



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 2021 to 20 February 2022 pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2613 \(2021\)](#).

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 despite 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 [2613 \(2021\)](#).

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 ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the 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 activities that might lead to an escalation of the situation between them.

4. On 30 November, United Nations personnel at observation posts 71 and 73 observed Israel Defense Forces soldiers patrolling in three main battle tanks and one armoured personnel carrier inside the area of separation north-west of Jubbata al Khashab.

5. Late on 6 December, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 observed machine gun tracer rounds being fired by unknown elements from the area of separation, approximately two kilometres south-east of the post, towards an Israel Defense Forces position on the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan). Subsequently, United Nations personnel observed machine gun firing from the Israel Defense Forces position towards a location in the area of separation from where the initial firing had originated. On 7 December, United Nations personnel at observation post 73 noticed



one Israel Defense Forces main battle tank fire into the area of separation. On the same day, United Nations personnel at observation posts 71 and 73 observed two Israel Defense Forces tanks crossing the ceasefire line from south-east of observation post 73 and later returning to the Alpha side. On 8 December, personnel at observation post 73 noticed three tanks and one armoured personnel carrier that had crossed the ceasefire line south-east of observation post 73 reaching one kilometre south-east of the observation post.

6. In the early hours of 12 December, United Nations personnel at position 80 observed 20 Israel Defense Forces personnel on foot crossing the ceasefire line about three kilometres north-west of the position and engaging with an individual in a vehicle. The Israel Defense Forces personnel subsequently returned to the Alpha side.

7. On three separate occasions, 24 and 28 December and 7 January, United Nations personnel at observation posts 53, 54 and 73, respectively, observed an Israel Defense Forces patrol firing four rounds of small arms shots into the area of separation to ward off shepherds in the vicinity of the Israeli technical fence.

8. Late on 5 January, Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that main battle tanks of the Israel Defense Forces had crossed the ceasefire line in the vicinity of Horaye. UNDOF did not observe the incident. United Nations personnel at observation posts 56 and 72 then heard three loud explosions south-west of Camp Faouar. Later, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF that they had destroyed stone structures that they alleged had been used by Syrian armed forces personnel in the area of separation and assessed were used for “surveillance”, constituting “provocative actions”. On 7 January, UNDOF personnel patrolling the general area of the explosions south-west of Horaye in the area of separation located six craters on the ground and scattered rocks, which they assessed to be the impact of heavy-calibre fire.

9. On 7 January, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF of the presence of two Syrian armed forces personnel south-west of Horaye in the vicinity of the Israeli technical fence. UNDOF personnel deployed to the location noticed three individuals in civilian attire. UNDOF engaged with the Syrian authorities to ensure that the individuals moved from the area.

10. On 9 February, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 observed 11 projectiles being fired in the vicinity of Khan Arnabah in the area of limitation on the Bravo side, with five of them exploding in mid-air. While UNDOF was not able to ascertain the exact points of origin or the impact of the projectiles, it assessed that, based on the trajectory of the projectiles, they could have originated from the Bravo side, with some of them impacting locations inside the area of separation.

11. In a letter dated 9 February addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me (S/2022/102), the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic conveyed information from his Government, stating that Israel had “launched a two-pronged aerial attack against the environs of Damascus, firing salvos of missiles at approximately 0056 hours Syrian time from a point south-east of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, and surface-to-surface missiles from the occupied Syrian Golan at approximately 0110 hours Syrian time. One soldier was killed and another five were injured in the attack, which also caused material losses.”

12. On 17 February, the Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that a Syrian national had been apprehended by Israel Defense Forces personnel from west of Hadar village in the area of separation and taken to the Alpha side. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNDOF on 18 February that they had released the individual early that day at the same location at which they had apprehended him after he allegedly crossed the ceasefire line.

13. On 24 November, United Nations personnel observed two drones flying from the Bravo side cross the ceasefire line. On three separate occasions, 29 November and 25 and 27 December, United Nations personnel noticed drones flying from the Alpha side across the ceasefire line and over the area of separation. United Nations personnel also observed, on five separate occasions in December, January and February, drones flying over the area of separation. UNDOF was unable to determine the points of origin of the drones.

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 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, some of whom were armed, staffing several checkpoints within the area of separation, in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

15. 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 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 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.

17. In a letter dated 4 January addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me (S/2022/9), the Permanent Representative of Israel relayed information on “Syrian violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces of 1974 and breaches of Israeli sovereignty in the months from July to September 2021.” He stated that “Syrian violations of the Alpha line and armed presence in the area of separation occur daily” and that “Israel is fully committed to implementing the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and all relevant Security Council resolutions”.

