



# Security Council

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## United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) from 21 February 2023 to 20 May 2023 pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2671 \(2022\)](#).

#### II. Situation in the area of operations and activities of the Force

2. The ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was generally maintained, notwithstanding several violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974. The overall security situation in the UNDOF area of operations remained volatile, with continued military activity in the areas of separation and limitation in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2671 \(2022\)](#).

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line that it observes. All incidents of firing across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the ceasefire line by aircraft, drones, military vehicles and personnel, as well as other individuals, constitute violations of the Agreement. In its regular interactions with both sides, the leadership of UNDOF continued to call upon the parties to exercise restraint and avoid any activities that might lead to an escalation of the situation.

4. Late on 8 April and early on 9 April, United Nations personnel at positions in the southern part of the area of separation observed flares and heard multiple detonations in the area of separation. Early on 9 April, United Nations personnel at position 86B observed fragments of a rocket landing approximately 50 m from the position. The United Nations personnel at that position went into shelter, where they remained for approximately one hour. After approximately two hours, United Nations personnel at observation post 56 heard an aircraft flying, and personnel at Camp Faouar heard one explosion approximately 1 km from the Camp. The Israel Defense Forces made a public statement late on 8 April that “3 rockets were launched from Syria into Israel (...) 1 of them crossed into Israeli territory and landed in the southern Golan Heights” and that “in response (...) IDF Artillery is currently striking in Syrian



territory". Later that day, the Israel Defense Forces stated that "3 rockets were launched from Syrian territory toward Israel, two of them crossed into Israeli territory (...) An IDF UAV is currently striking the launchers in Syria from which rockets were launched into Israeli territory earlier tonight". Open sources reported that a Syria-based Palestinian group claimed responsibility for the rockets in the context of escalation at the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem. UNDOF remained in contact with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities throughout to de-escalate the situation. UNDOF, in consultation with the Syrian authorities, examined the remnants of a rocket in the vicinity of the ceasefire line in the southern part of the area of separation and concluded that it had been fired towards the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan).

5. On 18 April, United Nations personnel at observation post 53 observed one rocket flying from the Alpha side towards a position of the Syrian armed forces at Tall al-Gharbi in the southern part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side. At around the same time, United Nations personnel at positions 80 and 85 and observation post 57 heard several detonations and small arms shots.

6. Late on 23 April, United Nations personnel at observation post 71 heard explosions and observed two projectiles fired from the Alpha side impacting the vicinity of a Syrian armed forces position in the northern part of the area of separation. United Nations personnel at position 10A and observation posts 71 and 73, which are in the vicinity of the point of impact of the projectiles, went into shelter where they remained for at least one and a half hours. Early on 24 April, personnel at observation post 71 and position 10A heard 10 explosions in the vicinity of the Syrian position, personnel at United Nations position 37 noticed 11 flares and personnel at observation post 72 observed five main battle tank rounds fired from the Alpha side across the ceasefire line. Subsequently, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that their operation had concluded. UNDOF liaised with the parties to prevent an escalation of the situation.

7. On several occasions, United Nations personnel observed the Israel Defense Forces firing small arms shots into the area of separation. On 19 and 20 April, United Nations personnel in the southern part of the area of separation observed the Israel Defense Forces firing heavy machine gun bursts from a main battle tank towards the area of separation. On 7 March, United Nations personnel at position 22 noticed the Israel Defense Forces firing several heavy machine gun bursts from a main battle tank in the vicinity of the Israeli technical fence into the area of separation.

8. On 21 February, United Nations personnel at observation post 58 observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers in two main battle tanks and construction vehicles carrying out works on the Alpha side subsequently crossing the ceasefire line and briefly moving in the area of separation. On 25 February, United Nations personnel noticed a group of Israel Defense Forces patrolling the Alpha side momentarily crossing the ceasefire line and subsequently returning to the Alpha side. On 25 March, 22 Israel Defense Forces soldiers on foot briefly crossed the ceasefire line.

9. On 3 March, UNDOF personnel observed four armed individuals in civilian attire and two military tanks at a checkpoint in the central part of the area of separation in the vicinity of the Bravo line.

