

# UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

## Background Guide

*Agenda: Deliberating upon the escalating United States Iran conflict and its implications for regional stability, nuclear proliferation, and global energy security*

# Points To Remember

## ***1. Procedure:***

The purpose of putting procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organised and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UNA USA Rules of Procedure. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of the agenda will be the main priority. So, delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding the procedure.

## ***2. Foreign Policy:***

Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

## ***3. Role of the Executive Board:***

The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of the debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stances on any issue. However, the Executive Board may put forward questions and/or ask for clarifications at all points in time to debate further and test participants.

## ***4. Nature of Source/Evidence:***

This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during the formal debate is acceptable from the following sources:

### ***United Nations:***

Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body are held as credible proof to support a claim or argument. Multilateral Organizations:

Documents from international organisations like OIC, NAFTA, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, the International Criminal Court, etc., may also be presented as credible sources of information.

### ***Government Reports:***

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State-Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country.

# Valid Evidence In the Committee

Evidence or proof from the following sources will be accepted as credible by the Executive Board:

- ***State-operated News Agencies:***

These reports can be used in support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used to support or against any country, but in that situation, they can be denied by any other country in the council.

Some examples are,

- I ) RIA Novosti (Russia)
- II ) IRNA (Iran)
- III ) BBC & Reuters (United Kingdom)
- IV ) Al Jazeera (Qatar)
- V ) Xinhua News Agency (PR China)

- ***Government Reports:***

These reports can be used in a similar way to the State-Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as credible information.

***Some examples are:***

1. Government Websites like the State Department of the United States of America or the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of various nations, like India or China
3. Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Reports
4. Multilateral Organizations like NATO

- ***United Nations Reports:*** All UN Reports are considered credible information or evidence

# Introduction of the Rules of Procedure

The committee will follow the idea of UNA-USA Rules of Procedure. While the Executive Board maintains these rules to ensure an organised and efficient debate, the primary focus remains on the agenda. Delegates are encouraged to participate freely and not let procedural hesitation restrict their statements.

## *Start of Committee*

- The Dias (Chairs) begins the session with a roll call.
- Delegates may respond with either "present" or "present and voting".
- The Dias will then ask to hear any points or motions from the floor.
- If there are no points or motions, the Dias will recognize the next speaker on the Speakers' List from the previous session.
- During the first committee session, a delegate must move to open the Speakers' List.
- The agenda must also be set during this first session (If there's more than one agenda)

## *The Speakers' List*

- The Speakers' List serves as the default format of the committee when no points or motions are on the floor.
- A country may only appear on the list once at any given time.
- Delegates can request to be added by raising their placard when the Dias asks, or by sending a written note to the Dias.
- The individual speaking time is established by the delegate who moves to open the Speakers' List, though another delegate may move to change this time later.
- If a delegate finishes their speech with time remaining, they must yield their time.
- A delegate may yield their time to the Dias (which ends the speech), to another delegate (which allocates the remaining time to them, though they cannot yield it further), or to questions (which allows for feedback from other delegates).
- If the Speakers' List is exhausted and no other delegates wish to be added, the committee moves immediately into voting procedure on any draft resolutions that have been introduced.

## *Moderated Caucus*

- A delegate may introduce a motion for a moderated caucus while the Speakers' List is open.
- This is a less formal debate format designed to discuss a specific subset of the topic.
- The motion must include a set topic, total duration, and individual speaking time, all of which will be voted on.

There is no set speaking order; each new speaker is chosen by the Dias after the previous speaker concludes.

- A delegate may not yield their time during a moderated caucus.

- If a delegate finishes early, the committee simply moves to the next speaker.

### ***Unmoderated Caucus***

- A delegate may introduce a motion for an unmoderated caucus while the Speakers' List is open.
- This is the least formal debate format.
- Delegates are permitted to move around the room and speak freely to one another in order to draft resolutions.
- Delegates may not leave the room without obtaining permission from the committee director.

