

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 31, 2024

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Austin:

We write to express our serious concern about recent reports that Israeli military actions in Lebanon have, on multiple occasions, resulted in the deaths of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) members. The most recent incident, caused by an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) airstrike on October 20, reportedly killed three LAF soldiers evacuating wounded Lebanese citizens.

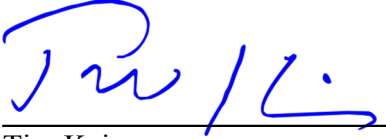
We have all stood firm for Israel's ability to defend itself from external threats posed by Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. But the United States has also made a commitment to the people of Lebanon to provide humanitarian assistance and continue to support the LAF. The LAF remains a key sovereign institution within Lebanon and is critical to promoting stability amidst ongoing crises. Reports that Israel is harming LAF forces in its war against Hezbollah run contrary to the U.S. interest in de-escalating violence in the region. Actions that destabilize the one institution in Lebanon that can be a bridge to a more peaceful future are also contrary to Israel's security interests.

We ask for you to brief us, by letter or in person, on this critical matter. Specifically:

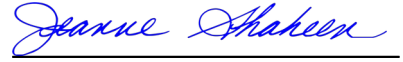
1. What is your assessment of LAF casualties as a result of IDF military operations? To your knowledge, in what instances were the LAF personnel IDF targets versus killed in action?
2. If the personnel were IDF targets, do you see any operational justification for targeting the LAF?
3. Has Israel communicated their use of U.S.-supplied arms or equipment in these operations?
4. What communication has the U.S. had with Israeli officials to strongly protest against actions leading to LAF casualties?
5. Has Israel made any commitment to focus its efforts against Hezbollah so as to protect LAF troops, Lebanese citizens and international aid workers?

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical request.

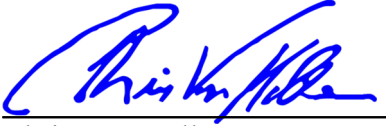
Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator