

# TED ANTALYA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019



**Forum:**Health and Environment Committee

**Issue:**The Issue of Oil Slick on Lebanese Shores

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A devastating attack has caused a major oil spill that has heavily polluted the shores of Lebanon, during Israel's 2006 war with Hezbollah. The issue of the committee concerns the environmental damage on human health, biodiversity, tourism and fisheries, which has been caused by the oil spill in the Mediterranean Sea, the results and the reason behind the oil spill.

## **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

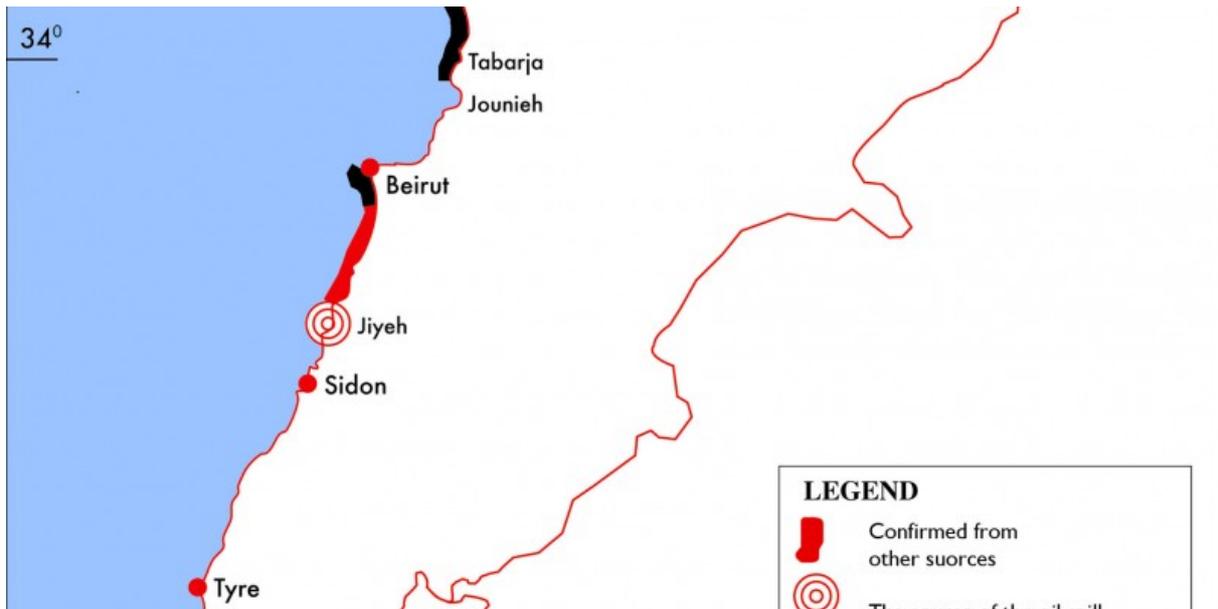
**Oil Spill:** A form of natural disaster which is caused by humans. It is the release of liquid petroleum into the environment. (in this case, specifically into the sea)

**Flora:** Flora is a name for the plant life present in a specific region or time.

**Fauna:** Is a name for the animal life present in a particular region or time.

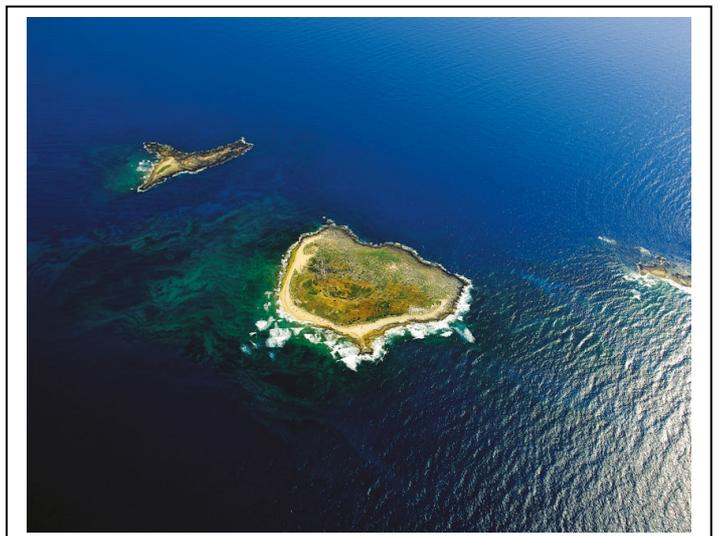
## **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

On 13th of July and 15th of July, 2006, Israeli forces has bombed the Jiyeh power station, which is located 30 km south of Beirut. The bombing escalated into one of the worlds greatest environmental disaster and polluted estimatedly 170 km of coastline. While the oil slick threathened the marine life of the Mediterranean Sea, the spill also affected Cyprus, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey. An estimated 10.000 – 15.000 tons of oil has merged into the Mediterranean Sea and the thickness of the oil on the surface of the sea has reached to 10 cm. Following the oil spill, a ceasefire also occured since the bombing of the power plant caused the remaining 5,500 tons of petroleum in the station to burn for more than three weeks.



