Syria: UN chief calls for urgent de-escalation by Israeli forces, withdrawal from Golan buffer zone

12 December 2024

Peace and Security The UN Secretary-General has expressed concern over the hundreds of Israeli airstrikes against targets in Syria since the overthrow of the Assad regime, calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the demilitarized zone in the strategically important Golan.

In a note to correspondents issued on Thursday, António Guterres said he was “deeply concerned by the recent and extensive violations of Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

Airstrikes, incursions

Since the de facto authorities of the HTS armed group took control of Damascus on Sunday, Israeli forces reportedly took over an abandoned Syrian military post overlooking the city in the Golan border region and other parts of the “areas of separation” between Israel and Syria.

The UN Disengagement Observer Force, UNDOF , was established by the Security Council in May 1974 to maintain the ceasefire between Israeli and Syrian forces in the mountainous Golan and supervise the areas of separation.

Israeli forces have not only moved into parts of the separation zone – they say on a temporary basis only until new security measures are put in place – but also conducted a “defensive” air campaign against weapons stockpiles, military facilities and assets such as airfields, as well as bombing naval vessels off the Syrian coast.

Urgent de-escalation

“The Secretary-General is particularly concerned over the hundreds of Israeli airstrikes on several locations in Syria,” the statement said, calling for urgent de-escalation “on all fronts, throughout Syria.”

Many areas of Syria are not under the control of HTS, with several armed groups holding territory in the south, the far north and the north-east, where Kurdish fighters have reportedly captured the town of Deir-ez-Zor. Designated terrorist group ISIL affiliates also maintain a foothold in central Syria, where US warplanes have been targeting them this week.

Golan agreements

The statement from the UN chief stressed that the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement “remains in force” and must be upheld, “including by ending all unauthorized presence in the area of separation and refraining from any action that would undermine the ceasefire and stability in Golan.”

Mr. Guterres also stated it is “imperative to support credible, orderly and inclusive transitional arrangements in Syria.”

Source: https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/12/1158131