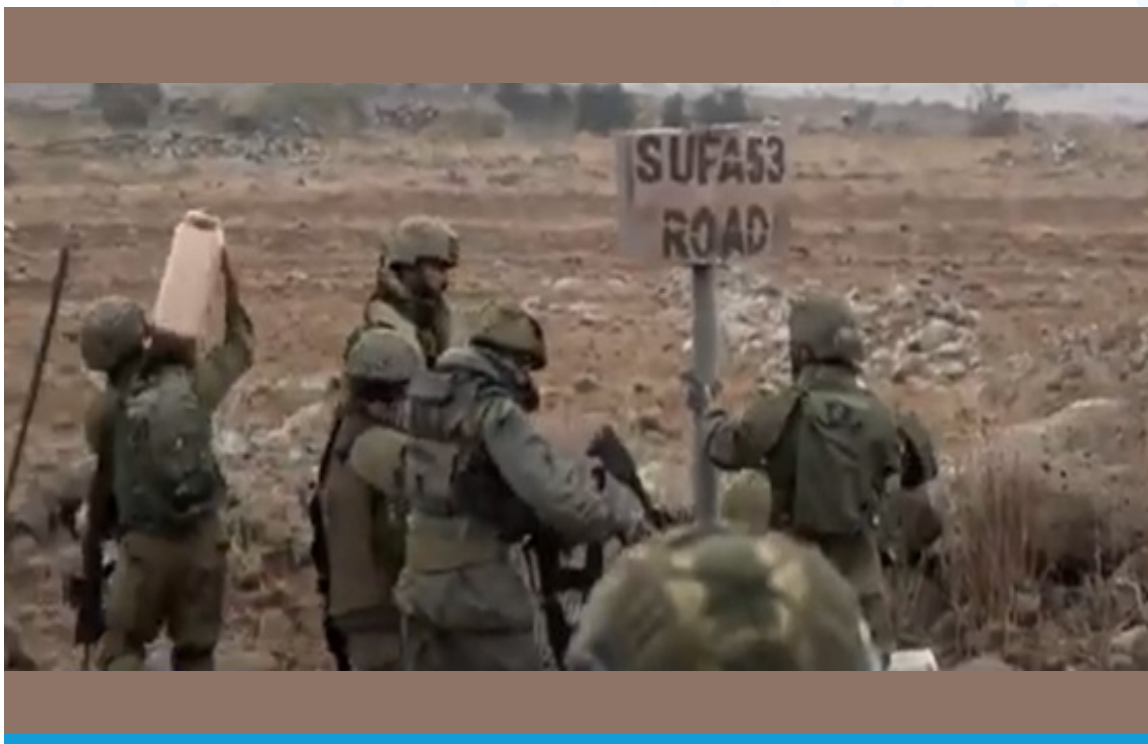


## SNHR Condemns Israeli Occupation of Syrian Lands in Quneitra in Syrian Golan Since September 15, 2024



**Tuesday 15 October 2024**

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyzes in Syria.

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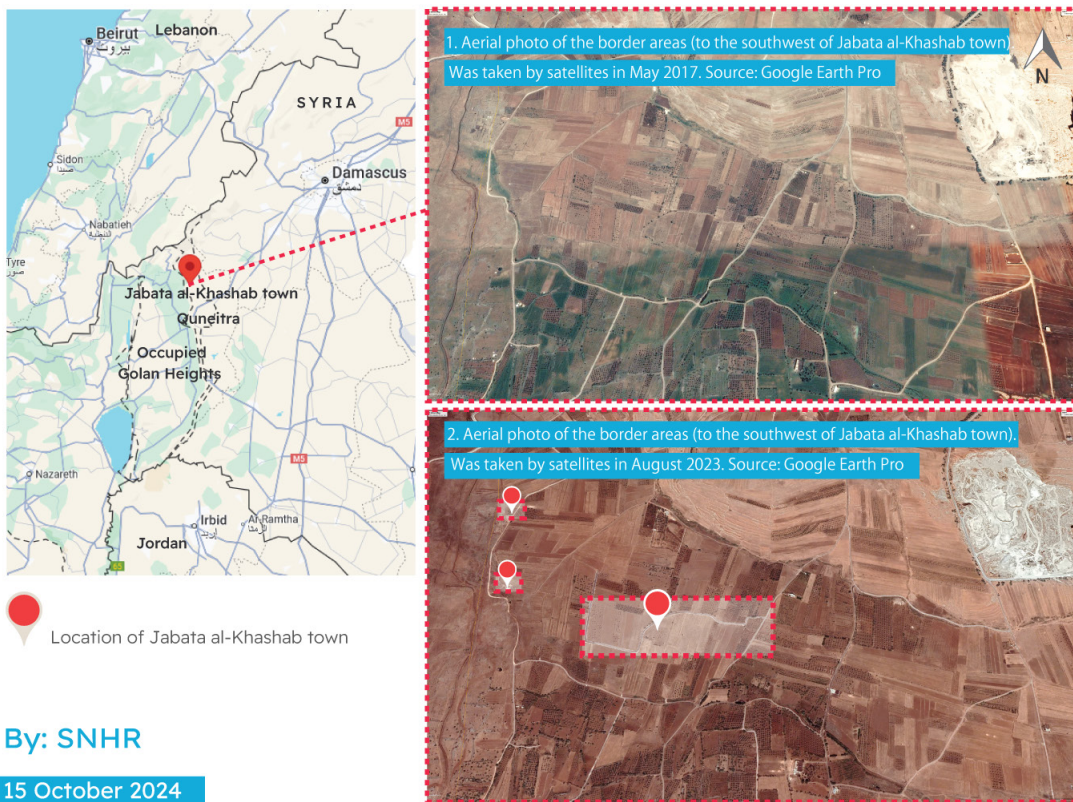