El-Jiyyeh was significantly suffering from the Israeli Air Force originated bombing. The clean-up operations which are being held by both local and international organizations are continuously making progress, however the Lebanese government estimated that it would take minimum 10 years to recover from such a tragic disaster. Some part of the oil that covered the Mediterranean Sea either evaporated, adding volatile organic compounds to the atmosphere or was pushed to the land by the prevailing wind. Most of the oil coated the coastlines. Some caves, harbours and coves were heavily affected by the oil spill since the oil got trapped in the regions that it spread into.

The flora and fauna were also exposed to tons of petroleum. Especially the aquatic life in the Lebanese shores were threatened and many species such as the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna fish, made its way into the “nearly extinct” classification. The oil also threatened the already endangered green sea turtle. As a result of extreme toxicity; gastropods, algae, polychaetes and crustaceans has faced smothering. The sunken oil in the sea also continues to poison the marine life. Unfortunately, the full-recovery of the habitat in the region may take years.





The oil spill did not only affect the biodiversity in Lebanese shores, but also had devastating effects on the Palm Islands Nature Reserve, which is located near Tripoli, Lebanon. The migrating birds, marine turtles and other fauna were affected since the oil spread to the shallow waters of the nature reserve.

The UNDP report on the issue significantly points out the cultural and touristic impact of the major oil spill by describing how the archeological structures

in Byblos were severely affected by the oil spill. Byblos, a world heritage site, is famous for its archeological sites, dominantly the Crusader Castle, holds Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Greek and Roman ruins. Two medieval towers currently have their basements covered with petroleum. This is a huge disappointment for tourists coming from all around the world, just to see these ancient ruins and a huge negative impact on Lebanese tourism.

The UNDP report also pointed out: “A national oil spill clean-up operation for the Lebanese coast could not start immediately after the spill occurred or even after the ceasefire due to the air and marine blockade enforced by the Israeli army on Lebanon as well as due to the lack of human, material and financial resources.”

The fishing industry has also suffered due to the lack of fish in the sea, especially in the first two years after the spill. Even though there was fish in the sea, they all had the poisonous petroleum and other hazardous chemicals that came with the oil spill in their blood so the most damaged industry could be considered the fishing industry

The impact on human health is also a crucial issue since oil has a direct effect on human health. Oil can affect health through direct contact or inhalation. Short term effects may cause nausea, headaches and dermatological effects on skin. Long-term effects of oil contact can even cause cancer, pulmonary disease and some skin diseases.



The ongoing aggression between Israel-Lebanon intentionally target civilians and destroy infrastructure. To focus on the reason why the bombing happened we have to take a look at the history of the conflict between Israel and Lebanon;

The two countries had a promising diplomatic relation back in the 1950's. Indeed, the two countries had a nonexistent relation even though Lebanon took part in the 1967 Six-Day War. However, after the war, Lebanon was considered as an ideal base for Palestinian terror by the Arab world, because of its weak central government.

After the Cairo Agreement, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) gained special status in Lebanon in 1969. As a result, Lebanon became the training ground for terrorists all around the world.

During the 1970's, PLO terrorists carried out numerous cross-border attacks to Israel. The situation spoiled the balance between Muslims and Christians in the country, indeed, escalated into a civil war in 1975. Lebanese Christians asked for support from Israel since both sides wanted to drive terrorists from their Lebanese base. On the other side, Syrians also intervened in the conflict. They initially sided with the Christians, however decided to switch sides and support the PLO and caused PLO to grow.

Israel, later launched Peace for Galilee, an operation designed to drive the PLO and the Syrians from Lebanon and pave the way for a peace, however this caused a huge chaos and 300 unarmed civilians to be butchered. Still, Israel and Lebanon were able to sign a peace deal that could only last for a year.

