt. Dov area is an integral part of the **Israeli-Syrian disengagement agreement of 1974**, and is part of the UNDOF mandate.⁴

A claim of sovereignty over the Sheba'a Farms after the IDF withdrawal from the security zone raised by Lebanon and Hezbollah.

10. The claim of sovereignty over the Sheba'a Farms was raised by the Lebanese government and Hezbollah following the withdrawal of the IDF from the security zone, based on full implementation of **Security Council Resolution 425** (which does not relate to the Sheba'a Farms but only to the withdrawal of the IDF to the international border between Israel and Lebanon). On the eve of the IDF's withdrawal, official Lebanese sources claimed that Israel had taken over 16 agricultural farms in the region of Kafr Sheba'a, along the border which until 1967 separated Syria from Lebanon. The claims were based principally on Lebanese deeds, on the fact that in the past some of the farms

⁴ UNDOF, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, is the UN force operating in the Golan Heights.

had been worked by Lebanese and on the (baseless) claim that Syria had yielded its sovereignty over the area for the sake of Lebanon in the middle of the 1950s.

11. **The area is not included in Lebanon on Syrian, Lebanese or even UNDOF maps and the Syrian census before 1967 the farms and their inhabitants were listed as belonging to the district of Damascus. For that reason, and after an examination of the Lebanese claims, the UN rejected the Lebanese government demands and delineated the Blue Line, leaving the Sheba'a Farms within the mandate of UNDOF in the Golan Heights. The Blue Line in the Mt. Dov area, as delineated by the UN, rises from the Hatsbani river bed near Kafr Ghajar, reaches the heights of Mt. Dov, and leaves the Sheba'a Farms outside Lebanese territory.**

The Sheba'a Farms do not appear on the miniature map shown on Lebanese 1000-lira currency



A 1000-lira Lebanese note from 1988, showing a miniature map of Lebanon and the boundary between Syria and Lebanon in the Sheba'a Farms region. The border as it appears supports the Israeli (and UN) position, contradicting the Lebanese claim. On January 16, 2002, the Lebanese newspaper Al-Sapir reported that a complaint had been lodged with the Lebanese attorney general to remove the problematic currency from circulation...

Hezbollah attacks on Mt. Dov and the internal Lebanese discourse about the Sheba'a Farms issue

12. During the six years which have passed since the IDF withdrew from the security zone, **Hezbollah has occasionally attacked the IDF posts on Mt. Dov** (including the abduction and murder of three IDF soldier). It has done so to retain the problem of the Sheba'a Farms as a pretext for continued terrorist activity against Israel.
13. The subject was raised in the Lebanese national dialogue, ongoing since the beginning of 2006 between the various forces active in Lebanon. They reached a consensus over the Sheba'a Farms, deciding that they were Lebanese and that the Lebanese government would again appeal to the UN to ratify its sovereignty over them.
14. According to Lebanese prime minister Fuad Siniora and his supporters, that would obviate Hezbollah's chief pretext for retaining its arms and continuing attacks against Israel. However, both Siniora and his supporters are well aware that **Hezbollah has other pretexts** which will be backed up by Syria, including reservations as to how the Blue Line was delineated by the UN cartographers and a demand for the return of seven Shi'ite villages which in the past were south of the international border.⁵ Thus a solution to the problem of the Sheba'a Farms will not lead to a disarmament of Hezbollah or a stop to its terrorist activities

⁵ Seven Shi'ite villages in Israeli territory whose inhabitants fled during Israel's War of Independence in 1948.

The Sheba'a Farms as a pretext for Hezbollah to continue its terrorist attacks

◆ On June 1, 2006, the Lebanese television channel LBC (identified with the Christian Lebanese Forces) broadcast a satirical show highly critical and scornful of Hezbollah. The following is the sketch devoted to the Sheba'a Farms:⁶

Interviewer: Sayyid [Hassan] Nasrallah, if the Sheba'a Farms are liberated, do you then intend to give up your weapons [to the central Lebanese government]?

“Nasrallah:” We do not have weapons because we love them but rather to realize our right [to do so] [a claim often made by Nasrallah]... **After [the liberation of] the Sheba'a Farms we will liberate Abu Hassan's garden in Detroit, USA...** [i.e., Hezbollah's claims that its activities are meant to “liberate” the Sheba'a Farms is merely a pretext which will be followed by other pretexts, equally absurd...]

“Nasrallah” and the interviewer discuss the “liberation” of the Sheba'a Farms



“After the Sheba'a Farms we will liberate Abu Hassan's garden in in Detroit, USA...”



“Sayyid Nasrallah, if the Sheba'a Farms are liberated, do you then intend to give up your weapons?”

Interviewer: “And after that... will you give up your weapons?”

“Nasrallah:” “No. We will still have to get rid of the American-imperialist-Zionist satellites which are circling overhead and passing over our air space and infringing on our sovereignty...”

Appendix B

Map of Mt. Dov area (Scale 1:50,000)

