



# 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 August 2023 to 20 November 2023, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2689 \(2023\)](#).

#### 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 of 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 area of separation and limitation, and across the ceasefire line, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2689 \(2023\)](#).

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 Agreement 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. On 10 October, UNDOF personnel heard explosions on the Bravo side and aircraft flying over the area of separation. Around the same time, the Israel Defense Forces announced on social media that in response to a number of rockets that were launched from the Syrian Arab Republic towards Israel, the Israel Defense Forces were responding with artillery and mortar shells towards the point of origin in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 14 October, UNDOF personnel heard heavy explosions on the Bravo side and observed three flares in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

5. On 24 October, UNDOF personnel heard explosions on the Bravo side and observed projectiles flying from the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) over a United Nations position in the southern part of the area of separation, impacting the Bravo side. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that three rockets had been



fired from the Syrian Arab Republic toward Israel and announced on social media that “in response to rocket launches from Syria toward Israel yesterday, IDF fighter jets struck military infrastructure and mortar launchers belonging to the Syrian Army”. The Israel Defense Forces also informed UNDOF that “the IDF holds SAAF [Syrian Arab Armed Forces] responsible for every act of terrorism that emanates from the Syrian borders. The IDF will act as necessary in order to protect all Israeli citizens from acts of terror perpetrated by the Syrian Regime”.

6. On 29 October, UNDOF personnel heard several explosions on the Alpha side and the eastern part of the Bravo side. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that three rockets “were launched from Syrian territory into Israeli territory” and that the Israel Defense Forces were “responding to the launch site”. During these developments, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that it should advise its personnel to go into shelter, and subsequently notified UNDOF that it was safe for United Nations personnel to come out.

7. In addition, United Nations personnel went into shelter on several occasions during the reporting period due to explosions and incidents of the firing of rockets across the Blue Line in the vicinity of Shab’a village.

8. On 15 November, a UNDOF mobile patrol vehicle in the area of separation was hit by four small arms rounds. There were no injuries to UNDOF personnel. The patrol returned to its base. The preliminary assessment of UNDOF is that it is likely that the small arms fire came from a southern direction in the vicinity of an Israel Defense Forces position.

9. On 20 October, UNDOF personnel observed approximately 15 newly laid anti-tank mines in the northern part of the area of limitation on the Alpha side.

10. Israel Defense Forces personnel on numerous occasions restricted the movement of UNDOF on the Alpha side, including denying UNDOF patrols access through the Israeli technical fence gates on 33 occasions. On all occasions, the patrols left the area.

11. On six occasions, Syrian armed forces personnel restricted the movement of UNDOF on the Bravo side, and the patrols left the area. On 9 October, an armed individual in the vicinity of observation post 56 in the area of separation pointed a weapon at the military observers on the platform of the observation post.

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 operations 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 constituted violations 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 personnel and by drones and aircraft, 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. In addition, UNDOF protested all restrictions by the parties on the movement of United Nations personnel carrying out their mandated activities.

16. On 19 September, the Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that two Syrian nationals from the village of Hadar had gone missing and requested UNDOF to liaise with the Israel Defense Forces in this regard. The Israel Defense Forces confirmed to UNDOF that they had detained two Syrian nationals after they had crossed the ceasefire line and had released them on the same day. On 29 September, the Israel Defense Forces apprehended and detained an individual from the Bravo side who had crossed the ceasefire line and subsequently released the person into the area of separation. On 18 November, an individual from the Bravo side was apprehended and detained by the Israel Defense Forces after crossing the ceasefire line. The following day, the Israel Defense Forces released the person to UNDOF through the Alpha gate at the Qunaytirah crossing. UNDOF subsequently handed the person over to the Syrian authorities at the Bravo gate.

17. UNDOF continued to observe almost 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 constituted a threat to the safety and security of their personnel operating in proximity to the ceasefire line. On several 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 to enable them to move within the vicinity of the ceasefire line and to prevent the recurrence of incidents involving the firing of warning shots.