## I. Israel Has been Advancing Into Syrian Lands Since September 15, 2024, Building A ‘Security Fence’ Around Borders

On Sunday, September 15, 2024, Israeli forces accompanied by tanks, bulldozers, and excavation equipment advanced 200 meters into Syrian territory to the east of the 1974’s United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) disengagement line to the west of the town of Jabata al-Khashab in Quneitra, in the occupied Syrian Golan. There, they began bulldozing agricultural land, digging trenches, and constructing earth berms and trenches in a location west of the town of Jabata al-Khashab, beneath one of the Israeli observation posts in the al-Shahar district, on Syrian land east of the UNDOF line and along the ‘Sufa 53’ road, which Israel also constructed within Syrian territory in 2022. They also established monitoring positions, fortified by earth berms and trenches as deep as 5-7 meters, each a kilometer from the other.

On October 11, 2024, Israeli forces, backed by armored vehicles equipped with machine guns and dozer blades, bulldozed agricultural lands near Koudna town by the al-Ahmar al-Gharbi hill in southern rural Quneitra.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by an Israeli announcement of establishing what they called a ‘security fence’ on the border with Syria.

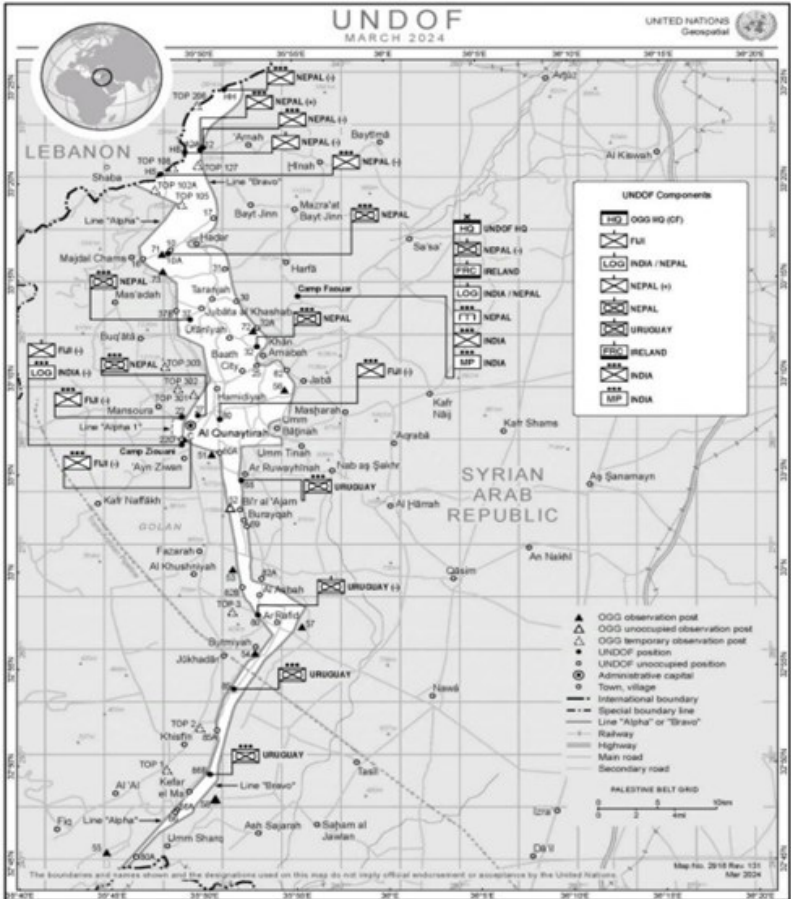
Satellite imagery of the border areas to the west of Jabata al-Khashab town:



1. The Syrian regime, through the Governor of Quneitra Governorate, denied any incursion by Israeli forces. Following his visit to Koudna town, the governor denied any infiltration by Israeli forces, claiming that what has been circulated on social media is false, and is simply part of a media war, [according to the Syrian Arab News Agency \(SANA\)](#).

