



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 to 20 November 2021, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2581 \(2021\)](#).

II. Situation in the area of operations and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was generally maintained, several violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974 notwithstanding. 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 [2581 \(2021\)](#).

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and ensure 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 line, as well as the crossing of the line by aircraft, drones and 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 activities that might lead to an escalation of the situation between them.

4. In the early hours of 25 October, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 observed a rocket being fired from the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) across the ceasefire line towards the area of separation. United Nations personnel at positions 32, 37 and Camp Faouar heard explosions from the direction of the area of separation. Open sources reported alleged Israeli air strikes on 25 October against locations in Qunaytirah Governate, including in Ba'th in the area of separation.

5. On 23 August, United Nations personnel at observation post 53 observed an Israel Defense Forces patrol cross the ceasefire line, fire shots from the area of separation and apprehend an individual west of the forests in Kudnah. The individual was brought through the Israeli technical fence to the Alpha side and detained for 33 minutes before being released to return to the Bravo side. On 19 November, UNDOF



personnel at observation post 71 observed 15 Israel Defense Forces personnel inside the area of separation in the northern part and subsequently lost sight of them. Approximately one and a half hours later, UNDOF personnel observed a convoy of Israel Defense Forces personnel at an Israeli technical fence gate south of observation post 73, as it subsequently moved through the gate. UNDOF engaged with the parties, seeking confirmation from the Israel Defense Forces, which stated that their personnel had carried out an activity but on the Alpha side, west of the ceasefire line, and liaising with the Syrian authorities.

6. The continued presence of Iron Dome systems, artillery systems and multi-launch rocket systems in the area of limitation on the Alpha side constitutes a military 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.

7. Sporadic heavy explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire persisted throughout the reporting period. UNDOF assessed that the military activity was the result of controlled detonations 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, also in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

8. During the reporting period, the Israel Defense Forces relayed to UNDOF their concern about the presence of five alleged positions of the Syrian armed forces southwest of Horaye in the area of separation in the proximity of the Israeli technical fence. UNDOF did not observe the presence of Syrian armed forces positions at those locations but upon investigation noticed the existence of rough stone structures, which it assessed could be used as windbreaks for livestock and shepherds or for tactical purposes. UNDOF conveyed the concern of the Israel Defense Forces to the Syrian authorities.

9. On 25 and 29 August, UNDOF patrols observed unidentified individuals in black attire with face coverings in the vicinity of United Nations position 86B, in the southern part of the area of separation, placing unidentified items approximately 20 metres from the Israeli technical fence. The individuals subsequently departed the location. UNDOF engaged with the Syrian authorities, who assessed that, on both occasions, the unidentified civilians had been hunters, who they said often placed nets close to the technical fence. UNDOF also engaged with the Israel Defense Forces to prevent any escalation of the situation between the parties owing to the proximity of the individuals to the Israeli technical fence.

10. On 30 August, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that, on 25 August, a foot patrol operating east of the technical fence on the Alpha side had been targeted by live fire from a location west of the village of Horaye in the area of separation. UNDOF investigated the incident and assessed that it could have been the result of stray shots fired by hunters who had been hunting in the area. UNDOF engaged with both parties to de-escalate the situation.

11. On 16 October, United Nations personnel at observation post 71 observed an unidentified item that they assessed to be suspicious and that had been placed in the vicinity of a radio relay station of the Syrian armed forces located west of Hadar in the area of separation. UNDOF engaged with the Syrian authorities on the matter, which resulted in the Syrian armed forces removing the equipment on 25 October.

12. On 3 November, a live round fired from an unknown location impacted around five metres from one of the military observers of an Observer Group Golan patrol at unoccupied United Nations position 17. UNDOF requested the Syrian authorities to

investigate the incident. On 7 October, Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that it was likely the live round had been a stray shot from hunters in the area.

13. During the reporting period, UNDOF continued to observe drones crossing the ceasefire line from the Alpha side to the Bravo side and flying above the area of separation. UNDOF was not in a position to determine the points of origin of the drones or to attribute responsibility to either party.