18. 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 the UNDOF patrol routes in Dara'a Governorate. Open sources reported security incidents in Jasim, Nawa, Tafas and Muzayrib towns 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.

19. 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 movement, which has continued to adversely affect the operational and administrative activities of the mission. Since the attack by Hamas against Israeli towns near the Gaza Strip and central Israel on 7 October 2023 and subsequent developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israel Defense Forces have further limited these movements at the Qunaytirah crossing, with only four crossings facilitated, which has adversely impacted UNDOF operations and logistics. 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.

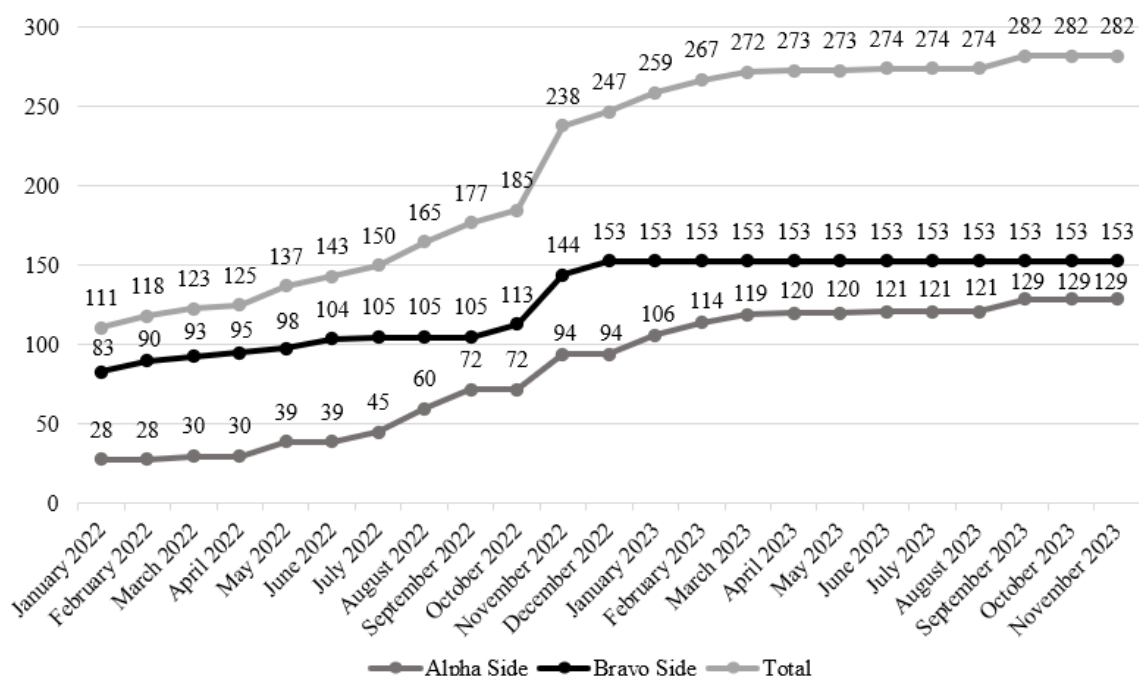
20. UNDOF continued to engage with the Israel Defense Forces with a view to addressing restrictions on the movement and access of United Nations personnel from the Alpha side, through the Israeli technical fence, to United Nations observation posts in the area of separation.

21. Following the 7 October attack, both the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities suspended their facilitation of the UNDOF fortnightly inspections carried out through Observer Group Golan, of the military positions of the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian armed forces in select parts of the respective areas of limitation. On 6 November, the Syrian authorities facilitated inspections in the central part of the area of separation on the Bravo side. UNDOF continued to engage with the Israel Defense Forces on the resumption of the inspections.

22. As part of the return to full mandate implementation on the Bravo Side, 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 129 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.

