



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 2022 to 20 February 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. On 29 January, United Nations personnel at observation post 58 heard eight small arms shots being fired from the vicinity of the ceasefire line. Later that day, the United Nations personnel observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers carrying one individual on a stretcher towards an ambulance parked near the Israeli technical fence on the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan). On the same day, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had “identified two (02) suspicious Syrian individuals, one (01) of them was armed, who had crossed from Syria to Israel and approached the technical fence” and that they had fired warning shots, injuring one individual from the Bravo side who succumbed to his wounds notwithstanding their having provided him with medical treatment. On 30 January, UNDOF, in support of the International Committee of the Red Cross and in consultation with the parties,



facilitated the transfer of the remains of the individual from the Israel Defense Forces to the Syrian authorities through the Qunaytirah crossing.

5. On 22 November, small arms shots fired from an unknown location impacted the vicinity of UNDOF personnel carrying out barrel refurbishment along the ceasefire line. The Israel Defense Forces subsequently informed UNDOF that they had fired warning shots at shepherds from the Bravo side who were in the vicinity of the ceasefire line. On 23 January, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed seven Israel Defense Forces soldiers firing several small arms rounds into the area of separation.

6. On 27 December and 4 January, UNDOF observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers in two main battle tanks crossing the ceasefire line and briefly moving into the area of separation. On 20 January, United Nations personnel observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers in a main battle tank momentarily crossing the ceasefire line. The United Nations personnel subsequently heard three explosions in the same area. UNDOF observed, on 13 and 20 December, 8 and 14 Israel Defense Forces soldiers, respectively, crossing the ceasefire line.

7. The Israel Defense Forces, on several occasions, apprehended individuals from the Bravo side in the vicinity of the ceasefire line. On 28 December, United Nations personnel at position 80 observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers apprehending and detaining one individual. UNDOF, in consultation with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities, facilitated the return of the individual to the Bravo side through the Qunaytirah crossing on 30 December. On 29 December, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had apprehended two individuals from the Bravo side who had allegedly crossed the ceasefire line. The Israel Defense Forces returned the two individuals through the Qunaytirah crossing on 30 December. On 27 January, United Nations personnel at observation post 53 observed at least 18 Israel Defense Forces soldiers dismounting from four vehicles in the vicinity of the observation post and appearing to apprehend three individuals. On 29 January, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had apprehended two of the three individuals who had crossed the ceasefire line. On 31 January, one of the two apprehended individuals was returned to the Bravo side. On 31 January, the Israel Defense Forces relayed to UNDOF information that “the IDF apprehended two (02) Syrian individuals who crossed the Alpha and Barrel Lines ... carrying a substantial amount of illegal drugs ... The individuals were taken by the Israeli police for questioning”.

8. On 14 occasions, Israel Defense Forces soldiers denied UNDOF patrols access through the Israeli technical fence gates. On all occasions, the patrols left the area. UNDOF protested the incidents to the Israel Defense Forces.

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

10. 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 training by Syrian armed forces personnel. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. In identical letters dated 2 January 2023 addressed to the President of the Security Council and me ([A/77/683-S/2023/4](#)), the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations conveyed that “the Israeli occupation authorities ... on the morning of Monday, 2 January 2023 ... launched an aerial attack by firing missile bursts from north-east of Lake Tiberias towards Damascus International Airport – a civilian facility – and the area around it. That led to the deaths of two military personnel, injury to two others, and material losses”.

14. The Permanent Representative of Israel, in identical letters dated 19 December 2022 addressed to the President of the Security Council and me ([S/2022/982](#)), relayed information regarding “Syrian violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and breaches of Israeli sovereignty in the months from July to October 2022” and that “Syrian violations of the Alpha line and armed presence in the area of separation occur daily”.

15. 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.

16. 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 from Jasim to Tafas 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.

