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SAUDI ARABIA'S ATTITUDE ON THE ISRAELI AGGRESSION ON LEBANON, APRIL 11-26, 1996.

Jassim Mohammed Khudhair^{1*}

¹*University of Mosul, College of Arts, Iraq. ¹jasem.m.k@uomosul.edu.iq, https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5565-2391*

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Corresponding author: Jassim Mohammed Khudhair
(jasem.m.k@uomosul.edu.iq)

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the stance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the Israeli military offensive against Lebanon from April 11 to 26, 1996, referred to as "Operation Grapes of Wrath." This action constituted one of the most severe escalations by Israel against Lebanon in the 1990s, leading to considerable infrastructure devastation, civilian fatalities, and extensive displacement. The primary aim of the research is to analyse the nature, extent, and ramifications of Saudi Arabia's political, diplomatic, and humanitarian response to this crisis, as well as the impact of its efforts in terminating the aggression and aiding Lebanon on several fronts. The study commences by delineating the background of the aggression, highlighting Israel's articulated objectives of ceasing Hezbollah assaults, compelling Syria to engage in the peace process, and bolstering the South Lebanon Army. It subsequently examines Saudi Arabia's rapid response, under King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, which included formal denunciations and cautions against the repercussions of Israeli incursions. The Kingdom categorically condemned infringements of Lebanon's sovereignty and transgressions of international law, demanding Israel's total departure and the enforcement of UN Security Council Resolution 425. Saudi Arabia's reaction extended beyond just public declarations. It commenced diplomatic initiatives at both regional and international levels. The report examines senior-level discussions and correspondence between Saudi officials and delegates from the United States, European Union, Egypt, and Syria, advocating for prompt action and compelling Israel to halt hostilities. Saudi representatives actively participated in the emergency meeting of the Arab League Council in Cairo, where they expressed unequivocal support for Lebanon's sovereignty and condemned the assault on civilians and infrastructure. A substantial portion of the research focusses on Saudi Arabia's humanitarian contributions. The Kingdom sent multiple humanitarian shipments, comprising food, medication, ambulances, and shelter supplies. It also allocated resources via entities such as the Arab Gulf Program for UN Relief and Works Agency (AGFUND). These initiatives alleviated the distress of the displaced Lebanese populace and bolstered Saudi Arabia's position as a humanitarian entity in the area. The research additionally analyses the political ramifications of Saudi participation. It emphasises the Kingdom's support for Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, augmenting his political clout in both Arab and international arenas. Saudi Arabia bolstered Lebanon's internal unity and foreign representation with diplomatic and material assistance during a pivotal period. The report suggests that Saudi Arabia's activities were crucial in securing the ceasefire deal referred to as the April Understanding, as evidenced by a meticulous chronological analysis of events, conversations, and choices. It underscores Saudi Arabia's steadfast commitment to upholding Arab unity, endorsing international legal standards, and fostering regional stability. The research enhances comprehension of the mechanisms underlying Saudi foreign policy in conflict scenarios, particularly within its proximate regional context. It elucidates how the Kingdom reconciles diplomatic engagement, public diplomacy, humanitarian assistance, and alliance formation in reaction to regional crises. The research additionally considers the wider ramifications of Saudi involvement in Lebanon for Arab collective action and the persistent obstacles to peacebuilding in the Middle East.

KEYWORDS: Saudi Foreign Policy, Israeli Aggression 1996, Lebanon War, Arab League Diplomacy, Humanitarian Aid.

