

Middle East conflict - Lebanon. Correspondence, statements, resolutions: Mi...

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Beirut, 1958 - August 1

UNOGIL (Plaza, Dayal, Bull)

— to Sec. Gen.

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UNITED NATIONS OBSERVATION GROUP IN LEBANON

Riviera Hotel
Beirut, 1 August 1958

CONFIDENTIAL

To : Secretary-General
From : Plaza, Dayal and Bull

Election of new President was hailed with great relief, but any real improvement in situation will depend upon attitude of President Chamoun who has announced his intention of completing his full term. This is quite unacceptable to opposition who are unlikely to lay down arms until they succeed in forcing or inducing Chamoun to go. Much also depends upon the attitude of the President-elect and Prime Minister. Sami Solh opposed Chehab's candidature to the last, but was overruled by majority in Cabinet and loyalist deputies. Nature of the vote on the President's election further indicates that Solh no longer enjoys confidence of Parliament. If Chehab does not take any firm action to bring about change in present Government, which is incapable of restoring law and order, present strife would continue. The speaker could however call a session of Parliament which would deny Solh a vote of confidence, and thus force out present Cabinet. In that event, Chamoun would be left without a Government and would probably be forced to resign, as any alternative to Solh would be a Prime Minister of a very different political complexion. Chamoun's departure would mean an interim President till September 24, who would undoubtedly work closely with Chehab, if Chehab himself does not assume Presidency till the date prescribed in



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constitution. In such circumstances, a marked reduction in civil strife would be possible, and among the first acts of the new Government would be a request for withdrawal of US forces.

Present political scene is confused, the first act in the drama, namely the Presidential election having been completed. Regarding the subsequent steps, the various possibilities have been described above.

As political developments here will inevitably react on the nature and scope of UNOGIL's functions, we are keeping a close watch on the political situation. Meanwhile, we are going ahead with our plans for extending observation activities to the border areas at all points.

We propose to keep you informed of developments in the political scene during the crucial period immediately ahead.