



[Israel Violates 1974 Disengagement Agreement and Occupies Land in the Golan Heights](#)

Israel has drawn justifiable criticism this week for its bellicose response to the deposing of the Assad regime in Syria. Its provocative actions against the neighboring country have included violating the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and occupying land in a demilitarized Golan Heights buffer zone, encroaching on sovereign Syrian territory, and launching hundreds of airstrikes across Syria. Israel's recent attacks and land grabs have been condemned by the United Nations, as well as other governments in the region like Qatar, Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the land seizures a violation of the aforementioned 1974 agreement between Israel and Syria, while the Qatari Foreign Ministry stated that the incursion is "a dangerous development and a blatant attack on Syria's sovereignty and unity as well as a flagrant violation of international law" which will only lead the region to further violence and tension. The Israeli move was also denounced as yet another example of Israel's continued violation of the rules of international law and as a clear attempt to try and sabotage Syria's efforts to restore its stability, security, and territorial integrity. UN officials were quick to emphasize that "there should be no military forces or activities in the area of separation...and [that] Israel and Syria must continue to uphold the terms of that 1974 agreement, and preserve stability in the Golan."

Peace advocates have lamented that Israel's immediate reaction to what has transpired in Syria was to initiate a military campaign of mass aerial bombardment and to unlawfully encroach onto sovereign Syrian territory. To some, this signals that Israel has no political or diplomatic leverage over opposition forces in Syria, and that it instead seems intent on expanding and perpetuating hostilities in the region. Israel's incursion into the Golan Heights has, in recent days, even prompted France to call on Israel to respect neighboring Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to withdraw its forces from the Golan demilitarized zone between the two countries. In doing so, France cited the United Nations' statement on the matter and concurred with the assessment that Israel's actions were in violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement – which must be respected by its two signatories. The German Foreign Ministry was also critical of the move undertaken by Israel, warning it not to jeopardize the chances of a peaceful transition in Syria.

In addition to its widely-criticized land seizure in the Golan Heights, Israeli forces have been bombing sites across Syria since the ouster of Assad earlier this week. These attacks have been carried out against Syrian airbases, military assets, naval ships, security complexes, and government research centers. While Israel claims that the hundreds of airstrikes are aimed at defending itself and preventing Syrian military assets from getting into the hands of hostile entities, analysts have pointed out that there is no indication whatsoever of any Syrian threats against Israel. As one commentator put it, "no one is making a claim that [Syria] will start advancing towards the deconfliction lines or start attacking Israel." In actuality, what appears to really be spurring Israel's actions is a desire to try and hinder a functional post-Assad Syria before it can even take shape, particularly at a time like now when a great degree of uncertainty exists regarding how domestic circumstances in Syria will unfold moving forward.

The array of denunciation towards Israel's actions in the aftermath of the fall of the Assad regime is legitimate due to concerns that the moves could undermine efforts to achieve peace and stability in post-Assad Syria. Fair-minded observers have highlighted that the developments which have taken place in Syria should not be used by Israel or

any other regional actors to infringe on its territory or domestic affairs. Following decades of living under a brutal and oppressive regime, the people of Syria deserve the opportunity to freely mold the future of their country without external sabotage and meddling.