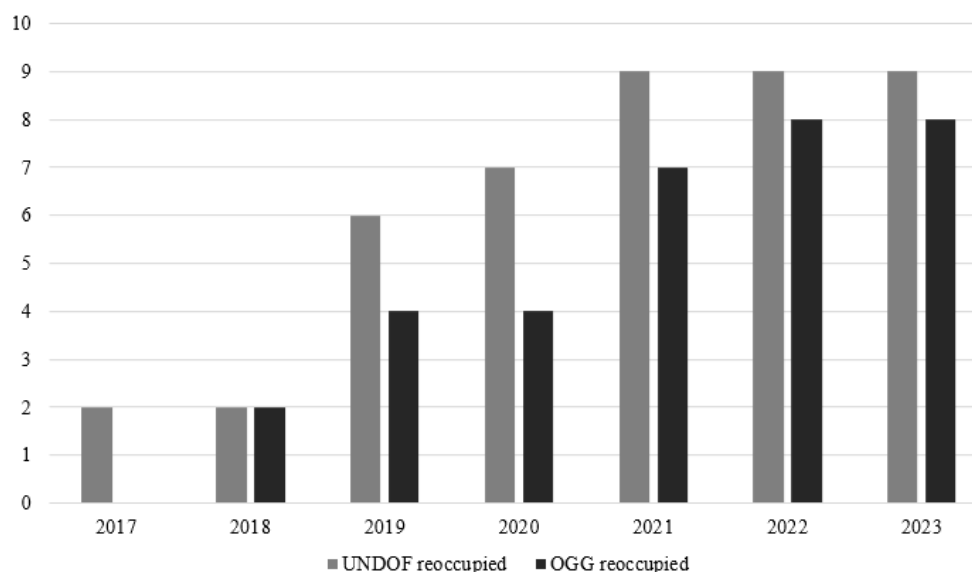
Figure I

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



23. Preparations for the construction of the new United Nations position 17A, in the northern part of the area of separation, and the reconstruction of vacated observation post 52 are ongoing. The reoccupation of the observation post will complete the return of Observer Group Golan to the observation posts that the military observers vacated temporarily in 2014 owing to the deterioration in the security situation (see figure II).

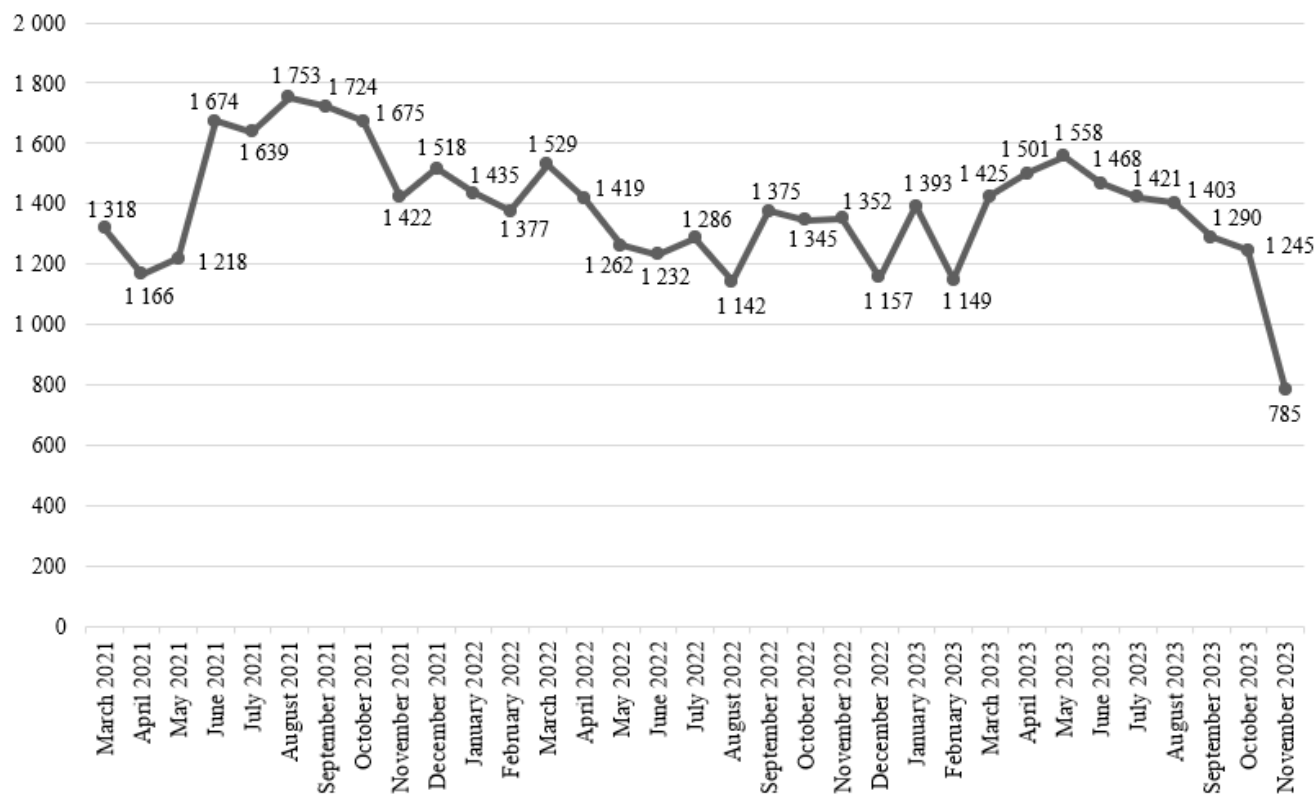
Figure II  
**Number of reoccupied Force positions and United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers in Observer Group Golan positions on the Bravo side since 2017 (cumulative over time)**



