



# 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) for the period from 15 March to 29 May 2019, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2450 \(2018\)](#).

#### II. Situation in the area of operations and activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was maintained notwithstanding a number of violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. While the overall security situation in the UNDOF area of operations remained stable, there was some military activity in the area of separation and across the ceasefire line. As reiterated by the Security Council in its resolution [2450 \(2018\)](#), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line that it observes. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the ceasefire line by individuals, constitute violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In its regular interactions with both sides, the leadership of UNDOF continued to call upon the parties to exercise restraint and prevent any miscalculation that might lead to an escalation of the situation.

4. During the reporting period, there were several breaches of the ceasefire line. On the evening of 27 May, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had carried out a strike on a location in Tal al-Shaar in the area of limitation on the Bravo side in retaliation of Syrian air defence system fire that had targeted an Israel Defense Forces aircraft. The Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that the Israel Defense Forces strike killed three military personnel and destroyed a military vehicle. In the late afternoon of the same day, UNDOF had heard the firing of approximately 30 heavy machine gun rounds from a distance of some 2 km from Camp Faouar. UNDOF was not in a position to confirm any casualties caused by the Israel Defense



Forces strike or determine the point of origin or impact of the earlier heavy machine gun rounds. UNDOF liaised with both parties to de-escalate the situation and reminded them of their obligation to respect the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the importance of liaison with UNDOF accordingly to prevent any further incidents and escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line.

5. On 8 May, UNDOF observed the Israel Defense Forces fire three tank rounds into the area of separation. UNDOF assessed that the firing was aimed at deterring shepherds and other persons from crossing the ceasefire line from the Bravo side. On 12 March, the Israel Defense Forces had released a video statement on Twitter claiming that a group known as “Golan File” or “Golan Portfolio” were operating around the village of Hadar within the area of separation. The Israel Defense Forces claimed that the alleged group was a Hizbullah-backed group that was conducting reconnaissance operations and attempting to recruit locals within the area of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. The Israel Defense Forces had previously made allegations to UNDOF about the presence of such groups.

6. On 1 May, UNDOF observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers laying razor concertina wire in the area between the Israeli technical fence and United Nations position 37B. UNDOF troops deployed to the location, where they saw approximately 20 Israel Defense Forces soldiers and main battle tanks deployed near the technical fence on the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan), with some of the Israel Defense Forces soldiers deployed on high ground in the area of separation. The Israel Defense Forces soldiers informed UNDOF that the purpose of the wire was to prevent persons from the Bravo side from approaching and crossing the technical fence. While this activity was taking place, the armed forces of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic deployed close to position 37B and informed UNDOF that they were there to monitor the activity of the Israel Defense Forces. The leadership of UNDOF liaised with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities to de-escalate the situation and urged the soldiers of both sides to leave the area of separation. Subsequently, the soldiers of both sides left the area. On 29 May, the Israel Defense Forces carried out their planned reinforcement operations to lay razor concertina wire between the ceasefire line and the Israeli technical fence in the central part of the area of limitation on the Alpha side. UNDOF had informed the Syrian authorities of the Israel Defense Forces operations. UNDOF had deployed troops to a location in the central part of the area of separation in the vicinity of the ceasefire line to prevent violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and de-escalate any tension during the Israel Defense Forces operations.

7. Sporadic heavy explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire persisted throughout the reporting period in the northern, central and southern parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo Side. UNDOF assessed that this military activity was due to controlled detonations of unexploded ordnance as part of clearance and training by the Syrian armed forces. On 17, 18 and 19 May, UNDOF observed several anti-aircraft rounds and ammunition bursts on the Bravo side. UNDOF also saw, on 17 May, four surface-to-air missiles being launched westwards from the vicinity of Tal al-Harrah in the area of limitation on the Bravo side. UNDOF was not in a position to determine the point of origin or impact of the anti-aircraft rounds or the impact of the missiles. UNDOF observed an increase in the presence of personnel of the Syrian armed forces, some of whom were armed, staffing a number of checkpoints within the area of separation, including in the vicinity of Ba’th and Khan Arnabah, as well as along the main road connecting Qunaytirah to Damascus. UNDOF was occasionally notified that the routes in the area of limitation on the Bravo side planned for patrol by the military police of the Russian Federation may involve their entering the area of separation. UNDOF was not in a position to confirm the presence of the military police in the area of separation.