With that, Israeli occupation forces are establishing themselves to the east of the 1974 UNDOF disengagement line within Syrian territory, violating the disengagement agreement signed between Syria and Israel on May 31, 1974. This agreement was concluded in compliance with UN Security Council resolution 338, issued on October 22, 1973, under the supervision of the UN, the United States, and the Soviet Union. It stipulates the creation of the UNDOF line, with Syrian territory to the east of it and Israel to the west. The agreement also includes a demilitarized zone, where UNDOF peacekeeping forces, established under UN Security Council resolution 350 of 1974, are deployed. Their role is to supervise the implementation of the disengagement agreement between Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan, ensuring that neither side deploys military forces or heavy equipment in the area. It is worth noting that the mandate of the UNDOF forces in the occupied Syrian Golan is extended periodically through Security Council resolutions, with the latest being [resolution 2737 issued on June 27, 2024](#), which extends the mandate until December 31, 2024. The resolution also called on all other groups, aside from UNDOF, to vacate all UN sites and return vehicles, weapons, and equipment belonging to the peacekeeping forces.<sup>2</sup>

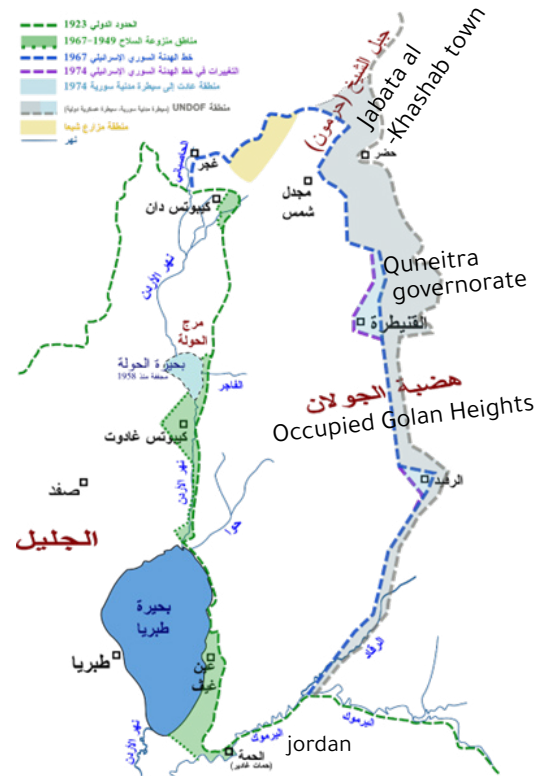
The most recent map showing the distribution of UNDOF forces in the disengagement zone in the Syrian Golan as of May 2024



2. As of May 14, 2024, the UNDOF was composed of 1,139 soldiers, from Argentina (1), Australia (1), Uruguay (213), Ireland (4), Bhutan (4), Czechia (3), Cuba (1), Zambia (3), Ghana (5), Fiji (149), Kazakhstan (139), Nepal (415), and India (201).

### Map outlining the Agreement on Disengagement between Israel and Syria that was signed in 1974

The disengagement agreement also provided for the separation of military forces between Syria and Israel by drawing two lines along the Golan Heights, forming the 'Bravo' zone. This is a demilitarized buffer zone where a UN force is stationed to monitor the separation of forces on both sides. The zone varies in width, reaching up to about 7 kilometers at its widest point and narrowing to 200 meters at its narrowest, covering an area of 250 square kilometers. It is divided into three sections, located east and northeast of Lake Tiberias.



Israel's ongoing infringement of Syrian territory since September 15, 2024, was not the first of its kind. Previously, in 2022, Israeli forces advanced into Syrian territory east of the UNDOF line, bulldozing agricultural lands belonging to residents of Syrian border villages like Jabata al-Khashab and al-Hurriya in northern Quneitra. There, Israel constructed a road named 'Sufa 53', which cuts through Syrian territory in some places, reaching up to two kilometers deep. This is part of an Israeli plan to construct a road that extends from the foothills of Mount Hermon, west of the town of Ein al-Tina in the far north of Quneitra, passing the vicinities of Jabata al-Khashab and reaching the southernmost part of Quneitra. Should this happen, this road would be 70 kilometers long. The construction of 'Sufa 53' aligns with Israeli plans to occupy more Syrian territory, expand its influence, and annex these areas in the future.

Not only did Israeli forces seize Syrian land at that time, but they also arrested Syrian citizens from areas that were supposed to be under the control of the Syrian regime, between the 1974 UNDOF line and the 'Sufa 53' road. The Syrian regime, however, turned a blind eye to all these violations.