1. INTRODUCTION

Israeli "Operation Grapes of Wrath" in 1996 constituted one of the most significant military offensives against Lebanon in contemporary history. This incident was part of a series of Israeli operations on Lebanese territory, purportedly aimed at undermining Hezbollah and responding to its assaults on Israeli forces deployed in southern Lebanon at that time. The violence occurred between April 11 and 26, 1996, coinciding with the signing of the "April Memorandum." It targeted Lebanese sites, primarily the party's heartland, with the stated objective of preventing Hezbollah from assaulting northern Israel. The occupying forces have conducted aerial and artillery bombardments on southern Lebanon, the suburbs of Beirut, and the Bekaa Valley. These assaults are violent and aim at residential and infrastructural zones, resulting in daily fatalities.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opposed the assaults and cautioned about the perils of the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. Simultaneously, it vehemently denounced the infringement of its sovereignty and the sanctity of its territory. It urged Israel to withdraw from Lebanon unconditionally and cautioned that Israeli assaults on their nation will exacerbate the situation, leading to further instability, violence, and fatalities. The Kingdom facilitated the cessation of Israeli assaults on Lebanon by its diplomatic and communicative efforts at both Arab and international levels. The two governments and their citizens demonstrated unequivocal solidarity with Lebanon, endorsing its territorial integrity, sovereignty, and stability. King Fahd bin Abdulaziz (1982-2005) expressed regret for the aggression inflicted upon Lebanon by what he referred to as the Israeli opponent. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia endorsed Lebanon's appeal for a convening of the Arab League Council, which occurred in Cairo on April 17 at the level of foreign ministers, as requested by Lebanon. The Kingdom placed significant importance on the Council's sessions, during which they reiterated their support for Lebanon and condemned Israel's incursion. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exerted considerable effort to achieve these outcomes.

Ultimately, on April 26, 1996, a truce was achieved. The Kingdom expressed satisfaction that the decision resulted in a truce in Lebanon. The Kingdom reiterated the significance of safeguarding Lebanon's populace, security, stability, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. The Kingdom commended the efforts made at all levels to achieve the truce, urged assistance for the Lebanese

populace, and requested the repatriation of displaced individuals to their towns. The Kingdom anticipated that the ceasefire deal would curtail military activities that have resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. It emphasised the significance of safeguarding Lebanon's security, stability, and territorial integrity.

2. THE KINGDOM'S POSITION ON THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE AGGRESSION, APRIL 13-15, 1996

In early 1996, Israeli forces assaulted many villages and communities in southern Lebanon. The most egregious incident was the assault on southern Lebanon, occurring from April 11 to 26, 1996. The primary objectives of the aggression were to safeguard settlements and Israeli soldiers from Lebanese resistance activities, disarm Hezbollah or at least curtail its armament, undermine the Syrian government and compel its participation in the peace process under minimal conditions by neutralising the resistance strategy, mitigate damage to the Israeli army's reputation, and enhance the morale of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and Israel's allies in the occupied region of southern Lebanon, who were experiencing confusion, anxiety, and fear regarding their future. Hostilities ceased upon the signing of the April Understanding on April 26, 1996.

On April 13, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia warned of the repercussions of Israeli assaults on Lebanon and expressed significant concern on the violation of its sovereignty and the sanctity of its territory. An official from the Saudi Foreign Ministry stated that Israeli aircraft assaulting Lebanon constitutes a violation of Lebanese sovereignty, an infringement on its territory and integrity, and a challenge to international legitimacy and UN Security Council Resolution 425, which mandates Israel's unconditional withdrawal from Lebanese territory. A source informed the Saudi Press Agency that Israeli assaults on Lebanon will exacerbate the situation, and Saudi Arabia seeks comprehensive, equitable, and enduring peace in the region. He reiterated that the Kingdom endorses Lebanon in protecting its territory and populace.

The Kingdom regarded the attack as a blatant infringement of Lebanese sovereignty and international law. It urged the global community to promptly fulfil its responsibility to halt the attack and safeguard Lebanon and its citizens. The Kingdom announced its intention to assist the Lebanese populace in reclaiming their rights and liberating their occupied region. April 14, 2014 BEIRUT (KUNA) Ahmed Mohammed Al-Kahimi, the Saudi

Arabian ambassador to Lebanon, stated today that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will not abandon Lebanon. This was articulated during a meeting between Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez and Arab ambassadors in Lebanon to discuss strategies for compelling Israel to cease its attacks on Lebanon. He conveyed the perspective of the Saudi Council of Ministers to Minister Bouez, who would then inform the Lebanese government. He also expressed opposition to the actions of the Zionists, including assaults on significant economic structures.