8. The military violations on the Alpha side included the presence of Iron Dome systems and multiple rocket launcher systems within 10 km of the ceasefire line, which are considered unauthorized military equipment in the area of limitation pursuant to the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

9. UNDOF continued to observe daily crossings of the ceasefire line by unidentified individuals from the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed that these individuals were shepherds and farmers from the surrounding areas tending livestock.

10. UNDOF protested to the parties all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that it had observed, including the crossings of the ceasefire line by civilians from the Bravo Side, the presence of unauthorized equipment and personnel in the areas of separation and limitation and the firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line.

11. On 25 March, the United States of America issued a presidential proclamation recognizing the sovereignty of Israel over the occupied Syrian Golan. This was followed by peaceful public protests in the UNDOF area of operations, particularly in Madjal Shams on the Alpha side, and in Ba'th, Khan Arnabah, Jaba and Rafid on the Bravo side.

12. Despite the improvement in the security situation in the UNDOF area of operations, open sources reported the presence of armed groups. On 12 April, open sources alleged that a group called the Popular Resistance claimed responsibility for a car bomb attack on pro-Government forces on the Harrah to Zimrin road, within the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

13. During the reporting period, UNDOF did not observe any internally displaced persons or tents in the area of separation. On 28 April, UNDOF facilitated the return of two Syrian nationals from the Alpha side through the Qunaytirah crossing. One of the Syrian nationals had been detained on the Alpha side since 2008 and the other since 2005. Both Syrian nationals were brought by the Israel Defense Forces to Camp Ziouani, where they were interviewed by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross before being transferred to the Syrian authorities.

14. Pending its return to full operations carried out on the Bravo side prior to its relocation in August 2014, UNDOF continued to maintain visibility, albeit limited, of the area of separation and the ceasefire line. UNDOF maintained its positions on Mount Hermon and at Camp Faouar and United Nations positions 32 and 37, in the central part of the area of separation, 80, in the southern part of the area of separation, and 22, on the Alpha side. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Observer Group Golan, who are under the operational control of UNDOF, and have maintained five fixed and three temporary observation posts along the ceasefire line, as well as four temporary observation posts on Mount Hermon. Additionally, Observer Group Golan also continued to maintain temporary observation posts in the vicinity of vacated United Nations observation posts 56, 71 and 72. The military observers in Observer Group Golan will not be deployed at observation posts in the area of separation on a permanent basis until such time as the security conditions permit, when adequate accommodation and appropriate force protection measures are in place. The focus of Observer Group Golan remains on continuous static observation and situational awareness.

15. UNDOF made progress towards its gradual return to the area of separation as it continued to develop the infrastructure of and improve the living conditions at Camp Faouar. The Mission conducted clearance of United Nations positions 27, 37 and 85 in preparation for the reconstruction and reoccupation of the positions. The

refurbishment of Observer Group Golan observation posts 72 and 56 is expected to commence in June.

16. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied the inspection teams. With the improvement in the security situation on the Bravo side, UNDOF plans to resume, during the next reporting period, inspections in the area of limitation, which were suspended for security reasons.

17. Engagement between UNDOF and the Israel Defense Forces continued, with a view to addressing restrictions on movement and access to United Nations positions in the area of separation and to reducing the delays and challenges experienced by United Nations personnel in crossing the technical fence to United Nations observation posts. The leadership of UNDOF continued to remind the parties of their obligation to scrupulously abide by the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground and to extend all cooperation to UNDOF in the fulfilment of the tasks under its mandate.

18. UNDOF, in consultation with both parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation as the Mission advanced its return to vacated positions in the area of separation. UNDOF conducted more than 180 operational patrols on routes in the northern and central parts of the areas of separation and limitation. In addition, the UNDOF mechanized infantry company and force reserve company continued to carry out assessment visits and protected patrols to United Nations position 68 and observation posts 52, 56 and 72. Liaison officers of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic accompanied UNDOF personnel on all patrols and assessment visits.

