



Mr. Stephane Dujarric  
Spokesman for the Secretary-General  
The United Nations  
Via fax: 212-963-7055

July 17, 2006

Dear Mr. Dujarric,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing on behalf of CNN's Larry King. Mr. Larry King would like to request an interview with the Secretary-General Kofi Annan to speak about the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. The request is open for anytime this week (July 17<sup>th</sup>) should the Secretary General wish to speak. We would be happy to set up the interview from any location and I would be happy to discuss with you any logistical or editorial questions you may have.

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Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions regarding this request.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Baker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nancy Baker  
Producer  
Larry King Live  
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**CNN's Larry King Live**  
**Friday, July 21, 2006**  
**Interview with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan**

LARRY KING, HOST: We welcome to LARRY KING LIVE Kofi Annan, the secretary-general of the United Nations. It's always a great pleasure to see you, and thank you very much for joining us, Mr. Secretary-General.

KOFI ANNAN, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL: I'm very happy to be with you, Larry.

KING: Condoleezza Rice is going to the Mideast. We're 10 days into this conflict. Should -- the Lebanese, by the way, prime minister was with us yesterday, and he said his country is being torn to pieces.  
Should Ms. Rice have gone sooner?

ANNAN: I think she's been busy discussing the possible solutions with many capitals and here in New York. As you know, she came to New York, and we had a working dinner. And she also talked to my team that went to the region this morning.

And obviously, she would want to go to the region but go with a package and proposals that will facilitate an agreement and negotiations.  
And I'm sure she will go as soon as she's ready, and as I hear, she's going this weekend.

KING: So you think it was a proper time to facilitate everything and, in accordance with that, this is a good time to go?

ANNAN: Yeah, I think -- let's not forget that I, myself, have sent a team to the region. European High Representative Solana was there. The French prime minister was there.

And I think you need to be able to sequence these things, that you don't also overload the people on the other side that you are dealing with. And I'm sure that once she gets there she'll be able to move the process forward.

KING: You've called for an immediate ceasefire in this conflict.  
Here's what the secretary of state had to say about that earlier today.  
Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CONDOLEEZZA RICE, SECRETARY OF STATE: A ceasefire would be a false promise if it simply returns us to the status quo, allowing terrorists at the times and terms of their choosing and to threaten innocent people, Arab and Israeli, throughout the region. That would be a guarantee of future violence.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KING: How do you respond?

ANNAN: I think on ceasefire my position is clear. What I have asked for is cessation of hostilities. If you wish, you can even describe it as a humanitarian truce for us to be able to get assistance to the people and allow us to organize ourselves to move logistics and supplies around and to have access to the people.

Ceasefire normally takes quite a lot of time to negotiate and to deal with. So I made a distinction between cessation of hostilities and ceasefire. And I am not suggesting that we go back to the previous situation.

In the package of proposals that I put forward, I indicated that not only should we have cessation of hostilities but we should also have a longer term solution, which would include deployment of international

forces to the south to stabilize the south, to help the Lebanese government strengthen, rebuild its army and expand its authority throughout its own territory, including deployment of Lebanese army to the south. And give them the capacity to implement the Resolution 1559 fully.

And 1559 does require them to deploy to the border. It does require the disarmament of militia, all militia, foreign and national. And so we have no disagreement on the longer term goals.

Where we may differ is that I'm prepared to ask for immediate cessation of hostilities to allow us to assist the people, allow the diplomacy to -- to take -- to take hold, and it does not exclude a longer term solution and a longer term package that would ensure that we do not return to the previous situation.

KING: Are you...

ANNAN: So I met -- I met her last night, and I think on quite a lot of the broad issues there's very little disagreement between us.

KING: Are you surprised that there's any opposition to that proposal, which, if in effect, would stop killing?

ANNAN: This is -- in fact, I had lunch with the Security Council members. We have a monthly lunch. And we went through this. I sense there's quite a broad support among the council members there for this. And I hope that we move forward in the next day or two, things will crystallize. And that the parties will be prepared to do this.

Otherwise, Larry, I'm afraid of a major humanitarian disaster. As we speak about -- over 700,000 people have been displaced. Five hundred thousand internally in Lebanon, about 150,000 across the border into Syria. With the destruction of the bridges and the infrastructure, it is extremely difficult to even get to the ground to assess how many people need help and how we are going to get it to them.