### ***Points and Motions***

- Points and motions are tools for delegates; points are used to ask questions about the proceedings, whereas motions change what the committee is doing and generally require a vote.
- Points do not require a vote.
- Delegates may only introduce motions while the Speakers' List is open and between speakers.
- Motions that require a vote may be substantive or procedural.
- Depending on the motion, a simple majority or a two-thirds majority is required to pass.
- Points may be raised during caucuses, and certain points may be used to interrupt a speaker.

### ***The Four Common Points:***

1. ***Point of Inquiry:*** Used to ask a question about parliamentary procedure.
  2. ***Point of Order:*** Used when a delegate believes the Dias has made a procedural error.
  3. ***Point of Personal Privilege:*** Used to express concerns about comfort, such as the temperature of the room or the inability to hear a speaker.
  4. **Point of Information:** Used to ask a clarifying question about the content of a speech or statement. This is only permitted during the Speakers' List.
- Note: Only a Point of Order and a Point of Personal Privilege may be used to interrupt a speaker.

# ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

## Introduction to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, tasked with ensuring international peace and security. Established in 1945 following the end of World War II, the UNSC plays a critical role in addressing conflicts, fostering diplomatic negotiations, and maintaining global stability. As the body responsible for determining the existence of threats to peace or acts of aggression, the UNSC has the authority to impose sanctions, authorize the use of force, and deploy peacekeeping missions. The council's decisions are binding on all member states, making it a central mechanism for the enforcement of international law and the maintenance of global order.

### *Members of the UNSC*

*The UNSC is composed of 15 members:*

1. **Permanent Members (P5):** These five countries hold permanent seats and possess veto power, allowing them to block any substantive resolution. The P5 members are:
  - **China:** A major global power with significant influence in Asia and beyond, China's role in the UNSC is pivotal in matters concerning the Asia-Pacific region.
  - **France:** As a leading European nation, France contributes to the council's deliberations with its strong diplomatic network and commitment to international law.
  - **Russia:** Russia's strategic interests and historical influence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia shape its participation in the UNSC.
  - **The United Kingdom:** With its extensive global ties and historical legacy, the UK plays a key role in shaping international security policies.
  - **The United States:** As a superpower, the US has significant sway in the council, often leading initiatives on global security and human rights.

2. **Non-Permanent Members:** Ten non-permanent members are elected by the United Nations General Assembly for two-year terms. These members are selected based on regional representation:

- **African and Asian states (Five seats):** These members bring perspectives from some of the most conflict-prone and rapidly developing regions.
- **Eastern European states (One seat):** This seat ensures representation from Eastern Europe, contributing to a balanced geopolitical perspective.
- **Latin American and Caribbean states (Two seats):** Members from this group highlight issues pertinent to the Western Hemisphere, including development and security challenges.
- **Western European and other states (Two seats):** This group includes developed nations that contribute significant resources and expertise to UNSC initiatives.

The non-permanent members do not have veto power, but their participation ensures a broader representation of the international community in the council's decision-making processes. Their rotating membership allows for diverse voices and changing perspectives on global issues.

# Mandate of the UNSC

The UNSC's primary mandate is to maintain international peace and security. This includes:

- **Conflict Resolution:** The council seeks to resolve disputes through diplomatic, legal, and, if necessary, military means. It encourages dialogue between conflicting parties and can deploy mediators or special envoys to facilitate negotiations.
- **Sanctions:** The UNSC can impose sanctions on nations or entities to pressure compliance with international law. These sanctions can be economic, trade-related, or targeted measures like travel bans and asset freezes.
- **Peacekeeping Operations:** It authorizes and oversees UN peacekeeping missions to manage and resolve conflicts in volatile regions. These missions involve military personnel, police, and civilian staff working to stabilize post-conflict areas.
- **Threat Assessment:** The council assesses situations that may pose threats to international peace and takes appropriate action. This includes addressing terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and other emerging security challenges.
- **Disarmament:** It works towards the regulation and reduction of armaments, particularly weapons of mass destruction. The council supports initiatives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament treaties.

## Powers of the UNSC

The UNSC has unique powers under the UN Charter, primarily codified in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII:

### 1. Chapter VI: Pacific Settlement of Disputes

- The council can investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to international friction. This involves fact-finding missions and consultations with the parties involved.
- It can recommend procedures or terms of settlement to resolve disputes peacefully. These recommendations often aim to prevent escalation and promote long-term stability.