On April 15, the Saudi kingdom requested that the European Union exert pressure on Israel to cease its military operations in Lebanon. Mamoun Al-Kurdi, the Saudi Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, presented this idea to the European Union delegation headed by Ludovico Anticzadi Camarana, the Italian Deputy Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. The delegation had recently landed in Riyadh for a Gulf trip. The Lebanese Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Zuhair Hamdan, conferred with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal at his office. They discussed the bilateral ties between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. The Saudi Press Agency said that Saudi Minister Saud Al-Faisal informed the Lebanese Ambassador that the Kingdom opposed the Israeli assaults, which constitute an infringement on Lebanon's sovereignty and a violation of its territorial sanctity. Al-Faisal stated that the Kingdom will assist Lebanon in safeguarding its land and ensuring security, asserting that any Israeli incursions will exacerbate the situation, induce instability, and result in increased terrorism. Violence occurs while the Kingdom aspires for comprehensive, equitable, and enduring peace across the entire region.

2.1. Saudi Contacts to Stop Aggression April 14-16, 1996

The Kingdom exerted pressure on Israel to cease its assaults on Lebanon through ongoing communication and diplomatic efforts. Diplomatic sources in Riyadh indicated that the Kingdom has engaged in discussions with the United States and European Union nations over this matter. On April 14 in Jeddah, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Aviation Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz conducted two meetings with US Presidential Special Advisor Thomas McLarty. Saudi officials communicated with President Clinton's adviser on the ongoing Israeli bombs in Lebanon and requested US intervention to halt them. On the same day, US President Bill Clinton conversed via

telephone with Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz following a discussion with his adviser in Jeddah. The Kingdom has requested EU members to exert pressure on Israel to cease its strikes. The Saudi proposal was presented during a meeting in Riyadh on April 14, involving Mamoun al-Kurdi, the Saudi Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs for Economic Affairs, and a European Union delegation headed by Ludovico Camerana, the Italian Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs. On April 15, Mario Scilia, the Italian ambassador to Riyadh, informed Al-Hayat daily that both Saudi and European representatives concurred in condemning Israel's aggression and committed to persuading Israel to cease its airstrikes and military operations in Lebanon. The ambassador emphasised that all parties concurred that the most effective means to de-escalate tensions in the region is to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 425, which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory.

On April 15, a delegation from Hezbollah convened with Ahmed al-Kahimi, the Saudi ambassador to Beirut. The group consisted of MP Ahmed al-Barjawi, Foreign Relations Officer Youssef Marei, and party member Ali Haribi. Hezbollah issued a statement indicating that the team informed the Saudi ambassador about the latest developments in the conflict in Lebanon. They expressed gratitude for the Kingdom's commitment to solidarity with the Lebanese populace in response to this onslaught. The Saudi envoy stated that the Kingdom, including its government and populace, supports Lebanon in opposition to Israeli attacks and is ready to assist the Lebanese government financially. He emphasised that the Kingdom would not permit Lebanon to confront this struggle independently; it will provide support. In the discussions of the UN Security Council regarding the Israeli assaults on Lebanon on April 16, Saudi Ambassador Jaafar Al-Laqai asserted that Lebanon cannot be deemed accountable for the resistance actions against the Israeli occupation in the south unless the Lebanese army is permitted to intervene, re-establish order and security, assume control of the situation, and gain complete authority over all of Lebanon's territory.