17. 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

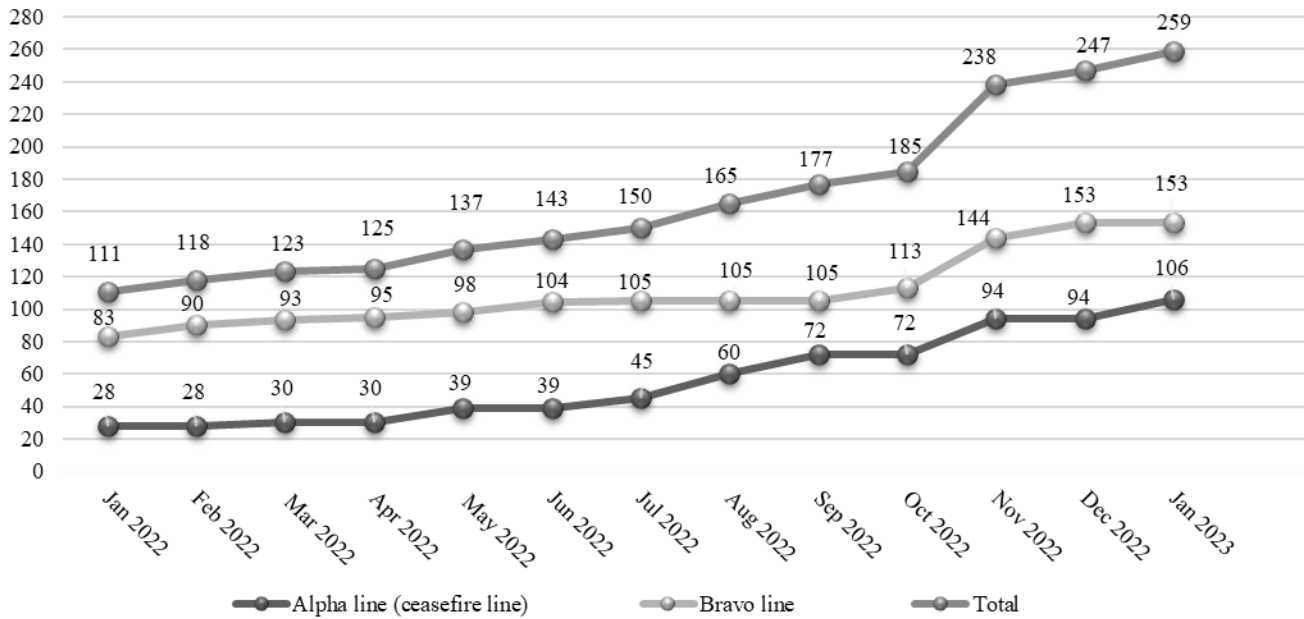
the movement of UNDOF personnel and supplies through the Bravo gate at the Qunaytirah crossing.

18. 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.

19. 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. 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.

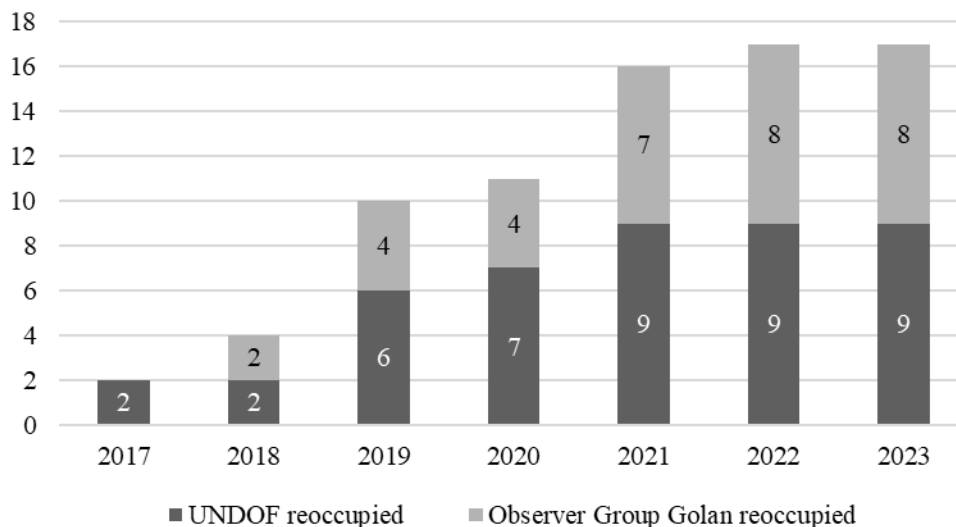
20. As part of the return to full mandate implementation, UNDOF continued with the restoration, repainting and refurbishment of the barrels marking the ceasefire line and the Bravo line, which delineate the area of separation, with 106 barrels restored along the ceasefire line and 153 barrels along the 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



