

CEASEFIRE VERIFICATION AND MONITORING

DEFINITION

Ceasefire verification and monitoring are two closely related, but clearly distinct tasks. Both can play an important role in the ceasefire implementation process.

Ceasefire verification refers specifically to the technical assessment of the conflict party's compliance with some specific terms in the ceasefire agreement.

- This involves a small team of normally military personnel, who are selected because of their technical expertise, who investigate, assess or verify whether conflict parties have undertaken their activities set out in the ceasefire agreement. This usually involves the verification of very specific tasks, such as the redeployment of heavy weapons, air base lockdowns and troop redeployments.

Ceasefire monitoring is a much broader process that involves the general observation of compliance or behavior that relates to the ceasefire.

- This involves putting eyes and ears on the ground to observe and report back on incidents that take place following a ceasefire agreement. This can involve reporting back on the party's compliance with the general commitment to stop hostilities, but also covers wider commitments that might be included in a ceasefire agreement, such as the commitment to

refrain from negative propaganda, legal reforms, respecting human rights, and restoring access to services like the internet. This often involves a large monitoring force, that can come from the conflict parties, international actors, civil society and civilians from the conflict-affected communities.

Key: verification and monitoring processes involve the parties beginning to take joint responsibility for their security and putting in place a method of managing the inevitable violations that will occur as a ceasefire is implemented.

WHY VERIFY AND MONITOR?

Ceasefire monitoring and verification seeks to provide accurate, reliable, and timely information about ceasefire compliance. In doing so, it can perform four important functions.

- **Firstly**, ceasefire verification and monitoring can help to rectify ceasefire violations and restore compliance. All ceasefires are violated. The challenge for those attempting to implement a ceasefire is how to respond to these incidents in such a way as to keep the process from collapsing.
- **Secondly**, ceasefire verification and monitoring can help to build trust between the parties. They create structures for conflict parties to work together, jointly taking responsibility for responding to investigating compliance, responding to violations, and managing incidents based on mutually agreed procedures.
- **Thirdly**, monitoring can also provide a mechanism to enhance civilian engagement in the peace process. Civilians – who bear the most significant costs arising from conflict violence – have traditionally been excluded from parts of the process pertaining to security and military matters. As a result, ceasefire processes have often overlooked those issues that are important to

the local population but not recognised or prioritized by armed groups or international actors.

- **Finally**, ceasefire monitoring is also a tool used to help contain conflict where the conflict parties are not yet ready to move towards peace but where there is a desire from internal or external actors to limit the spread or escalation of violence.

SHOULD ALL CEASEFIRES BE MONITORED?

No. Monitoring is not appropriate for all ceasefire arrangements.

- If conflict parties lack the willingness to commit to the peace process, monitoring itself is unlikely to prevent a return to violence or to build trust between the parties.
- When a ceasefire monitoring mission is rushed, imposed, or quickly breaks down, it can cause more harm than good, undermining the parties' confidence in a peace process, serving as systems of blame that harden conflictual relationships.
- A monitored ceasefire is not possible. Alternatives such as a phased approach could be considered, where dispute resolution and de-escalation can be initial objectives, and local community networks and civil society support implementation.

WHO SHOULD MONITOR CEASEFIRES?

The most appropriate composition of a monitoring force is shaped by the preferences of the actors involved, as well as various contextual factors, and to function effectively, monitoring should be developed by, or at the invitation of, the

conflict parties, who require a clear understanding of the commitments that they are signing up to.

ROLE OF THIRD PARTIES AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Despite the advantages associated with conflict parties taking ownership of their ceasefire, in many cases it is not possible for actors engaged in violent conflict to coordinate and collaborate on ceasefire monitoring without assistance.

- Conflict parties also tend to favor narrow agreements and limited monitoring arrangements that focus only on certain forms of military action, excluding a range of broader issues like civilian protection and humanitarian access
- There is then often a need to counter-balance the conflict parties' tendency to limit involvement in monitoring with third parties who bring different resources and a greater appetite for a broader range of provisions.

Trusted international actors are often asked to monitor and support a ceasefire to *provide a level of third-party objectivity*.

Third Party Actors Include:

- The UN and other international actors
- Regional bodies such as the African Union and the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe

Limitations of Third Party Actors:

- Operating without the active participation of the conflict parties, they can have the unintended effect of undermining the conflict parties' responsibility

for the ceasefire, reducing the effectiveness of monitoring, and potentially threatening the safety of monitors.

- International monitoring missions are also expensive and are more likely to be withdrawn if monitors get caught up in the violence, reducing the flow of information at the point it is most needed.
- While international missions might benefit from higher levels of impartiality, this can be challenging to maintain when the conflict party's involvement in atrocities is uneven. This is particularly the case when an international monitor is also the mediator, which creates a conflict of interest around reporting violations that might undermine the process.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology can help to improve the coverage of a monitoring mission as 24-hour presence is rarely feasible or cost-effective, and maintaining a presence during intense periods of violence is dangerous and challenging.

The types of technologies in use are extensive and vary across contexts.

- They include cameras, smartphones and apps, videos and photos, acoustic sensors, UAVs or drones, apps that detect sentiment from social media, and satellite imagery.

Pros:

- Technology improves the reach of monitoring operations and the quality of information from conflict areas by providing more accurate real-time information, for example, through satellites and UAVs.

- Monitoring technology can often be deployed faster and more safely than humans. It also allows for more structured and systematic analysis of ceasefire violations, to gain a deeper understanding of who is often involved where, and what patterns or trends there are across time.
- Technology can also help in the communication around monitoring missions, helping to share the scope of the mandate, in particular key details around prohibited actions, and how to report violations. This is especially important in contested spaces where the monitors are likely to be operating.
- Technology can also promote inclusion and transparency, supporting war-affected communities to have more timely information, and actively contribute to monitoring compliance, for example, through app-based incident logging. It can also be used to create more informal collaboration in real time.

Drawbacks:

- An overemphasis on technology can reduce the quality of processes and ownership of outcomes.
- An over reliance on technology can also weaken the confidence-building function of monitoring operations, by reducing the opportunities for the parties to act jointly and collaboratively.
- Technology can also create problems by undermining the quality of information, for example through the use of deep fakes, and create an abundance of data that is challenging to assess.