The Lebanese government cannot be held responsible for the situation in the south unless this occurs. The Kingdom anticipates that the sponsors of the Middle East Peace Conference will exert pressure on Israel to adhere to its commitments and advance both the Lebanese and Syrian issues in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, ensuring the restitution of rights and land to their rightful owners. Thus, we might assert that it constitutes an

equitable resolution. Israel persists in assaulting Lebanese cities and villages in the south, including the western Bekaa, Iqlim Al-Tuffah, and the southern suburbs of Beirut, with Israeli bombers and helicopters targeting villages and towns in the western and central regions. Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz convened a meeting of the Saudi Cabinet on the evening of April 16. The Cabinet discussed the ongoing Israeli assaults in Lebanon. Saudi Minister of Information Fuad bin Abdul Salam Al Farsi informed the Saudi Press Agency post-meeting that the Cabinet expressed significant concern regarding the persistent Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon, asserting that violence begets further violence and that adherence to UN Security Council Resolution 425 is sufficient to establish peace and security in Lebanon. He stated that the assault must cease immediately and that Israeli forces should withdraw from Lebanese territory.

The Kingdom urged European Union members to exert pressure on Israel to cease its military operations in Lebanon. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Kingdom endorses Lebanon's right to reclaim its territory and will do all efforts to ensure Israel respects Lebanon's sovereignty, territory, and airspace, in addition to adhering to international resolutions. The statement indicated that Israeli assaults will result in the deaths of more innocent individuals in Lebanon, asserting that the sole means to halt the carnage was for Israeli forces to withdraw from southern Lebanon. The Kingdom expressed its intention to continue discussions with Arab and international entities to resolve the crisis in Lebanon. It was stated that measures must be implemented to halt Israel's aggression towards Lebanon and to adopt a resolute position against it. Saudi Arabia received Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on April 16, 1996. In an effort to mitigate bloodshed in Lebanon, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri visited Saudi Arabia on April 16 at the Kingdom's official invitation. Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz conferred with Rafik Hariri for 45 minutes at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah. Subsequently, Hariri conferred with Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the Second Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia. They engaged in a private talk that ran for thirty minutes. Prince Sultan stated that the discussion addressed Israel's assaults on Lebanon and the egregious actions perpetrated against the Lebanese populace, including the most atrocious and perilous forms of death. In response to enquiries regarding the Kingdom's initiatives to mitigate Israeli aggression towards Lebanon, Prince Sultan stated that the Kingdom's engagements in this regard are aligned

with Lebanon's efforts, emphasising that Saudi Arabia is impacted by the events occurring in Lebanon. With divine providence, we shall use every effort to assist Lebanon. Prince Sultan stated in response to another inquiry that the current Israeli military operations in Lebanon will impact the peace process. He also stated that it is imperative for everyone to acknowledge that peace must take precedence.

2.2. *The King continued his efforts to support Lebanon on April 16, 1996.*

On April 16, 1996, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia reiterated the Kingdom's dedication to Lebanon's geographical integrity, sovereignty, and stability. During a telephone discussion with Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, King Fahd expressed the Kingdom's regret for the Israeli bombings on Lebanon. That evening, the King contacted Lebanese President Hrawi to discuss the recent developments in Lebanon following the ongoing Israeli assaults, which were inflicting harm on citizens and harming the nation's infrastructure. King Fahd conversed telephonically with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

During the discussion, Hariri informed the King about the Israeli assaults on Lebanese territory, which have resulted in destruction, fatalities, and injuries among the Lebanese populace and residents. The official Saudi Press Agency said that King Fahd expressed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's profound regret for the Israeli assaults on Lebanon. He stated that the Kingdom would persist in its support for Lebanon in safeguarding its territory, security, and sovereignty, while ensuring the safety of its populace from the threats posed by this overt Israeli aggression. Jaafar Al-Laqa'i, Saudi Arabia's envoy to the UN Security Council, stated during discussions regarding Israel's aggression towards Lebanon on April 16 that Lebanon cannot be deemed accountable for resistance actions against the Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon unless the Lebanese army is permitted to enter the region, establish order and security, manage the situation, and assert Lebanese sovereignty over its entire territory. The Lebanese government cannot be held accountable for the situation in the south if this does not occur. He stated, "We urge the sponsors of the Middle East Peace Conference to exert pressure on Israel to fulfil its commitments and advance the Lebanese and Syrian negotiations by adhering to international legitimacy resolutions, ensuring that rights and land are restored to their rightful owners." Thus, we might