10. The Israel Defense Forces, on two occasions, apprehended individuals from the Bravo side in the vicinity of the ceasefire line. On 21 February, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they would return an individual from the Bravo side who had allegedly crossed the ceasefire line the previous day. Later that day, UNDOF, in consultation with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities, facilitated the return of the individual through the Qunaytirah crossing to the Bravo side. On 1 March, United Nations personnel observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers, some in

two main battle tanks, cross the ceasefire line and apprehend one individual in the southern part of the area of separation. Later that day, the Israel Defense Forces returned the individual to the Bravo side in the same area where they had apprehended him. On 5 March, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had apprehended one individual from the Bravo side who had allegedly crossed the ceasefire line. On the same day, UNDOF, in consultation with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities, facilitated the return of the individual through the Qunaytirah crossing to the Bravo side.

11. On 20 occasions, Israel Defense Forces soldiers denied UNDOF patrols access through the Israeli technical fence gates. On all occasions, UNDOF personnel left the area and UNDOF protested to the Israel Defense Forces.

12. United Nations personnel at various positions observed on several occasions drones flying from the Alpha side across the ceasefire line and over the area of separation.

13. Sporadic heavy explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire persisted in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed that the military activity was the result of the controlled detonation of unexploded ordnance as part of clearance and operation by the Syrian armed forces. UNDOF observed the continued presence of Syrian armed forces personnel, some of whom were armed, staffing several checkpoints within the area of separation, in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

14. The continued presence of Iron Dome systems, armoured vehicles, artillery systems and multiple rocket launcher systems in the area of limitation on the Alpha side also constitutes a violation in each case. Pursuant to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, the presence of any unauthorized military equipment or personnel in the areas of separation and limitation is a violation.

15. UNDOF protested to the parties with regard to all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that it had observed, including the firing into and across the area of separation as well as across the ceasefire line, the presence of unauthorized equipment and personnel in the areas of separation and limitation, and the crossings of the ceasefire line by the Israel Defense Forces and by drones, as well as by civilians from the Bravo side. UNDOF liaised closely with the parties to de-escalate the situation, including during periods of heightened tension.

16. The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, in identical letters dated 7 and 22 March 2023 addressed to the President of the Security Council and me ([A/77/795-S/2023/181](#) and [A/77/813-S/2023/214](#)), relayed information “regarding repeated Israeli acts of aggression against the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic”. In his letter dated 7 March, the Permanent Representative conveyed that Israel “carried out an air raid from the Mediterranean Sea west of Ladhikiyah, targeting Aleppo International Airport. The raid caused material damage to the airport”. In his letter dated 22 March, the Permanent Representative conveyed that “Israeli occupation forces launched an air attack on Aleppo International Airport”.

17. In identical letters dated 21 February 2023 addressed to the President of the Security Council and me ([S/2023/131](#)), the Permanent Representative of Israel relayed information about “Syrian violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974 and breaches of Israeli sovereignty in the months of November and December 2022” and conveyed that “Syrian violations of the Alpha line and armed presence in the area of separation occur daily”.

18. UNDOF continued to observe daily crossings of the ceasefire line by unidentified individuals from the Bravo side. It assessed that the individuals were shepherds and farmers from surrounding areas tending livestock, as well as hunters

carrying weapons. The Israel Defense Forces continued to express deep concern about the crossings, which they stated were a threat to the safety and security of their personnel operating in proximity to the ceasefire line. On a number of occasions, the Israel Defense Forces fired shots to discourage individuals from approaching the Israeli technical fence. UNDOF continued to coordinate with both parties regarding the distribution by the Syrian authorities of identity cards to the shepherds in the local community in the area of separation in order to enable them to move within the vicinity of the ceasefire line and to prevent the recurrence of incidents of firing of warning shots.

19. UNDOF assessed that the security situation in the northern and central parts of its area of operations on the Bravo side had generally remained calm but continued to be volatile in the southern part, with security incidents reportedly occurring in locations within the area of limitation, including along UNDOF patrol routes in Dara'a Governorate. Open sources reported security incidents in Jasim, Nawa and Muzayrib in the southern part of the area of limitation involving armed attacks targeting checkpoints and convoys of the Syrian security forces, other government authorities and former members of armed opposition groups.

