



# 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 November 2023 to 20 February 2024, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2718 \(2023\)](#).

#### 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 on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974. The overall security situation in the UNDOF area of operations remained volatile, with military activity in the areas of separation and limitation and across the ceasefire line, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2718 \(2023\)](#).

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and to see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed in the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, 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 tensions in the region.

4. Late on 12 December, United Nations personnel at observation post 53 observed nine projectiles fired from the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) towards the Bravo side and heard a drone flying over the observation posts towards the Bravo side. Shortly thereafter, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed approximately four rockets fired from the Alpha side towards the Bravo side. One hour later, United Nations personnel in the southern part of the area of separation observed two drones flying from the Alpha side across the ceasefire line and over the area of separation. Shortly thereafter, United Nations personnel at observation post 58 observed six projectiles that they assessed to be artillery fire fired from the Alpha side towards the Bravo side. During these developments, United Nations personnel went



into shelter. On 13 December, the Israel Defense Forces stated on social media that “IDF aircraft and tanks recently attacked a number of military infrastructures and a military position of the Syrian army in Syrian territory”.

5. On 1 January, UNDOF personnel heard multiple explosions on the Alpha side and observed projectiles being fired from Tall al-Faras on the Alpha side towards the Bravo side. UNDOF personnel also observed rounds fired from a main battle tank on the Alpha side impacting the area of separation. UNDOF personnel sheltered in place. On 2 January, the Israel Defense Forces posted on social media that “in response to yesterday’s launches toward Israeli territory, the IDF struck military infrastructure belonging to the Syrian Army”.

6. On 6 January, United Nations personnel observed an individual from the Bravo side crossing the ceasefire line. Shortly thereafter, the Israel Defense Forces fired shots from the Alpha side, hitting the individual. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that their personnel had provided emergency medical aid to the individual, whom they had evacuated for further medical treatment, and that the individual had succumbed to his wounds on the way to a hospital. On the same day, UNDOF, in coordination with both sides, facilitated the return of the remains of the individual through the Qunaytirah crossing.

7. On 18 January, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that, “this evening at approx. 20:30, four (4) rockets were fired from Syria into Israel, all fell within Israeli territory ...”. Around the same time of the reported fire, United Nations personnel at positions in the area of separation heard multiple heavy explosions behind Tall al-Faras, approximately 1.5 km west of United Nations position 80, with personnel at some positions in the southern part of the area of separation going into shelter. United Nations personnel subsequently observed the Israel Defense Forces fire four rounds from a main battle tank towards the Bravo side. UNDOF was not able to determine the point of origin of the reported rockets from the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed that the fire from the Alpha side targeted a Syrian armed forces position adjacent to the area of separation.

8. On 30 January, UNDOF personnel heard several explosions on the Alpha side. Shortly thereafter, UNDOF personnel observed explosions on the Bravo side that UNDOF assessed to be missiles impacting the Bravo side. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that “at 21:24 (Alpha time) three (3) rockets were fired from Syrian territory into Israeli territory ... The IDF holds the Syrian Regime responsible for any hostile activity that takes place within Syrian Territory and is urged to act immediately to prevent any acts of this kind ...”. On 31 January, the Israel Defense Forces stated on social media that “a number of launches from Syria toward the southern Golan Heights were identified last night. In response, Israeli Air Force (IAF) fighter jets struck military infrastructure belonging to the Syrian regime”.

9. On 9 February, UNDOF observed 18 surface-to-air missiles, which it assessed to be the Israeli Iron Dome intercepting missiles on the Alpha side, and heard multiple explosions. Around the same time, UNDOF noticed what it assessed to be eight anti-aircraft tracer rounds, approximately 3 km west of United Nations position 80 in the area of separation. During these developments, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that it should advise its personnel to go into shelter and subsequently relayed that it was safe for the United Nations personnel to come out. The Israel Defense Forces further conveyed to UNDOF that “At approx. 18:00 (Alpha-time), rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israeli territory towards the Golan Heights. The Iron Dome defense system was activated in response to the attack.”