14. 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 closely liaised with the parties to de-escalate the situation, including during periods of heightened tension.

15. UNDOF continued to observe daily crossings of the ceasefire line by unidentified individuals from the Bravo side. It was assessed that the individuals were shepherds and farmers from the surrounding areas tending livestock, as well as hunters carrying hunting 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 the proximity of the ceasefire line. On a number of occasions during the reporting period, the Israel Defense Forces fired shots to discourage individuals from approaching the Israeli technical fence.

16. On 6 October, the Israel Defense Forces relayed to UNDOF that they had apprehended and detained a Syrian national for allegedly crossing the ceasefire line north-west of B'ir Ajam and that they had released the individual on 7 October at the location where they had apprehended him. On 5 November, the Israel Defense Forces confirmed to UNDOF reports from open sources that their soldiers had apprehended and detained two Syrian nationals that day. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had released the two individuals through the Israeli technical fence on the afternoon of 5 November.

17. On 13 October, the Israel Defense Forces blocked an UNDOF patrol from conducting a weekly static observation patrol at a temporary post in the northern part of the area of limitation on the Alpha side. The UNDOF personnel subsequently left the area.

18. In a letter dated 4 October addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me (S/2021/837), the Permanent Representative of Israel wrote to report "Syrian violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and breaches of Israeli sovereignty in the months from April to June 2021". The Permanent Representative also included "a comprehensive list of these violations" and requested that "the upcoming report reflect the situation on the ground accurately". Noting his country's "commitment to the successful implementation of the Agreement", the Permanent Representative stated that "Syrian violations of the Alpha line and armed presence in the area of separation occur daily".

19. In a letter dated 18 October addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me (S/2021/814), the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic conveyed information from his Government, stating that "on Saturday, 16 October 2021, Israeli occupying forces assassinated the Syrian freedom fighter Midhat Salih al-Salih, striking him down with Israeli gunfire from inside the occupied Golan as he returned to his home in Ayn al-Tinah in the liberated countryside of Qunaytirah Governorate, opposite the occupied town of Majdal Shams". The Permanent Representative stated that: "This crime is a flagrant violation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and United Nations resolutions concerning the

occupied Syrian Golan, most notably Security Council resolutions 497 (1981) and 338 (1973)".

20. During the reporting period, UNDOF assessed that, while the overall security situation on the Bravo side was relatively improved, the situation remained volatile. On 31 August, open sources reported the roadside detonation of an improvised explosive device, killing two civilians, in the vicinity of Jubbata al-Khashab in the area of separation. Open sources also reported other incidents in the area of separation, including a landmine explosion outside Hamadiyah al-Jadidah on 1 November; the detonation of explosive remnants of war, resulting in casualties in Qunaytirah, on 7 October; and the detonation of improvised explosive devices on two occasions on 16 and 17 October in Turunjah and Qunaytirah, respectively. In addition, open sources reported that an explosive device had been dismantled on 29 October by Syrian armed forces personnel. There were also media reports of a reduced frequency of kinetic activity in the southern part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side following the implementation of reconciliation agreements between the Syrian armed forces and non-State armed elements in the Dar'a Governorate, including towns and villages in the southern part of the area of limitation.

21. UNDOF continued to implement its mandate in the context of the measures adopted by the authorities of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to control the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. Those measures included limitations on the movement of United Nations personnel and their mandatory testing and quarantine after any crossing between the two sides and cross-border movement between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. In October, the Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that they had decided to return to the established procedures to facilitate the movement of UNDOF personnel and supplies through the Bravo gate at the Qunaytirah crossing. Since early March 2020, the Israel Defense Forces had been restricting the movement of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel through the Alpha gate at the Qunaytirah crossing, opening it on a case-by-case basis only, which 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. During the reporting period, two UNDOF personnel tested positive for COVID-19 and had since recovered. UNDOF continued to vaccinate its military and civilian personnel.