And so even the 500,000 could be a gross underestimation. And this is a very populated country. So you can imagine what is lying ahead of us.

KING: What happens if Israeli ground forces go into Lebanon?

ANNAN: I think that's going to be a very serious escalation. Obviously, there will be heightened fighting between them and Hezbollah.

And if they're going to southern Lebanon, what will be their intention? Are they going to stay? Are they going to root out Hezbollah and withdraw? If they stay and intend to establish what they have called, in the past, a security zone or security cordon, it will be a security zone for them, but for the others will be occupation and that will intensify the resistance.

That is also one of the reasons why I have suggested deployment of neutral international forces, to give Lebanon time and space to strengthen and prepare its own army to be deployed to the border so that you don't have the sort of situation I have just described.

KING: Since this started, who, in your opinion, is at fault? Who do you blame?

ANNAN: I think there's no doubt that the provocation and the acts of Hezbollah kidnapping the Israeli soldiers started off all this. It was unnecessary. It has provoked an onslaught on the people and the government, the nation of Lebanon. It has really set back peace prospects for the region.

But I still also believe that the Israeli response has been excessive and disproportionate.

KING: What is Israel supposed to do? What do you want it, as this little nation amidst enemies, what do you want it to do?

ANNAN: Well, I would want to see Israel live in peace with its neighbors. The Security Council has passed many resolutions, pushing for comprehensive peace in the region and we would want to see Israel live in peace, side-by-side with a Palestinian state and Israel established in the region and at peace with its neighbors, trading and working with all the other countries in the region.

But to get there, I think you have to do it through political negotiations. I don't think you can do it through force alone.

As I said, there was a provocation, but when you look at what is going on, if this continues for long, you're going to see a situation where the public, because of what they are seeing on television, tend to forget the original sin, the original sin of the kidnapping of the soldiers, the abducting of the soldiers, and only focus on what they see on their television happening to the state of Lebanon and the civilians.

And I think Israel should work with the international community to get a ceasefire, send the international troops in to stabilize the situation, strengthen the Lebanese government to take full charge and full responsibility for its territory, and implement 1559 fully, which also includes disarmament of militia, including Hezbollah.

KING: We have an e-mail question for you from J.C., of Wakonda, Illinois, who has a very basic question.

Why does the U.N. pass resolutions, such as 1559, and then not enforce them?

ANNAN: Well, let me tell my dear friend from Illinois that the U.N. is the member states, his government, the U.S. government, my government, the Ghana government. Were the member states have the will to follow through on resolutions, a lot can get done.

When the resolutions are passed and the means are there and the will is there, we do get them implemented.

On the issue of 1559, it was clear in the council that the Lebanese government will have to work in extending its authority to the border and in working on disarming Hezbollah. And in discussions with the Lebanese authorities, they were having this discussion within the government, the disarmament of Hezbollah.

They have plans of how they pull Hezbollah into the army, but possibly as a national guard under the command of the national army.

And then, of course, this provocative act happened and everything exploded.

But the U.N., we have to be clear, is not a glass building in New York. The U.N. is a government, the U.S. government, my government and other governments working together.

So we have to be careful sometimes not to take the governments off the hook by referring to the U.N. as if it's some satellite out there with no links to the governments.

KING: We're speaking exclusively with Kofi Anna, the secretary general of the United Nations.

We'll be right back.

(BREAK)

KING: In your address at the U.N. yesterday, you said, "Israel has a right to defend itself," but added, "The excessive use of force is to be condemned."

What is "excessive?"

ANNAN: I think Israel has made it clear that its target is Hezbollah. It has also stated that it has no quarrel with the Lebanese people or the Lebanese government.

In these circumstances, if it had focused its target narrowly on Hezbollah and Hezbollah targets, it would be understandable.

But the extensive bombing of Lebanese civilian infrastructure, of bridges, of the airport, and the blockade imposed on Lebanon, both sea and land, and the destruction of the bridges, making it very difficult for people to move around and eventually going to make it difficult to move in supplies of food, medication and others, is a punishment for the Lebanese people as a whole.

But we also have to understand that Lebanon is a democratic state. The Lebanese government did not support what Hezbollah did and the government has stated that clearly. And, therefore, to punish the people of Lebanon and pressure a democratic government to a point where it may collapse is a very serious situation.

And I think we need to really reflect on the consequences of the actions that are taking place in Lebanon. I hope the international community will support the democratically elected government, the democratically elected government that has itself distanced itself and made clear that they are not supporting what Hezbollah did.