24. 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 the UNDOF Force Commander 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, situational awareness and fortnightly inspections. In addition, the military observers are tasked with carrying out investigations of incidents within the UNDOF area of operations.

25. UNDOF monthly operational patrols continued in the areas of separation and limitation, with 1,290 operational activities carried out in September, 1,245 in October and 785 as at 20 November (see figure III). UNDOF patrol routes cover the full breadth of the area of separation and 70 per cent of the area of limitation on the Bravo side. 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



26. The movement of UNDOF personnel has been 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.

27. 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.

28. UNDOF continued to conduct assessments of and update its contingency planning for the reinforcement, extraction 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.

29. 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.

30. As at 30 October, UNDOF comprised 1,131 troops, including 84 women peacekeepers. Troops are deployed from Argentina (1), Australia (1), Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (150), Ghana (5), India (201), Ireland (135), Nepal (414), Uruguay (214) and Zambia (3). In addition, 75 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 16 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

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

31. In its resolution 2689 (2023), 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 31 December 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/78/315), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/26 entitled “The Syrian Golan”.

32. 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

33. The General Assembly, by its resolution 77/291 B, appropriated the amount of \$69.3 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

34. As at 3 November 2023, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNDOF amounted to \$26.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,917.3 million.

35. Reimbursement of troop costs as well as reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment have been made for the period up to 30 June 2023.

### V. Observations

36. At a time of particular volatility in the region, I remain concerned about the continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, including breaches of the ceasefire on 10, 14, 24 and 29 October. Any firing across the ceasefire line is in violation of the Agreement and should cease. Reports of rockets fired from the Bravo side towards Israel are of concern. The Israel Defense Forces should also refrain from firing into the area of separation, 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. 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 and aircraft across the ceasefire line, are 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.

37. It remains critical that the parties maintain their liaison with UNDOF in any situation to avoid misunderstanding leading to escalations. All violations of the ceasefire lines 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 in the UNDOF area of operations during these times of heightened tensions in the region.

38. 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 remains a priority for the Force. I count on the continued cooperation of both parties to facilitate 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 the extension of inspections on both sides. I am concerned by the restrictions of movement of UNDOF in its area of operations, including at the Qunaytirah crossing, and the non-facilitation of inspection on the Alpha side since 7 October. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

39. 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 and security 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 of UNDOF for effective mandate implementation.

40. 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 also thankful to the Member States that have contributed military observers to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

41. 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 30 June 2024. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel has also expressed its agreement.

42. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa, 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