### 2. Chapter VII: Action concerning Threats to Peace, Breaches of Peace, and Acts of Aggression

The UNSC can determine the existence of a threat to peace and decide on measures to address it. This includes identifying aggressor states or non-state actors.

- It can impose sanctions, authorize the use of force, and mandate military or non-military action. These measures are binding on all UN member states and can include military interventions or economic embargoes.

### 3. Chapter VIII: Regional Arrangements

- The council encourages regional organizations to address peace and security issues within

their regions. This leverages local knowledge and resources for conflict resolution.

- It can authorize such organizations to take enforcement action under its guidance. Examples include the African Union's peacekeeping missions in Africa.

## Working Methods of the UNSC

The UNSC operates through a combination of formal and informal processes:

### 1. Meetings and Sessions:

- The council meets regularly at the UN headquarters in New York. It can be convened at any time to address urgent matters, reflecting its readiness to respond to crises.
- Meetings can be public or private, with public meetings being accessible to UN member states and the media. Public meetings ensure transparency, while private sessions allow for candid discussions.

### 2. Resolutions and Statements:

- The council adopts resolutions, which are binding on all UN member states. Resolutions require at least nine votes in favor and no veto from any permanent member. These resolutions address specific issues, ranging from peacekeeping mandates to sanctions.
- Presidential statements and press statements are also issued to communicate the council's position on specific issues. These statements provide insights into the council's views and intentions.

### 3. Committees and Working Groups:

- Various committees, such as the Sanctions Committees and the Counter-Terrorism Committee, support the council's work. These committees monitor compliance with UNSC resolutions and coordinate international efforts.
- Working groups focus on thematic or region-specific issues, facilitating detailed examination and recommendations. They provide in-depth analysis and propose actionable solutions.

### 4. Peacekeeping Operations:

- The UNSC mandates and oversees peacekeeping missions, defining their scope, objectives, and rules of engagement. These operations are deployed to conflict zones to maintain peace and security, protect civilians, and support political processes.
- Peacekeeping missions involve a combination of military, police, and civilian components, working together to stabilize regions and support the implementation of peace agreements.

# Historical Background

Hostility between Washington and Tehran dates to the 1979 revolution and the 444-day US embassy hostage crisis, which produced the ICJ judgment discussed in Section 7. The 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq War, during which Washington backed Baghdad, and the 1987–1988 "Tanker War" in the Gulf, which produced the 2003 Oil Platforms judgment, set the pattern of naval confrontation that recurs in this crisis.

Iran's nuclear programme became a Council matter after undeclared enrichment facilities at Natanz and Arak came to light in 2002, prompting sanctions resolutions between 2006 and 2010. On 14 July 2015, Iran and the P5+1 China, France, Russia, the UK, the US, and Germany signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, capping enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief. The Council endorsed it unanimously six days later in Resolution 2231, building in a ten-year "snapback" clause: any original party could trigger automatic reimposition of the old sanctions if Iran significantly breached the deal. The US left the JCPOA in May 2018 and reimposed its own sanctions; Iran scaled back compliance from 2019. A 2020 US attempt to trigger snapback unilaterally, after already having withdrawn, went nowhere with the Council.

- ***The Twelve-Day War, June 2025***

Israel opened a surprise campaign against Iranian nuclear, missile, and military targets on 13 June 2025, killing senior commanders including IRGC chief Hossein Salami. Iran fired missiles back at Israeli territory. On 21–22 June, US B-2 bombers and a submarine struck Iran's enrichment sites at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan Operation Midnight Hammer. General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the operation used more than 125 aircraft, including seven B-2s, roughly 75 precision munitions including 14 GBU-57 bunker-buster bombs, over about 25 minutes. Trump said the sites were "completely and totally obliterated"; a leaked Defense Intelligence Agency assessment and separate Israeli assessments put the real setback at anywhere from a few months to about two years. The IAEA said the sites "suffered enormous damage" without specifying how much of the programme survived.

Iran fired a pre-warned, largely symbolic strike at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on 23 June; no one was hurt. A ceasefire took hold the next day. On 2 July, Iran suspended its enhanced cooperation with the IAEA.