19. UNDOF regularly used the Qunaytirah crossing to move equipment and personnel between the Alpha and Bravo sides. Pending the reoccupation of the United Nations position at the Charlie gate, UNDOF military police continued to deploy at the crossing point during the limited opening hours only, to liaise with the respective sides on UNDOF personnel crossings. UNDOF continues to liaise with both sides with regard to their facilitation of the crossing of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel at the Qunaytirah crossing, including the need for the United Nations personnel to use only documents issued by UNDOF to cross and for an increase in the opening hours of the crossing.

20. UNDOF continues to assess that there is a significant threat to United Nations personnel in the UNDOF area of operations from explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance and mines, and from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups. UNDOF continues its assessment of the security situation in the southern part of the area of separation in view of the planned deployment to positions in that area.

21. In accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution [2450 \(2018\)](#) and the UNDOF operational concept, UNDOF continued its efforts to deploy appropriate technology to ensure the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and equipment. A surveillance trailer to support UNDOF observation tasks remained deployed on the Alpha side at Camp Ziouani and United Nations position 22, while another was maintained at Camp Faouar.

22. UNDOF continued to conduct and update its contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, as well as facilities in Damascus. UNDOF conducted regular rehearsals, exercises and training for identified contingencies. Risk mitigation measures, including force protection measures, continued to be developed at United

Nations positions and observation posts and at the UNDOF operational base at Camp Ziouani and headquarters at Camp Faouar.

23. As at 13 May, UNDOF comprised 935 troops, including 41 women peacekeepers. Troops are deployed from Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (246), Ghana (13), India (194), Ireland (137), Nepal (334), the Netherlands (2) and Uruguay (2). In addition, 74 military observers, including 13 women from UNTSO serving in Observer Group Golan assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

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

24. In its resolution 2450 (2018), 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 2019, 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/73/322), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 72/15 on Jerusalem and 72/16 on the Syrian Golan.

25. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. I look forward to 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

26. The General Assembly, by its resolution 72/298 of 5 July 2018, appropriated the amount of \$60.3 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

27. As at 20 May 2019, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF amounted to \$14.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contribution for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$1,962.8 million.

28. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 January 2019, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2018, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

### V. Observations

29. I note the generally calm situation in the UNDOF area of operations. However, I am concerned about the continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. I am particularly concerned about the developments of 27 May involving the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Furthermore, I am also concerned about the continued military activities and presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation and the crossing of the ceasefire line by the Israel Defense Forces on 1 May. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. The Israel Defense Forces should refrain from firing across the ceasefire line. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the areas of limitation on both the Alpha and Bravo sides is also of concern. These developments have the potential to jeopardize the Disengagement of

Forces Agreement. I urge the parties to exercise maximum restraint. I encourage members of the Security Council to support efforts to sensitize both parties to the risk of escalation and the need to preserve the long-standing ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

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

31. I note the continued support of the parties in facilitating the return of UNDOF to full operations on the Bravo side. It is important that the parties provide all necessary support to allow full utilization of the Qunaytirah crossing by UNDOF in line with established procedures. It is critical that UNDOF be able to carry out its operations without facing any administrative obstacles. This is even more important as UNDOF increases its operations on the Bravo Side to facilitate effective and efficient mandate implementation.