22. Authorities on both the Alpha and Bravo sides did not facilitate the resumption of UNDOF inspections, carried out through Observer Group Golan, of their military positions in the areas of limitation. The Israel Defense Forces continued to suspend inspections on the Alpha side, citing a need for newly agreed arrangements with UNDOF. The Syrian authorities suspended inspections after one was carried out on 9 August on the positions of Syrian armed forces in the northern part of the area of limitation. That had been the first inspection since 2014, when they had ceased owing to the deterioration in the security situation. The non-resumption of inspections on the Alpha side was cited as the reason for the suspension. UNDOF continued to engage with both parties with a view to resuming its inspections.

23. 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 11 barrels restored along the ceasefire line and 64 along the Bravo line. UNDOF continued to consult the parties on the barrel restoration activity.

24. Progress in the incremental return of UNDOF to the Bravo side continued, despite restrictions on construction owing to COVID-19 control measures. The construction of the new United Nations position 86B in the southern part of the area of separation was completed, with UNDOF occupying the position fully on 8 November. The reconstruction of United Nations observation post 57 was also completed and Observer Group Golan reoccupied the position on 1 November.

25. 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 nine 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 the continuous static observation and situational awareness. It was also tasked by UNDOF to conduct investigations of incidents within the UNDOF area of operations.

26. UNDOF monthly operational patrols continued on routes in the areas of separation and limitation, with 1,753 operational activities carried out in August, 1,724 in September and 1,675 in October. UNDOF patrol routes cover approximately 97 per cent of the area of separation and 70 per cent of the area of limitation. The deterioration in the security situation in the central part of the area of operations and the volatile security situation in the southern part continued to slow down progress in opening new patrol routes in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

27. The movement of UNDOF personnel through Lebanon had been restricted owing to measures related to COVID-19 and 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 during the period.

28. 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.

29. Late on 16 October, a mine within a marked minefield in the vicinity of a United Nations temporary observation post north-east of Buq'ata on the Alpha side exploded in proximity to an UNDOF static patrol. UNDOF assessed that the detonation had been caused by a bush fire the previous day.

30. 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 of its area of responsibility, 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 at the operational base at Camp Ziouani and headquarters at Camp Faouar.

31. As at 20 November, UNDOF comprised 1,142 troops, including 62 women peacekeepers. Troops were deployed from Bhutan (3), Czechia (3), Fiji (152), Ghana (6), India (195), Ireland (135), Nepal (435), the Netherlands (1) and Uruguay (212). In addition, 72 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 10 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

32. In its resolution 2581 (2021), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973). It decided to renew

the mandate of UNDOF for six months, until 31 December 2021, and requested me 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/76/194), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/24 on the Syrian Golan.

33. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict further reduces the prospects for their resumption and for progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. 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

34. The General Assembly, by its resolution 75/303, appropriated the amount of \$61.2 million for the maintenance of the mission for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

35. As at 9 November 2021, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNDOF amounted to \$11.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$1,434.0 million.

36. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 30 June 2021, as has reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

V. Observations

37. I am concerned about the continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement during the reporting period, at a particularly volatile time for the region, including breaches of the ceasefire that occurred on 25 October. 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. 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 continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, as well as the flying of drones across the ceasefire line, is also of concern. Those developments are in violation of the 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.

38. 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 tension.

39. 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 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 inspections on both sides. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

40. 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. I note with concern the firing of a live round, on 3 November, that impacted in proximity to a United Nations military observer. It is therefore of particular importance that the Security Council continue to bring its influence to bear 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 Agreement. It remains important that the parties continue to ensure and facilitate the deployment of all personnel to UNDOF for effective mandate implementation.

41. The continued support of Member States, and in particular the confidence of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF and their commitment to its mission, remain key to the Force's ability to carry out its mandate. I am grateful to the Governments of Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Ireland, Nepal, the Netherlands and Uruguay for their contributions and the commitment, resolve and consummate professionalism of their military personnel in UNDOF. I am also thankful to those Member States that have contributed military observers to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

42. 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 2022. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel also has expressed its agreement.

43. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Lieutenant General Ishwar Hamal, 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.