- ***Snapback and the end of the JCPOA file***

France, Germany, and the UK the E3 invoked the Resolution 2231 snapback mechanism on 28 August 2025, citing Iran's enriched-uranium stockpile, restricted IAEA access, and abandonment of the Additional Protocol. China and Russia's attempt to extend the Council's deadline for considering the file failed on 26 September. UN sanctions on Iran were formally reimposed on 27 September 2025. The Resolution 2231 file was due to close entirely on 18 October 2025; that same day, China, Iran, and Russia sent the Council a joint letter arguing the E3 had no standing to trigger snapback, since they had themselves stopped meeting their own JCPOA and Resolution 2231 commitments and had not exhausted the deal's dispute-resolution steps first. Whether the reimposed sanctions have valid legal force is still disputed among Council members.

## Current Situation

- **The January 2026 crackdown**

Nationwide protests began in Iran in December 2025, driven by economic collapse. Security forces — the IRGC, its Basij units, and the police force FARAJA — opened fire on demonstrators, most heavily on 8–9 January 2026. The toll is contested. UN Special Rapporteur Mai Sato said on 16 January that at least 5,000 had died. Khamenei acknowledged "several thousand" killed in a 17 January speech; an Iranian official told Reuters the government's own estimate was over 5,000. Other counts, compiled by rights groups and reported by Time, range as high as 30,000 to 36,500, including bystanders. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International documented mass unlawful killings; HRANA and Iran Human Rights verified at least 118 children among the dead. Iran's nationwide internet shutdown at the time is part of why estimates vary so much.

- **Outbreak of the 2026 war**

On 28 February 2026, the US and Israel launched roughly 900 strikes against Iran in twelve hours, in an operation the US called Epic Fury. The opening wave killed Khamenei, IRGC commander Mohammad Pakpour, and other senior officials. A strike on a girls' school next to a naval facility in Minab, near Bandar Abbas, reportedly killed about 170 people. Trump said the goals were to destroy Iran's missile force, disable its navy, block any path to a nuclear weapon, and cut off support for regional allies; he also called on Iranians to overthrow their government. Iran struck back at Israel, at US bases, and at Gulf states hosting them. Mojtaba Khamenei became Supreme Leader on 1 March; Masoud Pezeshkian has stayed on as President.

- **The Council's response and the fight over the Strait**

On 10 March 2026, US Ambassador Michael Waltz sent the Council an Article 51 letter defending the strikes as self-defence and the collective self-defence of Israel. The next day, the Council adopted Resolution 2817 by 13 votes to none, with China and Russia abstaining, condemning Iranian strikes on Gulf states.

On 7 April, a Bahrain-led draft resolution on protecting Hormuz shipping — already softened repeatedly to win over Moscow and Beijing — got 11 votes but was vetoed by both. Russia's ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, objected that the text blamed Iran alone while ignoring the US and Israeli strikes that started the war. Hours later, under a Pakistan-brokered deal, Washington and Tehran agreed a two-week ceasefire tied to reopening the Strait. It briefly reopened, then the talks collapsed, and around 13 April the US imposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports, with a humanitarian carve-out, lasting into mid-June.

In June 2026 the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding under which Iran agreed to "make arrangements using its best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels" through the Strait. It broke down in July after renewed Israeli strikes in Lebanon: on 10 July the US said the

ceasefire was over, on 11 July Iran accused Washington of breaching the deal's nuclear terms, and on 12 July the IRGC closed the Strait after firing on a vessel, even as US forces struck again and insisted the waterway was still open.

At the Freeze Date, the US blockade remains in place. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey signed a mutual-defence pact in Mecca in early August. Talks are reportedly moving toward a roughly 60-day, renewable Iran–Oman arrangement giving Iran more say over Strait traffic than before the war. Iran's Supreme National Security Council set out conditions for reopening the Strait on 11 August, in a meeting with China's ambassador. No lasting settlement had been reached by 14 August 2026.