10. On 20 January, United Nations personnel noticed three aircraft flying from the Alpha side across the ceasefire line. United Nations personnel also observed, on several occasions, drones flying from the Alpha side across the ceasefire line and over

the area of separation. In addition, the Israel Defense Forces fired heavy machine guns and small arms into or across the area of separation.

11. On 46 occasions during the reporting period, Israel Defense Forces personnel restricted the movement of UNDOF on the Alpha side. On 16 occasions, Syrian armed forces restricted the movement of UNDOF on the Bravo side.

12. On 8 December, United Nations personnel at observation post 56 observed two explosions in Ba'th in the central part of the area of separation. An UNDOF patrol, accompanied by a Syrian armed forces liaison officer, was deployed to the site of the explosions. The UNDOF personnel found indications of an impact on the asphalt ground, including at least two holes, as well as burn marks and shrapnel. They also found a damaged, burnt-out vehicle on the side road approximately 300 m away. UNDOF personnel were informed by a Syrian police officer at the location that a drone had been flying in the area and that subsequently two rockets had hit a taxi driving on the road, killing all four occupants of the vehicle.

13. The Syrian authorities informed UNDOF on 8 December that the Syrian armed forces had located two rockets on the ground in the northern part of the area of limitation and that the Syrian armed forces denied responsibility for these rockets. UNDOF dispatched personnel to the location. The Syrian armed forces destroyed the two rockets in the presence of the UNDOF personnel.

14. 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 operations by the Syrian armed forces. UNDOF observed the continued presence of Syrian armed forces, some of whom were armed, staffing several checkpoints within the area of separation.

15. 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.

16. 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 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.

17. The Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed several letters to the President of the Security Council and to me. In a letter dated 18 November 2023 (A/78/607-S/2023/890), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. stated that "on Friday, 17 November 2023, Israeli occupying forces carried out an aerial attack from the occupied Syrian Golan against areas in the environs of Damascus, causing material losses". The Chargé d'affaires a.i., in a letter dated 27 November 2023 (A/78/615-S/2023/913), conveyed that on "26 November 2023, the occupying Israeli forces launched an aerial attack from the occupied Syrian Golan, firing missiles at Damascus International Airport and parts of Rif Dimashq. As a result, the airport was again put out of service ... In addition, the attack disrupted the humanitarian work of the United Nations by halting its humanitarian aviation services in Syria". In addition, in a letter dated 21 January 2024 (A/78/728-S/2024/87), he relayed that "on Saturday,

20 January 2024, at 1030 hours, the Israeli entity launched a missile attack from the direction of the occupied Syrian Golan against the city of Damascus. It targeted a residential building in the Mazzah neighbourhood ... The building collapsed completely and adjacent buildings were damaged. Several civilians were killed”.

18. In identical letters dated 11 January 2024 (S/2024/52) addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations relayed information regarding Syrian violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and breaches of Israeli sovereignty in the months of July to September 2023. The Permanent Representative stated that “Syrian violations of the Alpha line and armed presence in the area of separation (AOS) occur daily”.

19. 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 several occasions, the Israel Defence 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.

20. On 27 November, UNDOF, in coordination with the parties, facilitated the return of two Syrian nationals, who had been apprehended by the Israel Defense Forces on 30 June 2023 for alleged drug smuggling, through the Qunaytirah crossing. On 11 December and 13 February, the Israel Defense Forces apprehended and detained two individuals and one individual, respectively, from the Bravo side for allegedly crossing the ceasefire line. On each day, UNDOF, in coordination with both sides, facilitated the return of the individuals to the Bravo side through the Qunaytirah crossing. UNDOF, also in coordination with the parties, on 6 January, facilitated, through the Qunaytirah crossing, the return to the Bravo side of the remains of the civilian who had been shot by the Israel Defense Forces for crossing the ceasefire line (see para. 6). On 21 February, several Israel Defense Forces personnel crossed the ceasefire line, apprehended an individual from the area of separation and detained the individual on the Alpha side.