assert that it constitutes an equitable and enduring resolution. That evening, the Saudi Royal Court issued a statement indicating that King Fahd had mandated the provision of urgent assistance, encompassing food, medicine, blankets, mattresses, tents, and ambulances, for the Lebanese individuals impacted by the Israeli assaults on their territory and those displaced from their residences. This action was undertaken because the King sought to assist them. On April 17th, numerous cargo aircraft will transport and deliver them. Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz, responsible for the Arab Gulf Program for United Nations Relief and Works Agency (AGFUND) in Riyadh, said that \$1 million will be allocated to support relief operations and humanitarian assistance in Lebanon. Prince Talal stated in a communiqué issued by the program's office in Riyadh that the funds will be allocated to various relief groups operating in the impacted regions to alleviate suffering, bolster medical and food assistance initiatives, and provide shelter for victims. In accordance with the King's directive, prompt assistance commenced arriving in Lebanon on April 17. This included sustenance, pharmaceuticals, bedding, and emergency vehicles. On the evening of April 17, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal contacted US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in an effort by the Kingdom to negotiate a cessation of the Israeli offensive in Lebanon. Nicholas Burns, a representative of the State Department, indicated that the telephone conversation between Saud al-Faisal and Christopher pertained to strategies for resolving the crisis. Al-Faisal stated that the Kingdom will continue diplomatic efforts to halt the violence and terminate the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. Al-Faisal urged the US Secretary of State to exert pressure on Israel to cease its assaults and withdraw its forces from Lebanon. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has once more condemned and denounced the ongoing assault on Lebanon. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed in a statement that the Kingdom is observing the brutal Israeli assault on the Lebanese populace with concern, apprehension, and sorrow. The strike demonstrates a disregard for humanitarian and ethical considerations. It demanded measures to halt Israel's violent actions, which involve killing and destruction in Lebanon, irrespective of age, gender, or ethnicity. It also disregards the essential infrastructure required for human habitation. The Kingdom stated that Israel's brutal actions are intended to inflict pain and damage upon Lebanon, constituting a violation of human rights. Lebanon

requested the Arab League Council to convene, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supported this proposal. The conference occurred in Cairo on April 17 at the foreign ministers' level, at the invitation of Lebanon. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal attended the Council's sessions, where all participants concurred on supporting Lebanon and denouncing Israeli aggression. The Saudi Foreign Minister stated in his address that the Kingdom prioritises Lebanon's security and emphasised the government's and citizens' backing for Lebanon and the Lebanese people's right to oppose the Israeli occupation. He also discussed the collaboration among Arab nations to combat the aggression. He stated that the Kingdom supports the Lebanese appeals for an immediate ceasefire and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory. He requested that Lebanon be let to exercise complete regulatory authority over its territory in accordance with international agreements and that its government be allowed to utilise its constitutional powers within its jurisdiction. He emphasised the necessity for Israel to cease all bloodshed and other injustices perpetrated against Lebanon. He stated that these Israeli offences against the Lebanese populace demonstrate a total disregard for all international laws and norms. He asserted that the international community should exert pressure on Israel to cease its assaults and withdraw from Lebanese territory. He emphasised that the Lebanese populace have the right to resist the occupation. The Arab League Council adopted a resolution denouncing the ongoing and violent Israeli aggression against Lebanese territory. It targeted Lebanon's sovereignty, the safety of its people and its lands, and demanded an immediate cessation of the ongoing aggression against Lebanon and an end to the widespread destruction and forced displacement carried out by Israel in Lebanon, the return of the displaced to their villages, and the affirmation of the Arab position in solidarity with Lebanon in the face of the Israeli aggression and the demand of the UN Security Council to condemn this aggression and oblige Israel to implement UN Security Council Resolution No. 425 of 1978, which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory, and the affirmation of the right of the Lebanese people to resist the Israeli aggression and occupation of Lebanese territory and support their right to demand compensation from Israel for the victims and damages resulting from the aggression and to provide financial and in-kind support to the Lebanese government to ensure the urgent return of the displaced to their cities and villages who were