18. 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 has been coordinating 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 shots.

19. On 24 November, an UNDOF patrol observed a gathering of at least 200 people, with some in military attire and armed, in the vicinity of unoccupied United Nations position 16, which is located close to the ceasefire line. Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that it was a “remembrance gathering” for Midhat Salih al-Salih. In a letter dated 18 October 2021 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me (S/2021/814), the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic had

conveyed information from his Government stating that “on Saturday, 16 October 2021, Israeli occupying forces assassinated the Syrian freedom fighter Midhat Salih al-Salih”. At about the time of the gathering, UNDOF personnel noticed another gathering, in proximity to the ceasefire line in the vicinity of Majdal Shams on the Alpha side, also commemorating the death of Midhat Salih al-Salih.

20. UNDOF assessed that the security situation on the Bravo side remained volatile, with security incidents occurring in locations in the area of limitation in Dar‘a Governate. Open sources reported the detonation of an improvised explosive device in Naba al Sakher on 23 November and on the road between Nawa and Shaykh Sa‘d in the area of limitation on 29 November. Open sources also reported an explosion on 17 February of an improvised explosive device planted by unidentified elements on the road between Shajarah and Hayt at the same time that a Syrian armed forces officer was travelling along the road.

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. The measures continued to include limitations on the movement of United Nations personnel, as well as their mandatory testing and quarantine after any crossing between the two sides and cross-border movement between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. UNDOF continued to vaccinate its military and civilian personnel. In January, UNDOF experienced a COVID-19 outbreak at the mission, which was contained. During the reporting period, 21 UNDOF personnel tested positive for COVID-19 and have since recovered.

22. In October, the Syrian authorities informed UNDOF that they had decided to return to the procedures established to facilitate the movement of Force 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.

23. 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 COVID-19 and a need for newly agreed arrangements with UNDOF. The Syrian authorities continued to suspend inspections on the Bravo side after one was carried out on 9 August 2021 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 of 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.

24. UNDOF continued to engage with the Israel Defense Forces with a view to addressing restrictions on movement and access from the Alpha side through the Israeli technical fence to United Nations observation posts in the area of separation.

25. 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 27 barrels restored along the ceasefire line and 84 along the Bravo line. UNDOF continued to consult the parties on the barrel restoration activity.

26. Progress in the incremental return of UNDOF to the Bravo side continued despite restrictions on construction owing to COVID-19 control measures. On 16 December, UNDOF completed the clearance of unoccupied Observer Group Golan observation post 58. The refurbishment of the post is continuing, with its reoccupation by Observer Group Golan military observers scheduled for June 2022.

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 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 continuous static observation and situational awareness. The military observers are also tasked to carry out investigations of incidents within the UNDOF area of operations.

28. UNDOF monthly operational patrols continued on routes in the areas of separation and limitation, with 1,422 operational activities carried out in November, 1,518 in December and 1,435 in January. UNDOF patrol routes cover approximately 97 per cent of the area of separation and 70 per cent of the area of limitation. The security situation in the central part of the area of operations and 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.

29. The movement of UNDOF personnel through Lebanon has 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, with intermittent closures owing to inclement weather.

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 a probable threat from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups.

31. 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 conducting regular rehearsals, exercises and training for identified contingencies. Risk mitigation measures, including force protection measures, continued to be developed at positions and observation posts and at 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 18 February, UNDOF comprised 1,120 troops, including 75 women peacekeepers. Troops were deployed from Bhutan (3), Czechia (4), Fiji (149), Ghana (6), India (199), Ireland (133), Nepal (414), the Netherlands (1) and Uruguay (212). In addition, 71 military observers from Observer Group Golan, including 11 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

34. In its resolution 2613 (2021), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to implement immediately its resolution 338 (1973), decided to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a period of six months, until 30 June 2022, 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/76/194), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/24 on the Syrian Golan.

35. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks, in December 2008, no negotiations have been held 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 by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. Observations

36. 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, with breaches of the ceasefire, including those that occurred on 6 December and 5 January, as well as the incident on 9 February, which also posed a risk to United Nations personnel. 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. The firing incident on 6 December from the Bravo side across the ceasefire line is also of concern. 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 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.

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 and undermine stability in the area. The continued liaison by UNDOF with the parties has contributed to de-escalation during times of heightened tension.

38. 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.

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. 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 also remains important that the parties 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 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 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, 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.

Map