21. UNDOF assessed that the security situation generally remained calm in the northern and central parts of its area of operations on the Bravo side but continued to be volatile in the southern part, with security incidents reportedly occurring in locations within the area of limitation. This includes areas 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, as well as other government authorities and former members of armed opposition groups.

22. 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 attacks by Hamas against 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 two weekly crossings facilitated, which has adversely impacted UNDOF operations and logistics. UNDOF

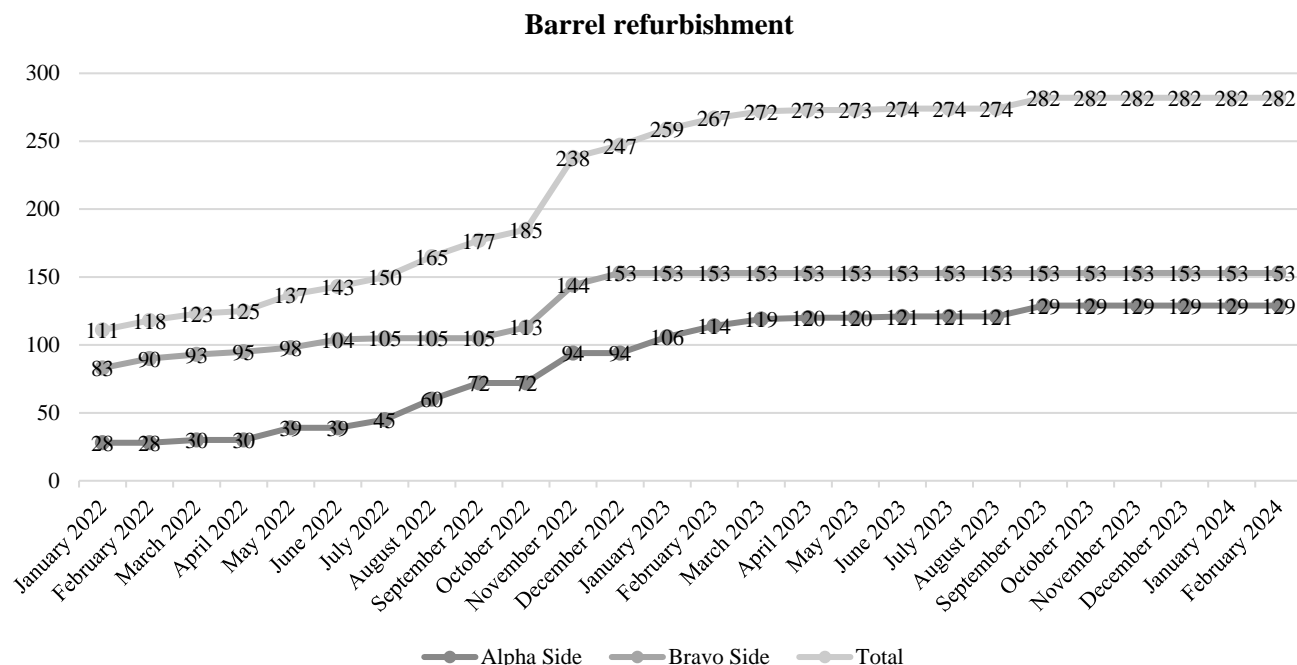
continued to liaise with the Israel Defense Forces on their facilitation of the crossing of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel at the Qunaytirah crossing, in particular on the need for United Nations personnel to cross using only documents issued by UNDOF at the crossing and to return to the established 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.

23. 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.

24. UNDOF, with the facilitation of the Israel Defence Forces and the Syrian authorities, resumed and 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. 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.

