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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 August 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Israel Use of Mercenaries in Iran

In line with the mandate of the Working Group (WG) on Mercenaries to monitor and investigate the use of mercenaries, mercenary-related activities, and private military and security companies and their impact on human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination, we draw the attention of the Working Group to the grave violations of human rights caused by the terrorist activities of the foreign-backed groups who committed numerous cases of assassinations, including mass killings in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) as part of the Israel aggression against our country in June 2025 which was aiming at what Israel and its allies described as "regime change."

On June 15th – on the third day of the aggression, Benjamin Netanyahu officially revealed his intention of the attacks against Iran telling the Fox News that Israel's operation “could certainly” result in regime change in Iran, as the government is very weak now [1] .

The Attacks

We draw the attention of the Working Group to the bitter realities that civilian victims of the aggression - back by the criminal operations of mercenaries - include children, women, school students, university professors and students, athletes, medical personnel, Red Crescent relief workers, journalists and media workers, scientists and physicians.

Consequently, Iran has identified various networks of mercenaries, arrested hundreds of members with connections to other governments. The arrests led to discovery of a large number of drones, in addition to munitions including curved grenade launchers, rifle grenade launchers, Kalashnikov rifles, combat grenades, cartridges, RPG-7s and bullets, hand grenades with explosive fuses, handguns, various cartridges for machine guns and belt-mounted weapons. Also, dozens of shipments of war weapons such as Kalashnikov rifles, in addition to large shipments of semi-heavy explosive weapons and ammunition machine guns have been discovered in the fight against mercenaries.[2]

The Aggression and International Law

- The International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries (1989), reinforced by UN Mercenary Convention (2001), prohibit use of mercenaries and urge states to prevent mercenary activities.

The 1989 Convention expands the definition of mercenaries to include individuals participating in overthrowing governments [3] or undermining constitutional order; prohibits states from recruiting, financing, or employing mercenaries and criminalizes mercenary activities under domestic law.

- Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other state;

- Provisions of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law concerning the protection of civilian life, including the common Article 3 to all four Geneva Conventions and Articles 48 and 51 of Additional Protocol I (1977) emphasize on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts;

- The international legal framework that prohibit extrajudicial killings, including Rule 89 of customary IHL (Rule 89 ICRC study on IHL)[4] that prohibits the carrying out of executions without regular judicial proceedings that afford all essential judicial guarantees;

- Relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 1373 (2001), obligate Member States to suppress support for terrorism and mercenary-related violence;

- Article 8bis of the Rome Statute defines aggression as the use of armed force by a state against another's sovereignty without UN authorization. Israel's unilateral strikes meet this definition.

Recommendations:

Mercenary operations and crimes are well documented in Iran during the so called "concerted" Israel aggression against Iran which constituted numerous mercenary terrorist activities against Iranian scientists, senior military officials and Iranian civilians including women and children.

Mercenary activities are heavily restricted under international law and treaties aim to curb their use due to risks of escalating conflicts and human rights abuses. In addition, the activities of mercenaries and all human rights violations committed by such individuals fall into the mandate of the WG, therefore we call on the WG Experts to:

- Initiate immediate probe into the activities of mercenaries, recruited by various governments, inside Iran, during and after the Israel-Us June aggression;
- Include the relevant findings in the reports submitting to the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly;
- Engage with the UN mandates on Iran for coordinated action and access to more information on the deadly human rights impacts of the aggression;
- Provide information to the UN to help bring the perpetrators of these mercenary crimes to justice.

1)<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/16/middleeast/israel-operation-iran-regime-change-netanyahu-intl>

2)<https://shorturl.at/HeBB2>

3)Ibid.

4)<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule89>