displaced by the aggression, and the demand of the UN Security Council to oblige Israel to pay the necessary compensation to restore the facilities, infrastructure and human victims destroyed by the Israeli forces. The press section of the Saudi Embassy in Beirut said that two Saudi aircraft transporting essential aid supplies arrived at Beirut International Airport on April 18, 1996, to assist the Kingdom and those affected and displaced by the crisis. Ahmed Al-Kuhaimi, the Saudi Ambassador to Beirut, stated that this prompt assistance was dispatched to the Lebanese populace at the directive of King Fahd. The Lebanese populace endured starvation and destitution due to the fighting. This initiative is integral to the urgent humanitarian relief mission for the Lebanese populace, whom we regard as brethren. This assistance included food, blankets, tents, carpets, medication, and two of the twenty ambulances delivered to Lebanon sequentially. The visit of Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal to Cairo and his meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on April 18, 1996. On April 18, 1996, King Fahd dispatched Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal to Egypt to discuss Israel's aggression on Lebanon. Al-Faisal conferred with Hosni Mubarak, the President of Egypt, and conveyed a message from the King. The Saudi minister asserted post-discussion that it pertained to the results of the League of Arab States conference held in Cairo on April 17, convened to address the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. Saud Al-Faisal asserted that the most effective method to terminate the cycle of bloodshed in Lebanon is to implement UN Resolution 425. He expressed his hope that diplomats will swiftly identify a means to cease hostilities in southern Lebanon and establish conditions that preserve Lebanon's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The Saudi minister stated that "this will occur solely if the UN resolution is implemented, as it represents the most effective approach to address any violence in the region and ensure the continuation of peace efforts." Al-Faisal stated that Egypt and Saudi Arabia consistently endeavour to identify a peaceful approach to resolve the issues in the Middle East, aiming for the continuation, success, and achievement of their objectives. An individual enquired of Al-Faisal regarding the prospects for an Arab summit, to which he said, "This matter has not been extensively discussed." Should the conditions be favourable, the summit will occur. There is a collective desire to restore Arab cohesion and unity, which is a shared aspiration. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt will not delay if the conditions are met. Saud Al-Faisal expressed his optimism that

these initiatives will succeed, as balanced security is crucial in all circumstances. He asserted that the primary objective of diplomatic negotiations should be to reclaim Lebanese territory for Lebanon and ensure equitable security for all parties involved. Amr Moussa, the Egyptian foreign minister, attended the meeting between Al-Faisal and Mubarak. He stated that Lebanon's request for compensation due to the inflicted harm is being addressed through UN Security Council resolutions. He additionally stated, "As the Arab representative on the Council, we endorse Lebanon in this regard." The Kingdom continued to provide aid and support to Lebanon. On April 19, a Saudi cargo aircraft arrived carrying 88 tonnes of medical and humanitarian provisions. Lebanese Health Minister Marwan Hamadeh and Saudi Ambassador Ahmed Al-Kuhaimi greeted the aircraft. The Saudi aid comprised substantial quantities of medication, food, blankets, beds, tents, and two ambulances. This alleviated the suffering of the Lebanese populace compelled to abandon their residences. The Saudi envoy stated that this assistance stems from King Fahd's intention to alleviate the suffering of our Lebanese brethren resulting from the persistent Israeli assaults. He stated that the King, the Crown Prince, the government of the Kingdom, and its populace stand in solidarity with Lebanon, expressing profound sorrow regarding the attacks, fatalities, and displacements it is experiencing, alongside the significant losses and detrimental impacts of military operations on the nation's infrastructure. Marwan Hamadeh, the Lebanese Minister of Health, expressed gratitude to Saudi Arabia for the donation and assistance provided to Lebanon. He stated that Saudi Arabia has consistently supported Lebanon, "and this marks the phase of reconstruction, reflecting the current challenges we are facing." In response to enquiries over Saudi Arabia's continued assistance to Lebanon, the Saudi envoy affirmed that the nation would indeed maintain its support and would offer further aid to Lebanon in the forthcoming days.