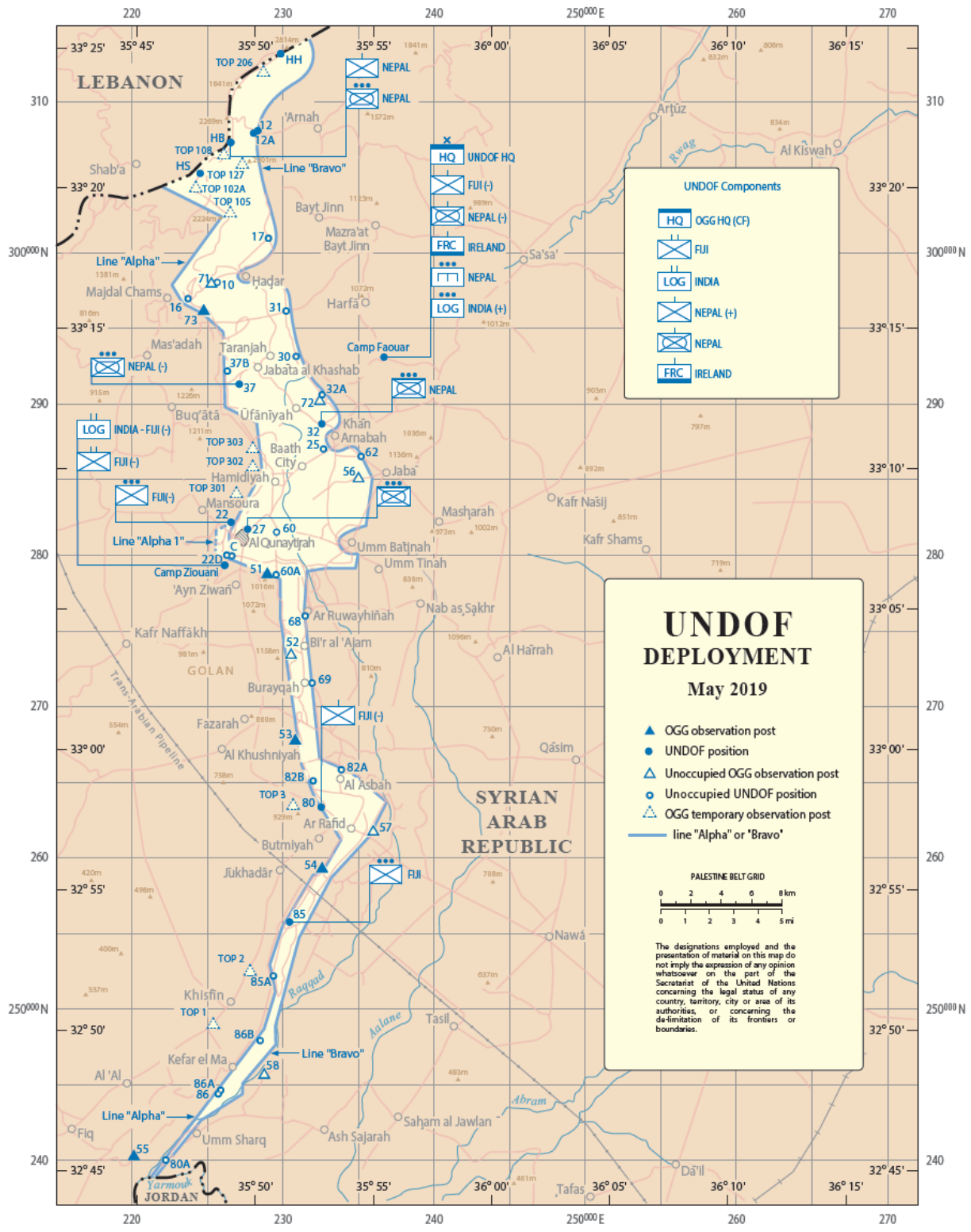
32. The continued commitment of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and support for the presence of UNDOF remains essential. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation continues to be a priority for the Mission. I count on the continued cooperation of both parties to facilitate the advancement of the Mission's plans for an incremental return to operations and positions in the area of separation and to ensure that the Mission can implement its mandate. It remains important that UNDOF be able to deploy the technology and equipment necessary to enhance its observation of the area of separation and the ceasefire line and to augment force protection. In that regard, the support and cooperation of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic is essential. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

33. It is equally important that the Security Council continue to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF continues to be accorded the ability to operate in a safe and secure manner and is allowed to operate freely in accordance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The support of the parties in facilitating the clearance of mines, unexploded ordnance and remnants of war in the UNDOF area of operation is crucial. It is also necessary for UNDOF to continue to have at its disposal all means and resources necessary for it to return fully to the area of separation, conditions permitting.

34. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF remain key factors in the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate. I continue to count on the support of troop-contributing countries as UNDOF advances the implementation of its agreed plan to increase operations in the area of separation. I am grateful to the Governments of Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Ireland, Nepal, the Netherlands and Uruguay for their contributions, commitment, resolve and consummate professionalism. I am also thankful to the Member States that have contributed military observers to UNTSO.

35. I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a period of six months, until 31 December 2019. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel also has expressed its agreement.

36. Finally, I wish to remember and honour Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri, UNDOF Head of Mission and Force Commander, who passed away suddenly on 19 April 2019, for his distinguished leadership of and dedicated service in UNDOF. I also wish to express my appreciation to the interim leadership of UNDOF and all military and civilian personnel, who continue to perform the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council with efficiency and commitment under challenging circumstances.



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