25. 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**

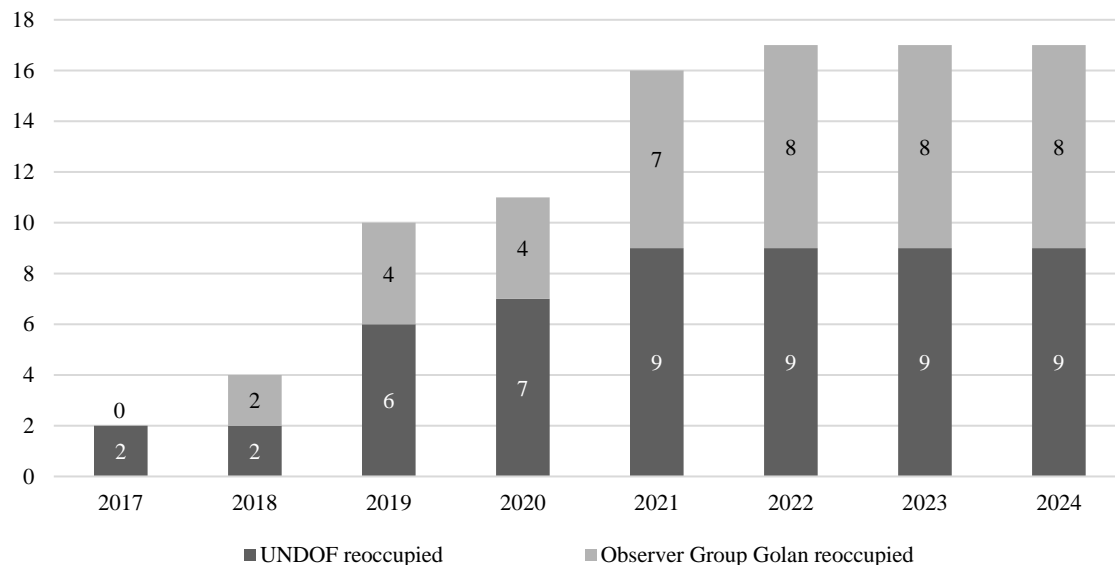


26. The construction of the new United Nations position 17A, in the northern part of the area of separation, commenced and is anticipated to be completed in April 2024. UNDOF plans to fully reoccupy the position in May 2024. The progress towards the reconstruction of United Nations observation post 52 has been slow since 7 October

2023. The reoccupation of this observation post will complete the return of Observer Group Golan to observation posts that the military observers vacated temporarily in 2014 owing to the deterioration in the security situation (see figure II).