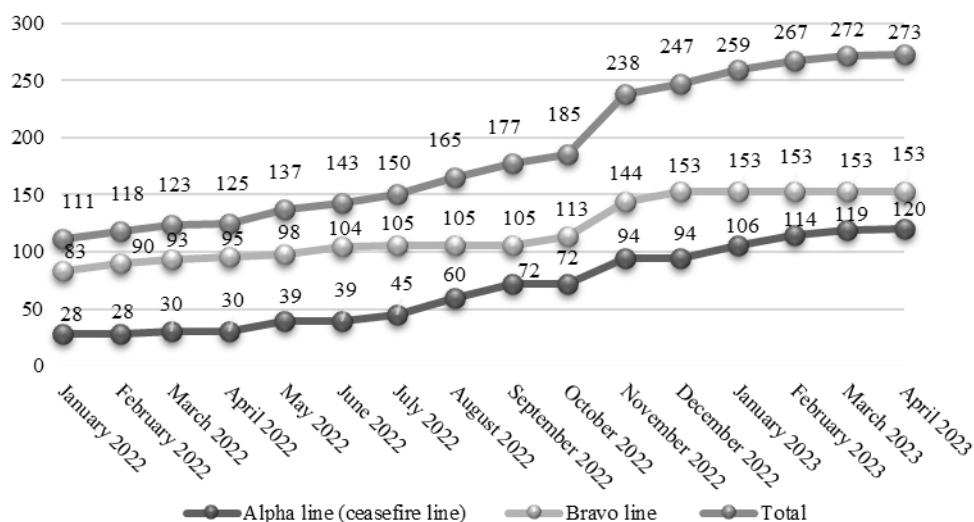
20. Since early March 2020, the Israel Defense Forces have restricted the movement of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel through the Alpha gate at the Qunaytirah crossing, requiring advance notice of the movement, which has continued to affect the operational and administrative activities of the mission. UNDOF continued to liaise with the Israel Defense Forces on their facilitation of the crossing of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel at the Qunaytirah crossing, and in particular on the need for United Nations personnel to cross using only documents issued by UNDOF at the Alpha gate and to return to the established crossing procedures. The Syrian authorities returned to the procedures established to facilitate the movement of UNDOF personnel and supplies through the Bravo gate at the Qunaytirah crossing.

21. UNDOF continued to engage with the Israel Defense Forces with a view to addressing restrictions on the movement and access of United Nations personnel from the Alpha side, through the Israeli technical fence, to United Nations observation posts in the area of separation.

22. UNDOF, with the facilitation of the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities, continued to carry out, through Observer Group Golan, fortnightly inspections of the military positions of the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian armed forces in select parts of the respective areas of limitation. On 27 March, the Syrian authorities denied United Nations personnel access to carry out mandated inspections in certain Syrian armed forces positions in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. UNDOF continued to engage with both parties to facilitate the extension of the inspections in their respective positions in the various parts of the areas of limitation.

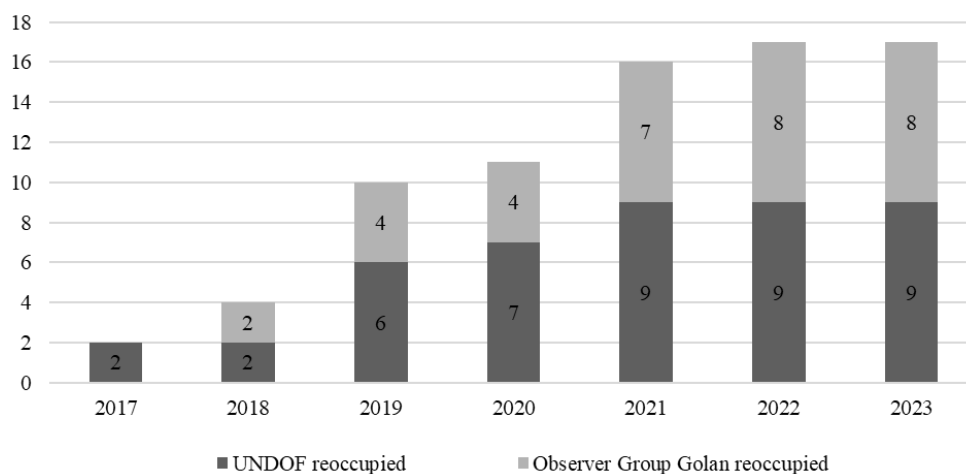
23. As part of the return to full mandate implementation, UNDOF continued with the restoration, repainting and refurbishment of the barrels marking the ceasefire line and the Bravo line, which delineate the area of separation, with 120 barrels restored along the ceasefire line and 153 barrels along the Bravo line (see figure I). UNDOF continued to consult the parties on the barrel restoration activity.