2.3. Continuing Saudi Diplomatic Contacts to Stop the Aggression, April 19, 1996

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia intensified its diplomatic initiatives to halt the Israeli assaults on Lebanon and achieve a ceasefire. On April 19, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz conversed with King Hussein bin Talal over the situation of the troops in Lebanon. The Crown Prince emphasised the imperative for both Arab and international initiatives to halt military activities against the

Lebanese populace and urged a return to dialogue and negotiation to resolve the issue and complete the peace process. The Crown Prince emphasised the necessity of assisting the Lebanese government and populace in resisting Israeli invasion. The spokesperson for the Saudi Foreign Ministry stated that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is exerting all efforts to halt military actions and facilitate a ceasefire negotiation. He reiterated that the Kingdom rejects and condemns the Israeli assaults on Lebanese cities and innocent civilians, as they constitute a blatant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty. The Saudi leadership remains in communication with foreign nations, exchanging ideas to halt the assaults and terminate the carnage. On April 19, King Fahd dispatched a telegram to the President of Lebanon to express his support for the nation and its populace. He stated that the Kingdom supported Lebanon and its populace. The Kingdom condemned the massacres perpetrated by Israelis against the Lebanese populace, extended condolences to the victims' families and friends, and emphasised the necessity of taking immediate action to halt the aggression and implement international resolutions advocating for the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Lebanese territories. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal engaged in multiple discussions with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa to strategise the Arab nations' response to Israel's ongoing bombings on Lebanon. The Saudi Foreign Ministry stated that al-Faisal's calls aimed to cease the bloodshed, assist Lebanon, and offer necessary support to the Lebanese populace. Al-Faisal emphasised that the Israeli adversary is perpetrating significant atrocities in Lebanon and conveyed optimism that the Kingdom's diligent efforts to halt the violence and assist the Lebanese in their suffering will yield a positive impact. He emphasised the significance of adhering to international agreements that call for the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. It is asserted that Israel disregards the integrity of international standards and regulations due to its intent to perpetrate violence and forcibly displace individuals while employing a scorched earth strategy. The Saudi Position on the Qana Massacre and the Conclusion of Hostilities, April 20–26, 1996.

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched a communication to the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs denouncing the Qana massacre perpetrated by Israeli forces on Lebanese citizens. The cable asserted that the targeting of civilians demonstrates

Israel's status as a usurper, employing harsh tactics and committing cruel acts against non-combatants. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested a ceasefire and support for initiatives to halt the violence.

On April 26, 1996, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the Lebanese government collaborated to cease hostilities. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expressed satisfaction with this move, as King Fahd approved of the ceasefire agreement reached in Lebanon. On April 26, the Saudi Press Agency said that King Fahd informed Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri of the deal following a telephone conversation with him. The King stated that the Kingdom is concerned about maintaining the safety and stability of Lebanon, along with its territory, sovereignty, and populace. The Kingdom commended the diplomatic efforts that culminated in the cessation of hostilities. The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the deal terminates the egregious assaults on civilian lives. The Ministry requested assistance for the Lebanese populace and for persons compelled to from their residences to return to their cities. It conveyed optimism that the ceasefire agreement will facilitate the cessation of military operations that are claiming innocent lives. A private Saudi jet arrived at Beirut International Airport on the afternoon of April 26, with eight ambulances dispatched by the Saudi government to Lebanon for humanitarian assistance and support. Ahmed Al-Kuhaimi, the Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon, and Stephan Douaihy, the Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs, convened at the jet. Al-Kuhaimi stated that the Kingdom dispatched these vehicles to assist Lebanon.