Figure II

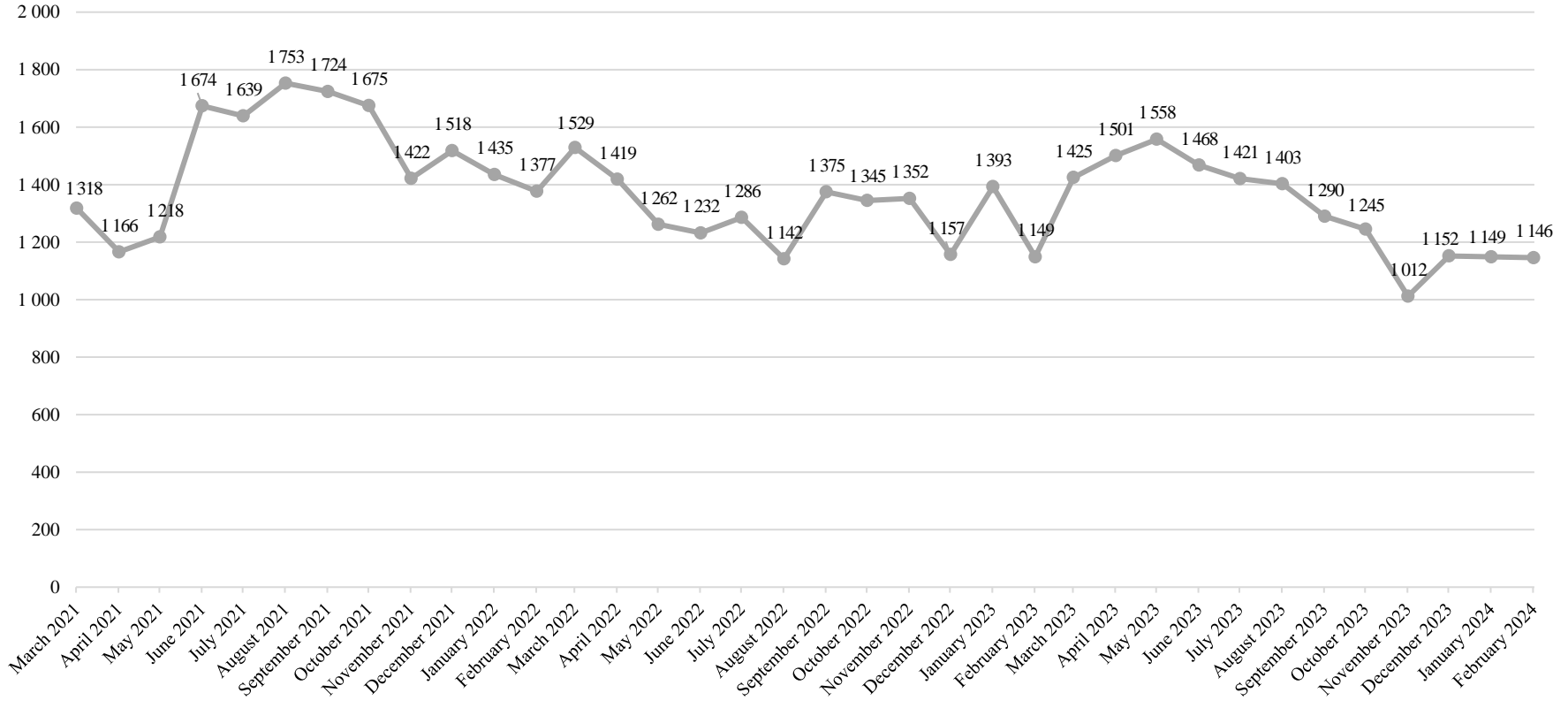
**Number of reoccupied Force positions and United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers in Observer Group Golan positions on the Bravo side since 2017**



27. 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 and situational awareness. In addition, the military observers are tasked with carrying out investigations of incidents within the UNDOF area of operations.

28. UNDOF monthly operational patrols continued in the areas of separation and limitation, with 1,152 operational activities carried out in December 2023, 1,149 in January and 1,146 in February 2024 (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



29. While the movement of UNDOF personnel continued to be restricted by Lebanese administrative requirements, since 16 February, the Lebanese authorities streamlined some of the procedures to facilitate the movement of UNDOF vehicles between Syria and Lebanon. 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.

30. 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 possible threats as a result of localized violence, including the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups.

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. As at 20 February, UNDOF comprised 1,128 troops, including 88 women peacekeepers. Troops were deployed from Argentina (1), Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (148), Ghana (5), India (202), Ireland (133), Nepal (415), Republic of Korea (1), Uruguay (213) and Zambia (3). In addition, 77 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 14 women personnel, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

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

34. In its resolution 2718 (2023), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to implement immediately its resolution 338 (1973). It decided to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a period of six months, until 30 June 2024, 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".

35. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. I look forward to a de-escalation of tensions and 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. 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 12 December 2023 and on 1, 18 and 30 January and 9 February 2024. 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 Defence Forces must also refrain from firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as from 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 aircraft and drones across the ceasefire line and over the area of separation, violate 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. All violations of the ceasefire line increase tensions between the signatories to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974 and undermine stability in the area. The continued liaison by UNDOF with the parties has contributed to avoiding further escalation during 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 of 1974 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 Alpha gate at Qunaytirah crossing. 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 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.

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, Republic of Korea, 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. 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