After the war, Syria moved troops back into Lebanon, and quickly regained its influence over the Beirut government. In the South a new force emerged: Shi'ite Muslims. Israel remained in occupation of a security zone in the South to protect its northern border. That led to an 18-year-long war of attrition with the Hezbollah, in which hundreds of Israelis died. In May 2000, Israel withdrew from Lebanon to the international border, in a move ratified by the United Nations. Hezbollah moved militiamen down to the border and, like the PLO before them, created a state-within-a-state in the South. In September 2004, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1559, which called for the removal of Syrian forces

from Lebanon and the dismantlement of all militias, including Hezbollah. The Syrians and Hezbollah ignored it.

In July 12, 2006, the Second Lebanese War begun when a group of Hezbollah terrorists attacked Israeli soldiers by crossing the border into Israel. This caused the Israeli government to respond with an air strike targeting Lebanon.

## MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

**Lebanon:** Lebanon is the main character of the issue. Resulting from the aggression between Lebanon and Israel, the country's power plant which is located in El-Jayya has been bombed by the Israeli government.

**Hezbollah:** Hezbollah, which dominates Lebanon today, is a military force, political party, a terrorist group and a transnational criminal organization group engaged in drug trafficking, Money laundering and arms smuggling. Hezbollah is financially supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran and refers to itself as the Islamic revolution of Lebanon.

**Israel:** Israeli government is the main cause of the oil slick since they bombed the power plant which is located in Lebanon. It is a country that has been continuous aggression between Lebanon for decades.



## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 1969** The Cairo Agreement has been signed and PLO gained a special place in Lebanon, which resulted as Lebanon being the training ground for terrorists
- 1970s** PLO terrorists carried out numerous cross-border attacks to Israel
- 1975** Lebanese civil war begun between the Christians and Muslims in Lebanon
- 1976** Syrian government first intervened to the civil war
- 1985** Hezbollah was officially formed
- 1992** Israel assassinated the Hezbollah chief Sheik Abbas Musawi
- 2000** Israel withdrew from Lebanon
- 2004** UNSC passed a resolution which called for the removal of Syrian forces from Lebanon and the dismantlement of all militias, including Hezbollah. The Syrians and Hezbollah ignored it.
- 2005** Syria assassinated former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri

- 2000-2006** In the six years following Israel's withdrawal, Hezbollah, with Syrian and Iranian support, had built up a an estimated force of 12,000 to 14,000 Katyusha rockets capable of hitting a wide range of Israeli cities, towns and villages.
- 2006** The Second Lebanese War begun when Israel bombed the power plant in Lebanon
- 2006** The war ended with a United-Nations brokered cease-fire in which the Lebanese agreed to take control of Southern Lebanon from the Hezbollah with the help of the United Nations.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

NGO's from all around the world such as Greenpeace and Greenline contributed in the clean-up operations. The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) and the Ministry of Environment also provided assistance.

The UN has passed a resolution that calls Israel to pay Lebanon \$850m over the oil spill. Furthermore, UN agencies have agreed on a multimillion dollar action plan in order to tackle oil spill. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme has stated that it is the best time to tackle the issue since the bombs and the guns have been silenced.

The actions taken in order to tackle the issue has been effective, however the oil spill was so massive that it had a traumatic effect on the environment. No matter what action is being taken, nature takes time to recover, especially from such a huge natural disaster.

## RELEVANT UN DOCUMENTS AND TREATIES

- <http://greenline.me.uk/wp-content/uploads/2006/09/GREEN-LINE-cleanup-operations-must-start.pdf> this is a report made by an NGO named Greenline. Greenline has done so much in order to clean the coastline of Lebanon and this report will especially cover the environmental impact of the matter.
- Oil slick on Lebanese shores Report of the Secretary-General\*  
A/62/343 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290296782\\_Oil\\_slick\\_on\\_Lebanese\\_shores\\_Report\\_of\\_the\\_Secretary-General\\_A62343](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290296782_Oil_slick_on_Lebanese_shores_Report_of_the_Secretary-General_A62343)

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The oil spill is one of the biggest environmental disasters that the humanity has ever faced and we cannot disregard that the effects will continue to show for years. The nature will recover itself however actions must be taken in order to decrease the effects of these oil spills on the marine life and human health especially. Because the more time oil stays on the surface of the sea, the more damage it will give. The effective usage of oil booms, sorbents or skimmers will be helpful while decreasing the effects of the oil spill.

Especially the Lebanese citizens should be encouraged to voluntarily participate in the clean-up operations. It will be better if we take the required precautions for a possible oil spill.

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