- **Where the nuclear file stands**

The IAEA still has no access to the struck facilities and cannot independently verify what remains of Iran's stockpile. As of mid-August 2026, US intelligence officials and Iran's own ambassador to the IAEA both say enrichment has not resumed, and the Agency reports no satellite evidence to the contrary. The IAEA's last confirmed figures put roughly 184 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride enriched to 20 percent, and about 441 kilograms enriched to 60 percent, still somewhere inside the country — the 60-percent material being close enough to weapons grade that officials describe it as sufficient, if further enriched, for the fissile core of around ten devices. None of this has been independently verified since the strikes.

- **Who is involved**

United States and Israel co-belligerents; claim self-defence and collective self-defence; run the naval blockade.

Iran target State; underwent a leadership succession mid-war while separately conducting the January crackdown; claims a right to control Hormuz shipping.

Gulf states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE) — hit by Iranian retaliatory strikes; sponsored the vetoed resolution; Oman is mediating separately with Tehran.

China and Russia — abstained on Resolution 2817, vetoed the Hormuz draft; China buys most of Iran's oil exports.

Pakistan — brokered the April ceasefire and co-signed the August defence pact.

Hezbollah, the Houthi movement, Iraqi militias — fighting in parallel; their attacks have twice helped collapse ceasefire arrangements.

## International Legal Framework

- **The use-of-force rules**

Article 2(4) of the Charter bars the threat or use of force against another State's territory or independence. Most international lawyers treat this as customary law, and some — following the ICJ's 1986 Nicaragua judgment — as close to a peremptory norm. There are two Charter exceptions: Council authorisation under Chapter VII, and self-defence under Article 51.

Self-defence must respond to an armed attack of real gravity, and any response must be necessary

and proportionate. Whether it can also cover a pre-emptive strike against a weapons programme not shown to be close to weaponisation is exactly what is contested here.

- **Non-proliferation law**

Iran is a party in good standing to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which bars it from acquiring nuclear weapons (Article II) and requires IAEA safeguards (Article III). Iranian officials have raised withdrawing under Article X, which allows 90 days' notice on grounds of extraordinary threats to national interest; Iran had not done so by the Freeze Date. Its Safeguards Agreement is the legal basis for inspections, which Iran curtailed from July 2025. The JCPOA is itself a political commitment, not a treaty, but Resolution 2231 gave its terms binding procedural force under Article 41 — why the snapback dispute matters.

- **Law of the sea**

Under the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, ships have a right of transit passage through straits used for international navigation, including Hormuz, which lies partly in Iranian and partly in Omani waters. The United States has not ratified the Convention but treats its navigational rules as customary law; Iran has ratified an earlier convention but not this one, and has at times said it will only recognise transit rights for States that have. Iran's claim to control shipping across the whole Strait, rather than just its own territorial waters, is not supported by the conventional or customary law of the sea as generally understood — though Tehran points to the June 2026 MOU's "best efforts" language as a separate, negotiated basis for a larger role.

- **Was the war lawful?**

The US letter to the Council frames Operation Epic Fury as self-defence and the collective self-defence of Israel, describing an armed conflict rooted in a pattern of Iranian attacks from 2019 to 2024 and citing the 1979 hostage crisis as part of that pattern. This has drawn sharp criticism. Writing in Just Security, Brian Finucane argued any self-defence claim tied to 1979 lapsed with the Algiers Accords decades ago. The New York City Bar Association's statement said the letter identifies no imminent Iranian attack as of February 2026 and does not claim Council authorisation. Marko Milanovic told Middle East Eye the strikes were "clearly illegal," since self-defence is the only possible justification and its conditions were not met. Gulf states' own collective self-defence claim is more straightforward, and is what Resolution 2817 recognised. Iran says the 28 February strikes were unlawful aggression to which its retaliation was a lawful response — though some of that retaliation, against Gulf states that deny hosting any US or Israeli operation, raises the same question in reverse.