21. The reconstruction of observation post 52 is anticipated to commence in the coming months, with its reoccupation completing 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).

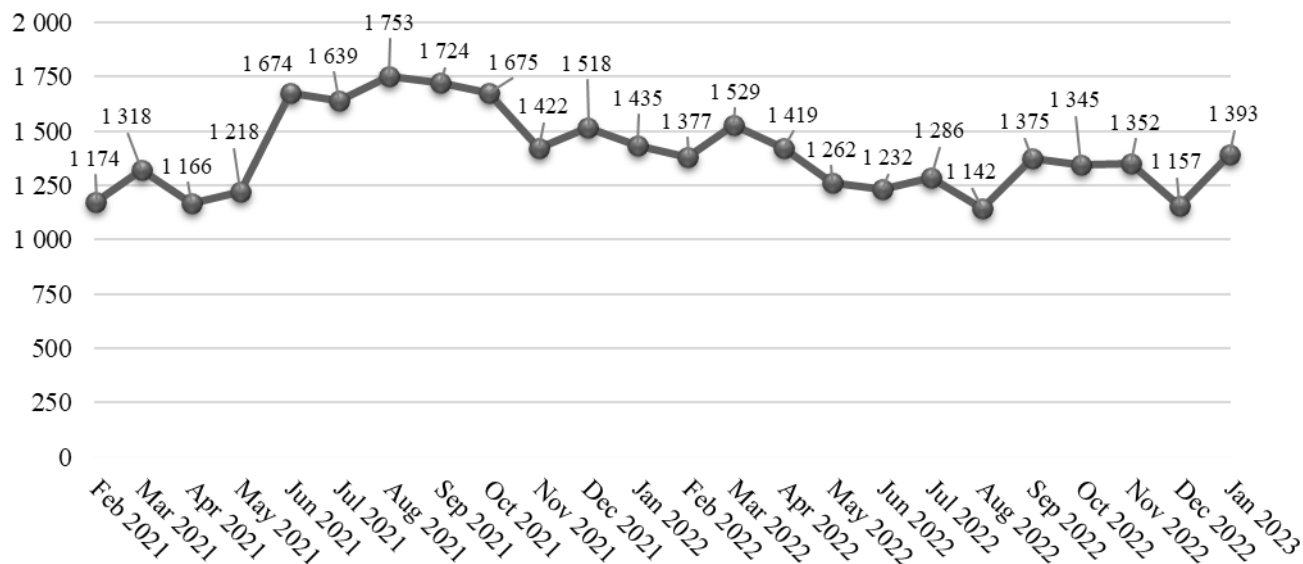
Figure II
Number of reoccupied Force positions and United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers in Observer Group Golan positions on the Bravo side since 2017 (cumulative over time)



22. 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 one 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.

23. UNDOF monthly operational patrols continued in the areas of separation and limitation, with 1,352 operational activities carried out in November, 1,157 in December and 1,393 in January (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



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

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. As at 20 February, UNDOF comprised 1,131 troops, including 96 women peacekeepers. Troops are deployed from Argentina (1), Australia (1), Bhutan (4), Czechia (4), Fiji (149), Ghana (6), India (200), Ireland (134), Nepal (415), the Netherlands (1), Uruguay (214) and Zambia (2). In addition, 81 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 16 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

29. 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".

30. 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 in the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. Observations

31. 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 line. 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. This is also critical to prevent the loss of life, as occurred on 29 January. 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 area 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.

32. 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.

33. 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 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.

34. 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.

35. 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, the Netherlands, 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.

36. 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

