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Oral Statement

ITEM 1: Urgent Debate on 27 March 2026

Escalating armed conflict in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Middle East

UN Human Rights Council
61st session
23 February - 31 March 2026

Mr. President,

We reiterate our urgent call for all parties to protect civilians and adhere to international law in the context of rapidly escalating regional hostilities across the Middle East. Civilians must not be treated as pawns in political power plays.

Evidence gathered by Amnesty International indicates that the school in Minab was directly struck by US forces with guided weapons, pointing to a failure to take feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm in carrying out the attack, a violation of international humanitarian law. US authorities must ensure impartial, independent and transparent investigations. Where sufficient evidence exists, competent authorities should prosecute any person suspected of criminal responsibility.

In the aftermath of the attack, Iranian authorities have exploited the suffering of victims' families and surviving children for propaganda purposes.

In this conflict, Iranian forces have also carried out attacks against Israel and Gulf countries that have violated international humanitarian law and caused civilian harm, and Israeli forces have carried out unlawful attacks in Iran and Lebanon.

We reiterate our call for states not to use ongoing armed conflict to intensify their crackdown on peaceful dissent, deepen discrimination, and commit patterns of crimes under international law. In Iran, authorities threatened further mass killings of dissidents and protesters, amid an ongoing internet shutdown they imposed. Prisoners and individuals detained in security facilities, including the thousands of arbitrarily detained protesters and other dissidents, are endangered by strikes by the USA and Israel, and by the Iranian authorities, who continue to forcibly disappear, torture and arbitrarily execute prisoners as bombs fall.

We again call for this Council to insist that respect for international law and tackling impunity must be the centrepiece of any genuine political resolution, and that holistic approaches to investigations, condemnations and accountability efforts, driven by the gravity of the harms done, rather than politics, are far more likely to breathe life back into the international legal system than piecemeal or one-sided approaches. This Council must champion a comprehensive and sustained strategy leveraging all tools and mandates available, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, treaty bodies, and the Human Rights Council mandates and processes.