I know...

KING: Have you talked -- I'm sorry, go ahead.

ANNAN: Go ahead, go ahead.

KING: Have you talked to Prime Minister Olmert?

ANNAN: I have spoken to Prime Minister Olmert several times. We have talked about the need for proportionality. We have talked about the need to ensure that whatever action is taken, civilians are spared, and that civilian infrastructure is not destroyed.

Any infrastructure and facilities that civilians need for their daily life and for their survival should be spared in these kinds of situations. He has assured me that Israel will do everything they can to spare civilian populations and to help with the humanitarian situation. And here, I'm not just talking about Lebanon. We had also spoken about Gaza.

KING: Would it be helpful, do you think, for President Bush to meet face to face with the leaders in the region?

ANNAN: I think at some point, it might be helpful. But the ground has to be prepared very carefully, and as you've heard, the Secretary of State Rice will go to the region either this weekend or early next week.

And that will be followed by a meeting in Rome of friends of Lebanon, of the contact group on Lebanon, which will bring together countries from the Middle East and Europe, the U.N. and the World Bank to discuss possible solutions to the conflict.

KING: What role, in your opinion, does Syria and Iran play in all of this?

ANNAN: Syria and Iran are two friendly countries. There's also indications that both Syria and Iran have influence with Hezbollah and have supported Hezbollah.

And, therefore, the two countries have to be part of the solution.

They will have to work with the international community and cooperate with the international community for us to help to find long-term solutions. Whether we like it or not, we have to engage those two governments if we're going to find a longer-term solution.

KING: You said there are serious obstacles standing in the way of defusing violence in the Middle East. What are the main obstacles?

ANNAN: Well, I think for the moment, both sides -- by both sides, I mean the government of Israel and Hezbollah -- in the discussions that my team had -- and also, you know, I sent a three-man team.

They were in Cairo, attended the Arab League ministerial meeting (ph), where they had discussions with all the Arab ministers. And then, from there, to Lebanon, and then to Israel.

Out of these discussions, they came to the judgment that it is going to be difficult to get a cease fire immediately because Israel has made it clear that its objective goes beyond getting the release of the two abducted soldiers, and that they would want to weaken or degrade or disarm Hezbollah.

Whether one can do it from air or through military action is another issue, and they are nowhere near achieving the objectives. Hezbollah has also made a statement that they are also prepared to continue this action indefinitely, and therefore, much more work needs to be done before one can get a cease fire.

And that is why I demand cessation of hostilities first, because it will be in the interest of Hezbollah to want to see the people of Lebanon and the needy in Lebanon provided with assistance. And I think the Israeli government also have indicated its willingness to do everything to support humanitarian efforts. It's also likely, hopefully, will accept the cessation of hostilities or a humanitarian truce.

Failing that, we have asked that they help us establish humanitarian corridors to be able to assess and gain access to those in need and actually supply them. In some situations, foods are in warehouses in Lebanon that cannot be moved to those in need. And the longer this continues, the greater the humanitarian crisis will be.

KING: Is the United States hand weakened by the war in Iraq?

ANNAN: Well, the war in Iraq is a major -- how should I put it? It's a major responsibility of the U.S. and the international community in the region. It is all-consuming. And, of course, lots of resources are tied up there.

But I think we have a very difficult situation in the broader Middle East, and when you read the newspapers, though, look at the discussions which are going on. We are dealing with Iran, with Iraq, with Lebanon, Syria, and we have Palestine.

So we have a region that has many flash points, but these are also all linked. And we tend to look at them individually and in isolation.

We need to look at the broader Middle East situation and what we are confronted with.

KING: Do you ever feel like throwing up your arms? Do you ever feel helpless, frustrated?

ANNAN: There are moments of frustration. There are moments of sadness. And moments, foremost, of despair with human nature, you know, because the way we turn on each other, and man's inhumanity to man, and our ability to use violence and weapons that do so much damage to each other.

I'm one of those who believe that in war, all are losers, including the so-called victorious, because you have to do lots of things that, as human beings, you would not want to do. And even when you win, when you look back and count what you had to do to win, the destruction, the misery, the pain inflicted on your own people and on the other side, you have to wonder if that was the best way or the only way to solve the problem.

KING: Good seeing you, as always.

ANNAN: Thank you, Larry. All the best.

KING: The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan.  
We'll be right back.

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