3. CONCLUSION

The Israeli onslaught towards Lebanon from April 11 to 26, 1996, resulted in profound humanitarian, infrastructural, and political repercussions. The evidence corroborates the extent of devastation and human casualties caused by this operation. A total of 153 civilians, 5 Lebanese military members, and 13 Hezbollah combatants were killed, while 359 civilians and 9 troops sustained injuries. The United Nations documented damage to 159 municipalities, encompassing the obliteration of 7,201 residential units and significant impairment to public infrastructure, including thoroughfares, educational institutions, medical facilities, and utilities. The fight on the Israeli side resulted in 26 military fatalities and 98 injuries, highlighting its ferocity on both fronts.

The truce, referred to as the April Understanding, represented a pivotal juncture. The accord, facilitated

by the United States, contributed to the reduction of hostilities by forbidding cross-border assaults on civilian targets and the use of civilian zones for military operations. This comprehension established the circumstances for a transient tranquilly in the region and indicated the potential for addressing such conflicts through diplomacy and international involvement. Saudi Arabia's involvement in the conflict illustrated the Kingdom's regional importance and its dedication to Lebanon's sovereignty, geographical integrity, and political autonomy. From the initial phases of the conflict, Saudi Arabia expressed unequivocal dissent about the Israeli offensive. It highlighted the dangers of additional escalation, conveyed profound apprehension regarding breaches of Lebanese sovereignty, and called upon the international community to intervene to halt the aggression. The Kingdom officially demanded Israel's unconditional withdrawal from Lebanese territory, in accordance with international law and United Nations Security Council Resolution 425. King Fahd bin Abdulaziz directly spearheaded the Saudi response. He conveyed regret over the anguish endured by Lebanon and mandated the provision of humanitarian assistance, comprising food, medicine, blankets, and ambulances. Saudi Arabia supported Lebanon's appeal for an urgent meeting of the Arab League Council at the political level. The conference, conducted in Cairo on April 17 among foreign ministers, witnessed Saudi Arabia reiterating its support for Lebanon and participating in Arab diplomatic initiatives to condemn Israeli activities and foster regional consensus against further

violence. The events of April 1996 reconfigured internal Lebanese political forces. Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, bolstered by substantial Saudi backing, attained enhanced regional and worldwide acknowledgement. His diplomatic endeavours were enhanced, and his reputation as a cohesive national leader was reinforced. Saudi Arabia's support bolstered his ability to promote a sovereign Lebanese decision-making process and to resist both internal and external attempts to divide the nation. Hariri's affiliations with Arab and Western capitals intensified following the crisis, enabling him to obtain extensive political and financial backing for Lebanon's post-conflict reconstruction. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia significantly contributed to ceasing the aggression via diplomatic pressure, while also offering assistance to the Lebanese populace and enhancing Lebanon's representation in regional forums. The Kingdom's engagement demonstrated a comprehensive strategic objective focused on maintaining regional peace, enhancing Arab unity, and bolstering legitimate governmental frameworks in Lebanon. The 1996 dispute and Saudi Arabia's reaction serve as a significant case study in Arab diplomacy and crisis management. It underscores the significance of prompt political intervention, regional collaboration, and global engagement in mitigating conflicts and assisting impacted nations. Saudi Arabia's conduct throughout the crisis exemplifies its overarching foreign policy, which is predicated on regional accountability, humanitarian dedication, and strategic involvement in safeguarding Arab sovereignty.

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