



# 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 18 September to 22 November 2019, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#).

#### 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 despite 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, in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council reiterated that 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, as prescribed in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, 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 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. On 19 November, United Nations personnel at the Hermon South position observed two unidentified objects being fired from a location approximately 50 m from an Israel Defense Forces position. The UNDOF personnel also heard three explosions. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had intercepted rockets fired from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that they had no knowledge of any firing of rockets. Open sources reported that Israel Defense Forces had intercepted four rockets fired from the Syrian Arab Republic into



Israel. UNDOF liaised with both sides to prevent any escalation of the situation. The last report of alleged firing of rockets was on 9 September, when the Israel Defense Forces reported to UNDOF that they had observed several rockets being fired from Damascus, with a point of impact in the vicinity of Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation. On that day, United Nations personnel at the Hermon South position heard 10 explosions. UNDOF was not in a position to confirm the firing of rockets from the Bravo side on 9 September and 19 November.

5. The Israel Defense Forces continued to carry out their planned operation, which they had begun on 1 May, of laying razor concertina wire on the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) along the ceasefire line. The Forces also continued to install steel-reinforced concrete blast walls west of the Israeli technical fence and to construct berms, in particular in the northern and central parts of the Alpha side. On 24 September, Syrian authorities protested against these activities, claiming that they were in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), serving in Observer Group Golan under the operational control of UNDOF, conducted an investigation and found that the Israel Defense Forces had been carrying out the activities on the Alpha side and had not breached the ceasefire line.

6. Sporadic heavy explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire persisted throughout the reporting period in 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. UNDOF observed the continuous presence 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. There was a continued presence of main battle tanks and anti-aircraft guns in the area of separation over the reporting period, in particular in the vicinity of Khan Arnabah.

7. 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.

8. 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. The Israel Defense Forces continued to express deep concern about these crossings, which, they stated, were a threat to the safety and security of Israel Defense Forces personnel operating in proximity of the ceasefire line. UNDOF continued to place warning signs along the ceasefire line to deter such crossings.

9. 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 and the presence of unauthorized equipment and personnel in the areas of separation and limitation.

10. Despite the improvement in the security situation in the UNDOF area of operations, open sources reported the continued presence of armed groups and a number of attacks carried out against Syrian armed forces and government authorities in the area of limitation on the Bravo side and east of that area. Open sources also reported the assassinations and attempted assassinations of several opposition leaders that had "reconciled" with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and attacks using improvised explosives devices targeting Syrian armed forces in the province of Dar'a in proximity to the southern part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

11. During the reporting period, UNDOF did not observe any internally displaced persons or tents in the area of separation. On 22 September, at the request of the Israel Defense Forces and with the agreement of the Syrian authorities, UNDOF and the International Committee of the Red Cross facilitated, through the Qunaytirah crossing, the return to the Bravo side of a 15-year-old boy who had been detained by the Israel Defense Forces on the Alpha side after allegedly crossing the ceasefire line.

12. Pending its return to full operations carried out on the Bravo side prior to its relocation in August 2014, UNDOF continued to maintain visibility of the area of separation and the ceasefire line. UNDOF made progress towards its gradual return to vacated positions in the area of separation. The mission increased the number of positions from which it has visibility of the ceasefire line and the area of separation and increased the patrolling of its area of operations. UNDOF currently maintains five positions on Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation, three in the central part of the area of separation and three in the southern part. The Force enhanced visibility of the southern part of the area of separation through increased patrolling and maintained static positions in that area. During the reporting period, UNDOF continued to develop the infrastructure of positions 27 and 80 and improve the force protection measures at these positions, while it reoccupied United Nations position 68.

13. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers in Observer Group Golan. The Group maintained seven fixed observation posts and one temporary observation post along the ceasefire line, following the reoccupation of observation posts 56 and 72. The focus of the Group remains on continuous static observation and situational awareness.

14. 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 progressively resume inspections in the area of limitation, which were suspended for security reasons.