It is worth noting that Israeli forces have been encroaching on Syrian land since 1967 by occupying the Golan Heights. On December 14, 1981, Israel unilaterally declared the annexation of the Golan, a decision condemned by UN Security Council resolution 497, which unanimously and explicitly declared the annexation "null, void, and without international legal effect."

3. B. The military forces of Israel and Syria will be separated in accordance with the following principles:
  - All Israeli military forces will be west of the line designated as Line A on the map attached hereto, except in the Quneitra area, where they will be west of Line A-1.
  - All territory east of Line A will be under Syrian administration, and Syrian civilians will return to this territory.
  - The area between Line A and the line designated as Line B on the attached map will be an area of separation. In this area will be stationed the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force established in accordance with the accompanying protocol.
  - All Syrian military forces will be east of the line designated as Line B on the attached map.
  - There will be two equal areas of limitation in armament and forces, one west of Line A and one east of Line B as agreed upon.
  - Air Forces of the two sides will be permitted to operate up to their respective lines without interference from the other side.
- C. In the area between Line A and Line A-1 on the attached map there shall be no military forces.

Text taken from:

Office of the Historian. Syrian-Israeli Disengagement Agreement. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v26/d88>

(Accessed on October 8, 2024)



The total area of the Syrian Golan is 1,860 square kilometers, constituting about one percent of Syria's total land area. During the war Israel waged in June 1967 against neighboring Arab countries, it occupied approximately 1,260 square kilometers of the Syrian Golan, which represents about two-thirds of that region's total area. In 1974, around 60 square kilometers were returned to Syrian sovereignty under the disengagement agreement following the October 1973 war, leaving around 1,200 square kilometers still under Israeli control.

## II. The Syrian Regime Has Turned the Lands of Syria into a Theatre for Iranian Militias

The Syrian regime, through its Iranian ally, brought in dozens of Iranian militia groups from various countries such as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen to Syrian territory to help crush the popular uprising against it in March 2011 and to support it in the internal armed conflict. These militias played a significant role in helping the regime stay in power. In 2014, [SNHR released an extensive report](#) detailing the presence of these militias in Syria. The presence of these militias, most prominently Hezbollah, provided the Israeli forces with a pretext to target their headquarters and weapons, deeming them a direct threat. The Syrian regime has facilitated the violation of Syrian sovereignty by hosting dozens of non-state groups. The Syrian regime has also allowed Israeli Air Force violations of Syrian air sovereignty that have become an almost daily occurrence, passing without any significant condemnation or attention.

## III. Conclusions & Recommendations

### Conclusions

1. The recent Israeli actions in Syrian territory, including establishing observation points and the 'Sufa 53' road east of the 1974 disengagement UNDOF line, violate international law, which prohibits the annexation or seizure of land by force or threat. These actions constitute an act of aggression and a threat to international peace and security.
2. Israeli actions are in direct conflict with the right of peoples to self-determination, the principle of state sovereignty, and the rules of international humanitarian law governing the duties of occupying forces and the rights of people in occupied territories.
3. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has affirmed the inadmissibility of territorial annexation resulting from war and the invalidity of measures taken by Israel in the occupied territories since 1967.
4. The Syrian regime's failure to fulfill its constitutional duty to preserve Syria's independence, unity, and territorial integrity may encourage Israel to seize and annex more Syrian land, exploiting the ongoing regional conflict and international indifference.

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4. The Syrian government did not issue any official statement or response to these Israeli incursions at the time.

## Recommendations

- The UNDOF must provide comprehensive reports detailing recent Israeli attacks on Syrian territory, the establishment of observation points, and the construction of the 'Sufa 53' road east of the disengagement line, as well as Israel's violations of the 1974 disengagement agreement.
- The UN and the UN Security Council must take up their responsibility in ending systematic Israeli attacks and enforcing relevant international resolutions, including UN Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 497 (1981), and UN General Assembly Resolutions 80/66 (2011) and 106/65 (2010), to end Israel's occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan.
- The international community must condemn Israel's flagrant violations of Syrian sovereignty and the 1974 disengagement agreement, recognizing these actions as serious breaches of the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions.
- Diplomatic efforts must be intensified to prevent further Israeli annexation of Syrian lands, with a focus on addressing the root causes of regional conflicts and instability.
- The Syrian regime must take steps to regain control over stolen Syrian territories and end its reliance on Iranian militias, which undermine Syria's sovereignty and provide justification for Israeli military actions.
- All stakeholders, including regional powers and the international community, must act toward a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement in Syria, in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2254. This political transition would help protect the rights of all Syrians and restore the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The transitional government should also request an advisory opinion from the ICJ regarding the legality of Israel's recent activities in Quneitra and the Syrian Golan.









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*No justice without accountability*

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