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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

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.

[02 August 2025]

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

Israel invasion of Iran

Introduction

On 13 June 2025, Israel launched a full-scale invasion against Iran, marking the start of a 12-day war that also drew in the United States. Israeli forces carried out strikes on Iranian territory targeting Iranian commanders, nuclear facilities, military sites, and even civilian infrastructure. Israeli strikes hit targets across 18 of Iran's 31 provinces, causing widespread destruction, and tens of thousands of Iranian civilians were displaced. We note with grave concern that the actions of Israel and the subsequent involvement of the U.S. government flagrantly violated fundamental principles of international law, inflicting immense suffering on civilians.

Unlawful Use of Force

The Israeli attack on Iran constituted a clear act of aggression and a violation of *jus ad bellum*. It is undisputed that Israel was the first to resort to armed force on 13 June 2025 in the absence of any prior armed attack by Iran. This use of force by Israel against Iran was a flagrant violation under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any Member State of the UN. A group of independent UN experts unequivocally condemned Israel's actions as "a blatant act of aggression and a violation of *jus cogens* norms". (1) They stressed that Article 2(4) admits no justification for what Israel called "preventive self-defense" against a potential nuclear threat. (2) Indeed, as the UN General Assembly has affirmed, "the first use of armed force by a State in contravention of the Charter shall constitute *prima facie* evidence of an act of aggression," and "no consideration of whatever nature... may serve as a justification for aggression". (3)

On 22 June 2025, the U.S. military overtly joined the conflict by deploying B-2 stealth bombers and cruise missiles to strike Iran's nuclear facilities at Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan. These U.S. strikes constitute another egregious violation of the UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force. The collective resort to force by Israel and the U.S. was widely denounced by the international community, including a joint statement by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the BRICS, the latter calling them a "blatant breach of international law".

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

Throughout the hostilities, serious violations of IHL were committed by the Israeli military, resulting in a horrific impact on Iranian civilians. We recall that in an international armed conflict, all parties are bound to respect the Geneva Conventions and customary IHL, which demand distinction between combatants and civilians, proportionality in attack, and precautions to spare civilian life. Yet the conduct of Israeli forces during this war exhibited a blatant disregard for these fundamental rules and constituted grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

Israeli airstrikes targeted densely populated urban areas across Iran, including Tehran. Residential neighborhoods were flattened, and preliminary counts indicate that up to 90% of fatalities were civilians. Reports confirmed that Israeli forces struck civilian scientists, media workers, and public officials many of whom were not directly involved in hostilities. For example, the IRIB headquarters was destroyed on June 16, resulting in blackouts and civilian casualties. Such attacks, especially on media infrastructure, violate the IHL principle of distinction, which prohibits targeting civilian objects and persons.

A particularly severe example was the bombing of Evin Prison in Tehran on 23 June. The strike occurred during daytime visiting hours, killing at least 80 civilians, including women, children, and staff. Amnesty International concluded that the prison was not a lawful military target and condemned the attack as a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions,

urging a war crimes investigation. This incident exemplifies the unlawfulness of directing attacks against protected civilian sites.

Further, Israeli forces targeted vital infrastructure and specially protected sites. Hospitals and healthcare centers suffered damage, and strikes on nuclear facilities at Natanz and Isfahan raised alarm over potential radioactive fallout.

UN experts described these acts as “flagrant violations” of international law, highlighting both the human cost and environmental risks. The cumulative impact of Israel’s conduct including the use of disproportionate force and attacks on protected sites demands full accountability under IHL. These actions are war crimes and must be subject to impartial investigation and legal redress.

International Human Rights Law (IHRL)

At the core of the recent hostilities lies a mass violation of the right to life, as protected by Article 6 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The cruel killing of more than 900 Iranians – most of them civilians – as a result of widespread bombing by Israeli forces constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of life.

The targeted killing of Iranian civilians, including scientists assassinated in their homes by drone strikes, exemplifies unlawful extrajudicial executions. Equally alarming was the reported attempted assassination of President of Iran during a high-level security meeting, an act that endangered many civilian officials and contravened both IHRL and IHL.

Israeli strikes severely damaged civilian infrastructure vital for survival including power stations, oil refineries, and communication networks. This destruction undermined civilians’ rights to health, an adequate standard of living, and dignity. The resulting displacement, deprivation, and trauma highlight the human rights crisis inflicted by the unlawful use of force. These acts must be condemned and those responsible held accountable under international law.

Recommendations

In the light of the above, we recommend:

- The Human Rights Council adopt a resolution condemning Israel’s attacks and U.S. involvement as violations of the UN Charter, IHL, and IHRL recognizing them as acts of aggression and grave breaches;
- The Human Rights Council establish or support an international fact-finding mission to investigate IHL and IHRL violations, document war crimes (e.g., Evin Prison attack), and report findings to the UNHRC;
- States to exercise universal jurisdiction to prosecute perpetrators of war crimes and explore referrals to the ICC or the creation of a special tribunal for the crime of aggression.
- UN General Assembly to create a compensation mechanism or trust fund for victims, ensuring Israel and the U.S. provide full reparations to affected civilians in line with international law;
- International community to recommit to the UN Charter, pursue diplomatic solutions, respect UNSC Resolution 2231, and ratify key IHL treaties such as the Additional Protocols to The Geneva Conventions;
- The UNHRC to hold special sessions and report findings to the UN Security Council and General Assembly for further action.

1) UN experts condemn Israeli attack on Iran and urge end to hostilities | OHCHR.

2) Ibid.

3) UNGA, Resolution 3314 (XXIX), Definition of Aggression, adopted on 14 December 1974, UN Doc. A/RES/3314(XXIX), Arts. 2, 5.