15. UNDOF continued to engage with the Israel Defense Forces 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.

16. 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. During the reporting period, UNDOF increased its monthly operational patrols on routes in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side from 573 in August to 886 in October. For the first time since 2014, UNDOF conducted patrols to the United Nations temporary observation post 80A, located close to the southernmost part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side. The opening of that patrol route further increased the situational awareness of UNDOF in its area of operations. UNDOF patrol routes covered approximately 95 per cent of the area of separation and approximately 50 per cent of the area of limitation. In consultation with the parties, UNDOF resumed, on 29 October, night patrols in the area of separation, which had been suspended in 2014. Liaison officers of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic accompanied UNDOF personnel on all patrols and assessment visits on the Bravo side.

17. UNDOF assessed that there continued to be 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 continued its assessment of the security situation in the southernmost part of the area of separation in view of the planned deployment of positions in that area.

18. In accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#) and the UNDOF operational concept, UNDOF continued its efforts to deploy appropriate technology to ensure the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and equipment. 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 of 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.

19. UNDOF regularly used the Qunaytirah crossing to move equipment and personnel between the Alpha and Bravo sides. UNDOF continued to liaise with the Israel Defense Forces with regard to their facilitation of the crossing of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel at the Qunaytirah crossing, in particular 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. The administrative procedures involved in crossing have placed a significant additional administrative and logistical burden on the mission.

20. Since 17 October, developments in Lebanon have affected the primary supply route for UNDOF between Beirut and Damascus, in particular the movement of UNDOF personnel, fuel, rations and other supplies. This has resulted in significant challenges for the mission, including delays in troop rotation.

21. As at 14 November, UNDOF comprised 984 troops, including 42 women peacekeepers. Troops were deployed from Australia (1), Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (136), Ghana (13), India (184), Ireland (135), Nepal (334), the Netherlands (2) and Uruguay (172). In addition, 75 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 13 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

### **III. Implementation of Security Council resolution [338 \(1973\)](#)**

22. In its resolution [2477 \(2019\)](#), 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 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/74/310](#)), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [73/22](#) on Jerusalem and [73/23](#) on the Syrian Golan.

23. 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 in 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

24. The General Assembly, by its resolution [73/321](#), appropriated the amount of \$69.4 million for the maintenance of the mission for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

25. As at 15 November 2019, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF amounted to \$27.8 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$3,581.6 million.

26. The reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 July 2019, while the reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 June 2019, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## V. Observations

27. I note the continued generally calm situation in the area of operations. However, I am concerned about the continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement in a particularly volatile time for the region. Furthermore, I remain concerned by the continued presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. 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 area of limitation on both the Alpha and Bravo sides is also of concern. These developments have the potential to jeopardize the Agreement. I urge the parties to the Agreement to exercise utmost restraint. I continue to 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.

28. 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 contribute to undermining stability in the area.

29. The continued liaison of UNDOF with the parties has contributed to de-escalation during times of heightened tensions. I note the continued support of the parties in facilitating the return of UNDOF to full operations on the Bravo side. It is crucial that the parties provide all necessary support to allow the full utilization of the Qunaytirah crossing by UNDOF in line with established procedures. It is important that UNDOF be able to carry out its operations without facing any administrative obstacles. This is becoming even more important as UNDOF increases its operations on the Bravo side to facilitate effective and efficient mandate implementation.

30. The continued commitment of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and their continued 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 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 is able to implement its mandate fully, including through inspections on the Bravo side, conditions permitting.