# Landmark Cases

- **United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran (US v. Iran)**  
I.C.J. Reports 1980, p. 3, judgment of 24 May 1980. Iranian militants seized the US embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979 and held its staff hostage; Iranian authorities did nothing to stop them and later endorsed the occupation. The Court found Iran had breached the Vienna Conventions on diplomatic and consular relations: even though the initial seizure was not directly Iran's act, its failure to intervene, and its later adoption of the militants' conduct, made it responsible. The case stands for two things — a State's duty to protect diplomats, and the rule that a State can become responsible for private conduct it knowingly lets stand or later endorses. It is frequently cited in the current dispute, including in the US Article 51 letter, though its bearing on the 2025–2026 strikes is contested.
- **Oil Platforms (Iran v. US)**  
I.C.J. Reports 2003, p. 161, judgment of 6 November 2003. The US Navy destroyed Iranian oil platforms in 1987–88 during the Tanker War; Iran sued under the 1955 Treaty of Amity. By 14 votes to 2, the Court held the US could not justify the attacks as necessary to its essential security interests under the Treaty, once that clause was read against the international law on self-defence in effect finding the US had not met the customary necessity-and-proportionality standard. It nonetheless declined Iran's separate claim that the attacks breached the Treaty's freedom-of-commerce clause, since the platforms were not operating commercially at the time. The case is the clearest precedent for how the Court tests US self-defence claims in the Gulf, and bears directly, though not conclusively, on the 2025–2026 strikes.
- **Nicaragua v. United States**  
I.C.J. Reports 1986, p. 14, judgment of 27 June 1986. The US backed Contra forces against Nicaragua's government and mined its harbours. The Court held that self-defence requires a prior armed attack of real gravity — distinct from lesser uses of force — and that any response must be necessary and proportionate; collective self-defence additionally requires a request from the victim State. This is the baseline test every later self-defence claim, including the ones made in this crisis, gets measured against.

No court has yet ruled on the 2025–2026 strikes themselves. No case is currently on the ICJ's docket and no ICC investigation specific to this war had opened as of the Freeze Date. Any view expressed above about the strikes' legality reflects how these precedents apply, not a binding ruling.

# Stakeholder Analysis

The United States sits on both sides of this file at once: a permanent Council member and a principal belligerent, which limits how far the Council can act against it and helps explain the April veto deadlock. China buys most of Iran's oil and has a direct stake in reopening the Strait; it abstained on 2817 but vetoed the Hormuz draft, arguing the text blamed Iran alone. Russia took the same position, citing risk to the Charter's use-of-force rules, while itself gaining from higher oil revenue during the crisis. France and the UK back the snapback's validity and broadly align with Washington on the nuclear dispute, while voicing more open concern than Washington about the strikes' legality and the humanitarian toll.

Gulf states want the attacks on their territory to stop and shipping restored, but are not unified on how: some host US operations and favour firmer pressure on Iran, while Oman keeps its own channel to Tehran open. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey's new defence pact suggests some regional actors are hedging their security arrangements outside the US umbrella and outside the UN framework altogether.

Iran-aligned groups — Hezbollah, the Houthis, Iraqi militias — are not parties to any resolution but have twice helped break down ceasefires. The IAEA is the only body positioned to verify Iran's nuclear status, and it currently cannot. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran are the main sources on the January crackdown.

## Key Issues

- ***Was the use of force lawful***

This is the fault line running through everything else. Washington and Jerusalem argue the proliferation risk and Iran's support for armed proxies justified strong self-defence. Critics argue Article 51 does not stretch to a preventive strike absent an imminent attack, and warn of the precedent it sets for any State to strike another's weapons programme first. The Council's own practice is inconsistent: it recognised Gulf states' claim in 2817 without ever ruling on the US and Israeli claim that started the war.

- ***Verifying the nuclear file***

Strikes degraded declared facilities but did not produce durable assurance against reconstitution, and the IAEA still cannot get in. Any path forward has to answer whether it revives elements of the JCPOA, negotiates something new, or relies on continued military deterrence — and how inspectors regain access.

- ***The Strait of Hormuz***

A fifth of the world's oil moves through this waterway. Repeated closures and the prospective Iran–Oman arrangement raise both an immediate question — restoring predictable shipping —

and a legal one: whether ad hoc bilateral deals over an international strait sit well with the multilateral transit-passage regime, or quietly hand Iran more control than the law of the sea gives it.

