

**Mandates of the Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; the Special Rapporteur on the right to development; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences**

Ref.: AL ISR 16/2025  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

19 June 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Special Rapporteur on the right to development; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 57/7, 51/7, 55/19 and 50/7.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the military strikes conducted by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against the Islamic Republic of Iran since 13 June 2025. These continued strikes, which reportedly targeted Iranian nuclear facilities and military infrastructure across dozens of sites, raise grave questions about compliance with fundamental principles of international law, particularly the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights law.

According to the information received the following events took place:

On the early morning of 13 June 2025, the Israeli Air Force launched a series of coordinated and targeted airstrikes against multiple sites in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The targets reportedly included both military and dual-use infrastructure suspected of being connected to Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

The operation was characterized by:

- Strikes on the Natanz uranium enrichment facility, long considered central to Iran's nuclear program;
- Attacks on air defence installations and missile storage depots, especially in Isfahan and southern provinces;
- Bombardment of a military base operated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, believed to house drones and ballistic missile capabilities;
- Aerial targeting of command centers and scientific research buildings on the outskirts of Tehran, reportedly killing senior Iranian military officers and nuclear scientists.

In response to the attack, the Islamic Republic of Iran reportedly launched a ballistic-missile campaign against Israel, reportedly firing hundreds of missiles, many intercepted, but some civilian-populated areas, residential buildings near Tel Aviv, and other towns such as Bat Yam and Haifa.

While the full casualty toll remains unverified, the Israeli attacks have reportedly resulted in at least 224 deaths in Iran, most of them civilians, including women and children; extensive material destruction, including of buildings in residential areas; and a significant disruption of Iran's national security infrastructure. In turn, the Iranian missile attacks on Israel have reportedly resulted in at least 24 civilian's deaths and several seriously injured. Civil infrastructure, including hospitals and homes, have also been damaged or destroyed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly declared the operation a "preventive measure", citing alleged intelligence suggesting Iran was preparing to assemble a nuclear weapon in breach of international obligations. The Israeli Government stated that the operation was a response to an alleged "imminent and intolerable threat", which was not confirmed by any independent entity, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The timing of the strikes is gravely concerning, as they occurred amidst ongoing diplomatic efforts in Muscat, Oman, involving Iran, the United States, and European intermediaries aimed at reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or reaching a new interim nuclear agreement.

We would like to express our deep concern regarding this unilateral decision to undertake a military operation, which constitutes an act of aggression and a violation of the prohibition on the use of force, undermining the international UN-Charter based legal order and posing a severe threat to regional and international peace and security. We also note that the Israeli Government allegedly uses funds from Israel Bonds sourced globally especially in the United States as well as taxpayer money to finance its military activities all of which could be used to finance peace. We also express our concern that the ongoing attacks appear to constitute violations of human rights, including the right to life, health, housing, education, and development.

We also express our concern that the Israeli attack and Iranian missile response have impacted civilians, including in proximity to military targets. We are particularly concerned about compliance with international humanitarian law, especially the principles of distinction and proportionality.

The use of force against the territorial integrity of another state constitutes a violation of jus cogens, a peremptory norm of international law, and is explicitly prohibited under article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter. This principle is further reinforced by article 1(2) of the Charter, which affirms that one of the core purposes of the United Nations is to foster international relations based on "respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples." The right to self-determination is also a fundamental principle of international human rights law, as enshrined in article 1(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states that "all peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and

cultural development.”

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) outlines the criteria for statehood, including respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The Charter of the United Nations (1945) in its article 2(4) states that “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”.

Furthermore, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), also affirms the right of peoples to self-determination.

Moreover, this aggression will increase geopolitical tension in a region, where use of force is normalized as a tool of statecraft, rather than an exception constrained by international law. The broader implications of these developments extend beyond the Middle East. They challenge the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international human rights treaties, particularly the obligation of States to safeguard peace, to respect the sovereignty of other nations and to refrain from actions that could undermine global peace and stability. At a time when multilateral institutions are already under strain, illegal aggressions undermine the democratic international order based on the rule of law.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide the legal justification relied upon by Your Excellency’s Government for the use of force against Iran without Security Council authorization, including the basis of any serious and imminent threat posed by Iran;
3. Please provide an explanation of the measures taken to comply with the principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction under international humanitarian and human rights law;
4. Please provide information regarding measures taken to prevent and stop human rights violations including including the right to life, health, housing, education, and development and ensure accountability for any loss of civilian life;
5. Please provide the basis, if any, for taking actions that appear to undermine peace and security in the region in breach of the UN Charter and in turn

threaten the realisation of inclusive and sustainable development.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a copy of this letter has been also sent to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

George Katrougalos  
Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order

Surya Deva  
Special Rapporteur on the right to development

Mai Sato  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Reem Alsalem  
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

## **Annex**

### **Reference to international human rights law**

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the following provisions of international human rights law.

Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, establishing the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. The right to self-determination of peoples, which is central to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, is enshrined in article 1(2) of the United Nations Charter. This right is further protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which the United States ratified 8 June 1992, specifically in Article 1, which guarantees that all peoples have the right to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, which safeguards the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states in times of armed conflict. The principles established in these conventions are critical in maintaining peace and order in international relations and are binding on all states. The Hague Conventions further emphasize the protection of state sovereignty and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which sets out the criteria for statehood, including the requirement for respect for territorial integrity, is also relevant to the concerns raised.

Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which the United States have not signed nor ratified, though not legally binding, establishes foundational principles of international law that protect the sovereignty and political independence of states. Articles 21(3) and 28 of the UDHR emphasize the need for human rights to be universally protected, including the right of peoples to determine their political status without external interference. The UDHR underscores the importance of respecting the autonomy of nations and the self-determination of their peoples. The right to self-determination is a foundational principle of international law, enshrined not only in the ICCPR and ICESCR but also in various UN General Assembly resolutions, including the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (UNGA Resolution 1514 (XV), 1960).

The right to control one's own economic and social development is also safeguarded by the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), signed by the United States 05 October 1977, which further reinforces the obligations of states to respect the rights of peoples to freely determine their political, economic, and social systems. While the United States has not ratified the ICESCR, its provisions remain relevant in the broader context of international law and should inform the conduct of states in relation to their territories.

We would also like to refer your Excellency's Government to the relevant

provisions of the Declaration on the right to development (A/RES/41/128) that read in pertinent parts:

“Article 3.2. The realization of the right to development requires full respect for the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.”

“Article 7. All States should promote the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security...”