

Peace Keeping in Lebanon - 1983

Issue

The tragic loss of life of United States and French members of the International Peace Keeping Force in Lebanon in October 1983 from terrorist bomb blasts raises not only deepest sympathy but also questions about peace keeping in that war-ravaged land.

Background

In the years since the establishment of the National Covenant, geopolitical and other events, both within and without Lebanon, have given rise to ever-increasing tensions, conflicts, military interventions by foreign states and violent civil wars. (For further details about Lebanon, kindly read the third paragraph of the Background for the 1983 Resolution: Israel and the Middle East).

When peace-keeping forces enter an area of severe conflict, no matter how carefully they execute their duties as neutrals, the warring factions must perceive them as neutrals and not as defenders of a particular point of view. It has been suggested that there is special significance to the fact that only United States and French units were the victims of the October terrorist bomb blasts as the British and Italian forces may have been perceived as representing more neutral powers.

Resolution

Profound sympathy is extended by the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in convention assembled in Houston, Texas, in November 1983, to the United States and French units of the International Peace Keeping Force in Lebanon and especially most deeply to the bereaved families of the young men whose lives were crushed by terrorist bomb blasts in Beirut. As delegates of more than 100,000 Sisterhood women of Reform, Liberal and Progressive Judaism in 13 countries, we share with all men and women of good will abhorrence of terrorist violence and its needless destruction of innocent lives.

With sorrow we realize that in the years of its occupation by foreign forces and its fierce civil war and rivalries among Lebanese factions who, with their private militias turned against the central government and each other, literally multi-thousand lives of innocent adults and children have been destroyed. This reality makes no less tragic these latest atrocities of October 1983 against young men whose task in Lebanon was to patrol as peace keepers while the Lebanese government, a strengthened Lebanese Army and various factions sought to resolve their fierce differences. We, therefore, now declare:

- 1) The role of an invited multinational force for peace keeping purposes is indeed justified.
- 2) However, it is imperative that such a force be perceived as truly neutral by major parties in the conflict situations.
- 3) Earnest consideration should be given to seeking such a force under the auspices of the United Nations or from such countries as the Lebanese government and the warring divisions in the country see as neutral.
- 4) All parties in Lebanon should consider it an unbreakable obligation of their honor and their religious faith of whatever creed to cooperate non-violently to restore peace through courageous negotiations held both within and without their troubled, torn land.