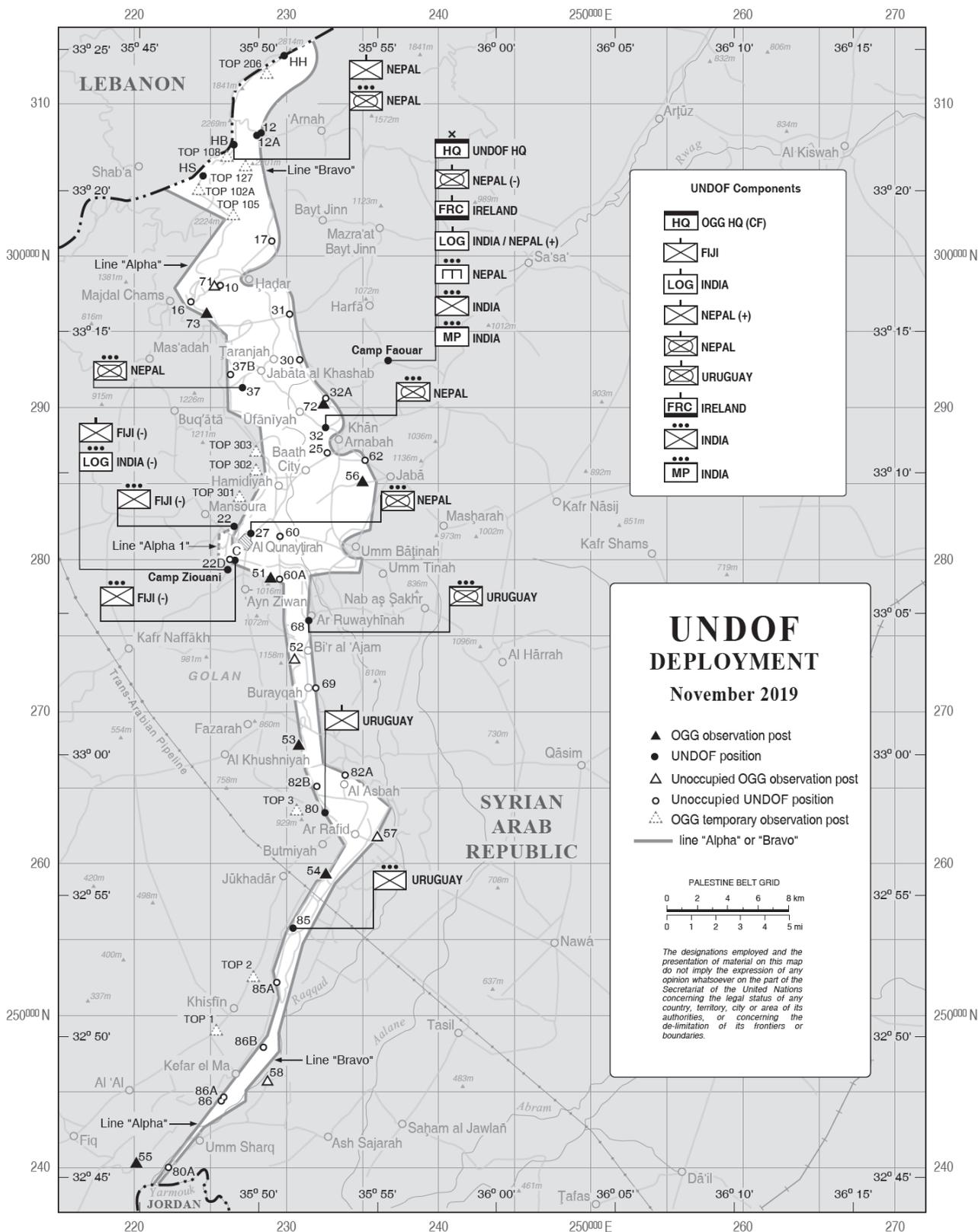
31. It is equally important that the Security Council continue to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate in a safe and secure manner and is allowed to operate freely in accordance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The support of the parties in facilitating the clearance by UNDOF of mines, unexploded ordnance and explosive

remnants of war in its area of operations 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.

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

33. 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 30 June 2020. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel also has expressed its agreement.

34. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to Major General Shivaram Kharel, who ended his tenure as the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNDOF on 24 October. I also wish to express my appreciation to all military and civilian personnel of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan, 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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