Figure I  
Number of ceasefire line and Bravo line barrels restored, repainted and refurbished by the Force



24. In its incremental return to the Bravo side, UNDOF is planning to construct new position 17A, in the vicinity of unoccupied position 17, in the northern part of the area of separation to enhance visibility in that area. Preparations for the reconstruction of observation post 52 are ongoing, with the work anticipated to commence in the coming weeks. The reoccupation of the observation post will complete the return of Observer Group Golan to observation posts, which the military observers vacated temporarily in 2014 owing to the deterioration of the security situation (see figure II).

Figure II  
Number of reoccupied Force positions and United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers in Observer Group Golan positions on the Bravo side since 2017 (cumulative over time)

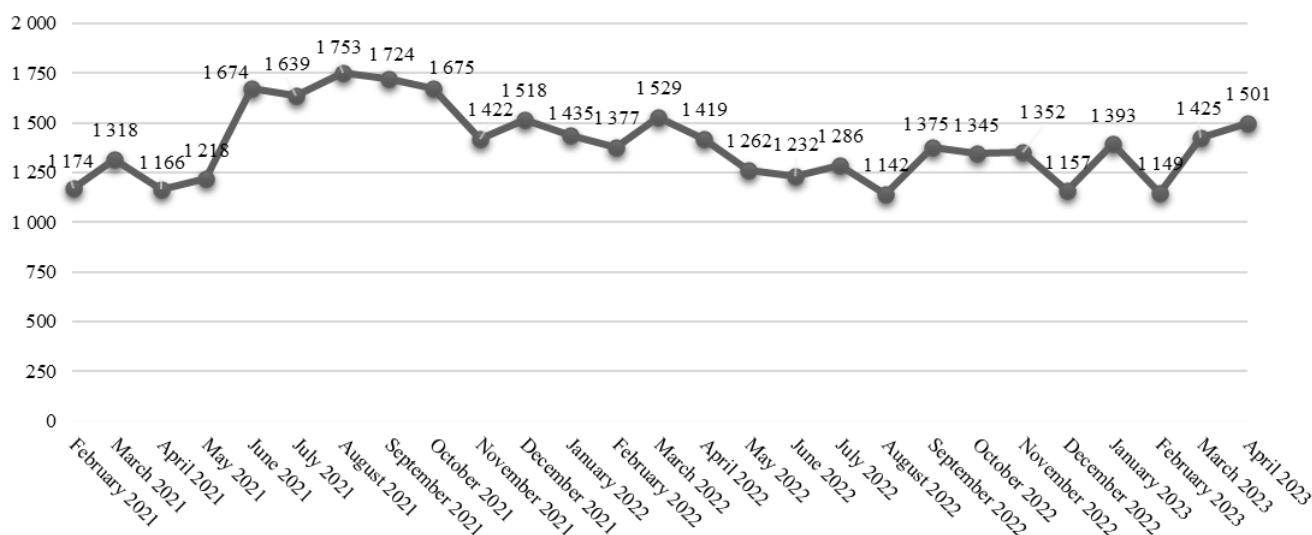


25. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Observer Group Golan, who are under the operational control of UNDOF and maintain 10 fixed observation posts within the UNDOF area of operations and 1 temporary observation post along the

ceasefire line. The focus of Observer Group Golan remained on continuous static observation and situational awareness. In addition, the military observers are tasked with carrying out investigations of incidents within the UNDOF area of operations.