- ***Accountability for January 2026***

Options range from continued Special Rapporteur reporting to a formal Commission of Inquiry to targeted sanctions on individuals implicated in the killings. An ICC referral would need a Council vote under Article 13(b) and is unlikely given the veto; the General Assembly and Human Rights Council are more realistic venues if the Council itself cannot act.

- ***Spillover***

Hezbollah–Israel exchanges in Lebanon and Houthi attacks near Bab-el-Mandeb have already wrecked two rounds of ceasefire diplomacy. Any Council response limited to the direct US–Iran dimension risks missing what is actually driving renewed escalation.

- ***Sanctions and their humanitarian cost***

Reimposed UN sanctions sit on top of extensive existing US sanctions. Washington has issued targeted humanitarian and energy carve-outs General Licenses 134 and U but the broader question of whether sanctions are still pushing Iran toward a deal, or simply punishing its population with diminishing effect, remains open.

## Challenges and Gaps to study

- ***Legal:*** no binding ruling exists on the use of force; the snapback's validity is itself disputed.
- ***Political:*** a P5 member is a belligerent, a large part of why the April resolution failed; mediation is now split across Islamabad, Muscat, and Mecca rather than centred on the Council.
- ***Economic:*** Hormuz uncertainty keeps prices elevated and hits import-dependent economies hardest — Vietnam reported fuel shortages during the crisis.
- ***Enforcement:*** the Council cannot compel a permanent member's compliance or guarantee IAEA access without Iranian consent.
- ***Humanitarian:*** accountability for January 2026 faces the same veto problem as the rest of this file, and the internet shutdown at the time still hampers fact-finding.

# Bloc Positions

- ***US, Israel***  
Defend the campaign as necessary self-defence; want continued sanctions leverage and a Hormuz arrangement that favours free navigation.
- ***E3 / EU***  
Back the snapback's validity; more openly worried than Washington about civilian harm and the strikes' legality; want the Strait reopened and prices stabilised.
- ***China, Russia***  
Stress Charter primacy and reject texts that blame Iran alone; China has a direct commercial stake in de-escalation as Iran's main oil buyer.
- ***Gulf states***  
Want the attacks to stop and shipping guaranteed; split between firmer alignment with Washington and Oman's direct engagement with Tehran.
- ***Iran***  
Maintains the war began with unlawful aggression against it and that its own actions, including over Hormuz, are lawful self-defence and sovereignty; resists outside scrutiny of the January crackdown as domestic interference.
- ***Non-aligned/importing states***  
Focused on price and supply effects; likely to favour balanced, de-escalation-focused texts over anything read as endorsing either side's use of force.

## Questions a Delegate Should Answer

- Does your State consider the February 2026 and June 2025 strikes lawful under Article 51, and is that position consistent with how it would judge a similar strike by another State?
- Does your State treat the September 2025 snapback as valid, and what does that mean for its own sanctions policy toward Iran?
- What would restore your State's confidence in the status of Iran's uranium stockpile, and what would it offer in exchange for renewed IAEA access?
- What is your State's view of a bilateral Iran–Oman arrangement over the Strait of Hormuz — consistent with the law of the sea, or a departure from it?
- Should the Council pursue accountability for the January 2026 killings, and through which body, given the near-certainty of a veto on any ICC referral?
- What would your State propose to stop the Lebanon and Red Sea fronts from repeatedly collapsing ceasefire progress on the main conflict?

# Glossary

- ***The Resolution 2231*** mechanism letting a JCPOA party trigger automatic reimposition of pre-2015 UN sanctions.
- ***Article 51 letter***  
A notification to the Council explaining the legal basis on which a State has used force in self-defence.
- ***Transit passage***  
The right under the Law of the Sea Convention to pass through straits used for international navigation.
- ***Additional Protocol***  
An agreement expanding IAEA inspection rights beyond the basic safeguards agreement.
- ***Jus ad bellum***  
The law governing when States may lawfully resort to force, as opposed to how they fight once at war.
- ***Collective self-defence***  
The right to use force in defence of another State that has suffered an armed attack, generally on that State's request.
- ***GBU-57 (MOP)***  
A US bunker-buster bomb built to destroy deeply buried targets; used against Fordow and Natanz.