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## Separation or provocation?

### Israel resurrects the 'Golan Wall' project

As Israel resumes construction of a 'separation wall' along the occupied Golan Heights, questions remain about whether these walls actually deliver security or merely invite further resistance, as seen over other similar structures in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.



Photo Credit: The Cradle

Tel Aviv has recently resumed efforts on a long-dormant project announced back in 2011: the construction of a 'separation wall' along its border with Syria. The move seeks to replicate similar structures erected along the borders with Lebanon, Egypt, Gaza, and throughout the West Bank – a network of concrete meant to shield against perceived threats.

The walls, topped with barbed wire and reinforced with surveillance systems, are part of an ongoing attempt to establish secure boundaries around areas Israel occupies, particularly Syria's Golan Heights.

Two-thirds of the Golan were seized on 9 June 1967; later, in December 1981, Israel unilaterally moved to annex the territory, blatantly disregarding international norms and overtly violating United Nations Security Council Resolution 497.

The UN resolution emphasized that territorial acquisition by force is unacceptable under the UN Charter and international law, deeming Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights null and void.

All Israeli actions in the Golan, including the imposition of Israeli citizenship, settlement expansions, and attempts to breach the disengagement zone to construct a separation wall, are still today considered flagrant violations of international law.

### **Strategic importance of the Golan**

The Golan Heights hold significant strategic value for Tel Aviv, both militarily and economically. The elevated terrain provides a vantage point for monitoring activity deep within Syria, offering a strategic buffer against potential or perceived threats.

Moreover, the Golan is a rich source of water, with the region's catchment feeding into the Jordan River and contributing to Israel's largest freshwater reservoir, the Sea of Galilee. The fertile land is also used for agriculture, making it an area of economic and strategic importance. These factors contribute to Israel's determination to maintain control over the Golan Heights despite overwhelming international opposition.

Amid the occupation army's troubled ground operations in southern Lebanon, media reports have surfaced of Israeli forces carrying out raids into Syrian territory. These incursions, however, were primarily for advanced logistical work linked to building trenches and concrete barriers in the disengagement zone – the area marked by the 'Bravo' and 'Alpha' lines between liberated Syrian territories from 1973 and the occupied Golan.

On 11 November 2024, the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) warned that Israel's "severe violations" at the buffer zone "have the potential to increase tensions in the area." However, the UNDOF, which oversees this buffer zone under a 1974 agreement, lacks the power to deter such actions, limiting its role to monitoring violations. Satellite imagery published by the Associated Press (AP) confirmed extensive construction and road paving by the occupation army, extending for 7.5 kilometers along the Alpha Line, with armored vehicles and tanks providing security.

## **Ripping up the disengagement agreements**

The disengagement zone, established as part of the ceasefire arrangements following the 1973 October War, was intended to reduce tensions and create a buffer between Syrian and Israeli forces. Despite these intentions, Israel's recent actions indicate a desire to alter the status quo in the region, effectively undermining the spirit of the disengagement agreements.

The construction of trenches and barriers in this zone not only raises tensions but also elevates the state of war between Damascus and Tel Aviv, making any future negotiations even more challenging.

Israel's current measures appear as a continuation of a controversial project launched in 2011 after Palestinians and Syrians breached the fence at Majdal Shams. The plan faced significant backlash, with public discussion resurfacing around 2014-2015 during the Syrian war when foreign-backed extremist groups failed to establish control over areas along the ceasefire line.

Already unpopular among the Syrian Druze community in Quneitra that faces the occupied Golan, these Al-Qaeda-linked militants, who also received military, logistical, and even medical support from Israel, were seen as an 'advanced protection wall' for Israel. Their defeat marked the return of 'panic' in Israeli leadership over the restoration of Syrian control in the region.

The failure of extremist groups to maintain control in the southern region of Syria highlights Israel's reliance on proxies to secure its borders. With these militants no longer capable of serving as a buffer, Israel has turned back to physical barriers to provide a sense of security.

However, the reliance on 'separation walls' has proven ineffective in the past, as demonstrated by the repeated breaches by resistance operations from Gaza, where tunnels and other methods have rendered these physical barriers obsolete. The new wall project in the Golan is, therefore, as much about projecting strength and displaying control as it is about actual security.

## **A false sense of security**

Despite these efforts, the 2023 Operation Al-Aqsa Flood shattered the illusion of impenetrable security walls. The surprise attack last year exposed vulnerabilities in Israel's defense infrastructure, demonstrating plainly that physical barriers alone are insufficient to guarantee security.

Nonetheless, Israel continues to invest millions in building yet another wall along the Golan buffer zone, claiming it is meant to prevent infiltrations from Syrian territory. Unspoken, however, is its desire to create a media narrative suggesting it is advancing in Syria, capable of moving freely within Syrian land, abducting citizens, and securing strategic points in the disengagement zone.

The psychological aspect of Israel's wall construction cannot be ignored. For the occupation state, these barriers serve as a symbolic assertion of sovereignty and control, both to its own population and to the international community.

By building walls, Israel aims to convey a sense of impenetrable defense, even if the reality on the ground tells a different story. The separation walls are, in many ways, physical manifestations of Israel's fears – fears of demographic shifts, fears of territorial claims, and fears of resistance movements gaining momentum.

Israel sees the Golan Heights as critical to its strategic and demographic interests. The ongoing construction of barriers and walls – far from creating real security – can be read as an escalation, aiming to provoke and destabilize southern Syria while further fueling tensions.

### **Baiting Damascus into war**

Israeli officials openly express a desire for regional upheaval and have never ceased supporting militant projects that exacerbate tensions in Syria's southern regions. Just last month, Israeli politician and Knesset member Avigdor Lieberman warned:

**“If Syria continues to be used as a logistical base for our enemies, we will simply seize the Syrian part of Mount Hermon and will not relinquish it until further notice.”**

Recent Israeli incursions and construction efforts must be viewed in the broader context of escalating aggression against Syria – from severing logistical routes between Syria and Lebanon's Hezbollah to indiscriminately targeting civilian areas across Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and the coastal regions.

The construction of a separation wall in the disengagement zone is a continuation of efforts to provoke Syria into a direct confrontation despite the failure of previous wall projects to guarantee security.

The broader geopolitical implications of these actions cannot be overlooked. By entrenching its presence in the Golan and escalating tensions with Syria, Israel is effectively sending a message to Damascus's allies in the region's Resistance Axis about its willingness to take unilateral action to secure its interests.

## **Meeting resistance**

The ‘Golan Wall,’ therefore, represents not just a physical barrier but a political statement – one that risks drawing West Asia into deeper conflict.

The key question remains: what is the feasibility of yet another wall? Will this new barrier succeed where others failed – in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon?

The pattern of Israel's expansionist tactics and its disregard for international law only raise doubts about whether these measures will truly enhance its security. Could the latest push for a Golan Wall lead Israel into an unwanted confrontation, forcing a reckoning with West Asia's formidable Axis of Resistance forces whose capabilities and plans Tel Aviv has yet to fully understand?

And if the Golan Wall is part of a broader scheme to reshape the region to benefit Israeli and US interests, will Syria and its allies allow this project to materialize?

For Damascus and other members of the Resistance Axis, the challenge will be how to respond to this provocation without falling into the trap of direct confrontation – an outcome that the US-backed Israeli army may be seeking to justify Tel Aviv's ongoing occupation and expansionist policies.

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