26. UNDOF monthly operational patrols continued in the areas of separation and limitation, with 1,149 operational activities carried out in February, 1,425 in March and 1,501 in April (see figure III). UNDOF patrol routes cover the full breadth of the area of separation and 70 per cent of the area of limitation. The volatile security situation in the southern part continued to slow progress in opening new patrol routes in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

Figure III  
Number of Force patrols carried out per month



27. The movement of UNDOF personnel continues to be restricted by Lebanese administrative requirements. The route between Beirut and Damascus, through the Judaydah and Masna' border crossing, which is a primary resupply route for UNDOF, remained open for the commercial movement of goods and personnel during the period. It is also the main route for UNDOF troops rotating through Beirut.

28. UNDOF continued to assess that there remained a significant threat to United Nations personnel in its area of operations from explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance and mines, as well as a probable threat from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups.

29. UNDOF continued to conduct and update its contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of positions and observation posts on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, in addition to regular rehearsals, exercises and training for identified contingencies. Risk mitigation measures, including force protection measures, continued to be developed at positions, observation posts and the operational base at Camp Ziouani and headquarters at Camp Faouar.

30. UNDOF reported no cases of misconduct. The mission continued to implement activities, including the regular training of personnel related to prevention, enforcement and remedial actions regarding misconduct.

31. As at 20 May, UNDOF comprised 1,124 troops, including 94 women peacekeepers. Troops are deployed from Argentina (1), Australia (1), Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (148), Ghana (3), India (201), Ireland (134), Nepal (415),

Netherlands (Kingdom of the) (1), Uruguay (210) and Zambia (3). In addition, 77 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 18 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

### III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

32. In its resolution 2671 (2022), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973). It decided to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a period of six months, until 30 June 2023, and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement resolution 338 (1973). The search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was addressed in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/77/298), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/11, entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

33. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

### IV. Financial aspects

34. The General Assembly, by its resolution 76/289, appropriated the amount of \$64.5 million for the maintenance of the mission for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

35. As at 15 May 2023, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNDOF amounted to \$27.9 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,767.7 million.

36. Reimbursement of troop costs as well as reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment have been made for the period up to 31 December 2022, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

### V. Observations

37. At a time that continues to be particularly volatile for the region, I remain concerned about the continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, including breaches of the ceasefire on 8, 18 and 23 April. The Israel Defense Forces should refrain from firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as crossing the ceasefire line. I also remain concerned by the continued presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. The incident of rocket firing from the Bravo side towards the Alpha side is also of concern. There should be no military forces or activities in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the areas of limitation on both the Alpha and the Bravo sides, as well as the flying of drones across the ceasefire line, is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. I urge the parties to the Agreement to exercise utmost restraint and comply with the Agreement. I continue to encourage members of the Security Council to support efforts to raise the awareness of both parties of the risk of escalation and the need to preserve the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

38. It remains critical that the parties maintain their liaison with UNDOF. All violations of the ceasefire line increase tensions between the signatories to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and undermine stability in the area. The continued liaison by UNDOF with the parties has contributed to de-escalation during times of heightened tensions.

39. The continued commitment of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and support for the presence of UNDOF remain essential. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation continues to be a priority for the Force. I am counting on the continued cooperation of both parties towards facilitating the advancement of the Force's plans for an incremental return to operations and positions in the area of separation and to ensure that the Force can implement its mandate fully, including facilitation of the movement of UNDOF and the extension of inspections on both sides. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

40. Given the worrying trend of continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the volatile security situation in the southern part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side, the safety and security of military and civilian personnel in UNDOF and Observer Group Golan are of particular concern. The parties must refrain from any activity that may risk the safety of the peacekeepers. It is therefore of particular importance that the Security Council continue to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate safely and securely and is allowed to operate freely in accordance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. It remains important that the parties also continue to facilitate the deployment of all personnel to UNDOF for effective mandate implementation.

41. The continued support of Member States, and in particular the confidence of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF and their commitment to it, remain key factors in the Force's ability to carry out its mandate. I am grateful to the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Ireland, Nepal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Uruguay and Zambia for their contributions and the commitment, resolve and consummate professionalism of their military personnel in UNDOF. I am thankful to the Member States that have contributed military observers to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

42. I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for six months, until 31 December 2023. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel has also expressed its agreement.

43. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa, and to the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership in UNDOF, and the military observers in Observer Group Golan, who continue to perform the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council with efficiency and commitment, under extremely challenging circumstances.



Map

