

Forum: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Issue #1: Measures to address violations of International humanitarian laws regarding targeted air attacks in the Middle East

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Introduction

International Humanitarian Laws (IHL) are a set of rules that aim to restrict the development of armed conflict. These crimes include indiscriminate and intentional attacks, which cause millions of civilian fatalities and massive destruction of infrastructure. Air attacks have become one of the main methods of combat, in which military aircraft drop explosives with the purpose of mass destruction. With rising tensions in the Middle East in the past decade, violations of IHL have escalated. Concerns have been raised about the need for

transparency and accountability, as well as the importance of upholding international law to prevent further violations and the protection of civilian lives. With the developments of conflicts such that between Israel and Hamas, Israel and Iran, and in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, the United Nations has had to investigate potential war crimes charges and use of prohibited weapons, including white phosphorus. The use of air strikes has been controversial, with some contending that they are necessary to preserve security and discourage future attacks, while others believe that they are destructive and risk intensifying disputes. With the continuation of armed wars with the use of airstrikes, potential conflicts may escalate, leading to major increases in unintended civilian casualties as well as a continuous cycles of violence.

Definition of Key Terms

International Humanitarian Laws - A set of rules that aim to restrict the development of armed conflict

Air Attacks - An attack by armed planes on a surface target

Plenipotentiaries - A person invested with full power or authority to transact business on behalf of another

ICRC - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ensures humanitarian protection and aid for victims of war

Zionism - A nationalist movement to enable the establishment of Jews in Palestine

Balfour Declaration - A public statement made by the British Government in 1917 announcing its support for the establishment of a home for the Jews in Palestine

Ottoman Empire - A long-lasting empire that expanded from Southeast Europe,

West Asia, and North Africa

Coup - An unlawful seizure of power from a government

Corrupt - Abuse of entrusted power for private gain

Houthis - A rebel group who aims to govern all of Yemen

Maritime Interception - Naval operations, that aim to delay, disrupt, or destroy enemy forces or supplies en route to the battle area.

Ceasefire - An accord in which groups of people who are fighting agree to refrain from fighting.

General Overview

Origins of International Humanitarian Laws (IHL)

The origins of International Humanitarian Laws (IHL) can be traced back to ancient history, as the idea of having a set of rules to regulate war has always existed in every culture, religion, and tradition. The ancient Greeks, the knights of the Middle Ages, and jurists of modern times all showed this concern. Regardless, the attempt to have regulations and put limits on wars has seen various setbacks. The modern history of the IHL started in 1864 when the plenipotentiaries of 13 States met in Geneva and adopted the First Geneva Convention, where the principles of universality and tolerance in matters of race, nationality, and religion were introduced. The convention laid the foundations of the IHL. Nevertheless, after the two world wars the term “International Humanitarian Laws” was officially introduced in 1974 at the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts by the ICRC. The set of rules were talked about and contested both throughout and after the conference. The conference consisted of over 700 delegates who expressed different views

about the International Humanitarian Laws. Finally, the official set of rules came out to the public in an attempt to prevent unnecessary suffering in order to prevent conflicts from reaching a point of no return.

Israel - Palestine

The Israel-Palestine conflict is a longstanding military conflict over ownership of what is now Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The conflict started in the late 19th century with the arrival of Jewish Settlers and the introduction of Zionism to Palestine. Although the Arabs opposed Zionism out of fear of displacement, the Zionist movement gathered support in the 1917 Balfour Declaration by Britain which promised more inclusion and a home for Jews in Palestine. However, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during World War 1, Palestine became a mandate of Britain, which created tension between Arabs and Jews. This then grew into an intercommunal conflict where Arabs demanded independence. However, in 1947 the UN made a Partition Plan for Palestine. This then triggered the Palestine War in 1948, in which most Palestinian Arabs fled—marking the establishment of Israel and the control of the Gaza Strip and West Bank by Egypt and Jordan. During a subsequent six-day war in 1967, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and West Bank, which marked the beginning of Israel in its current state. However, on October 7, 2023, Hamas, an extremist terrorist group of Palestine, launched air attacks from the Gaza Strip to South Israel. From that point to now, Palestine and Israel have been in an ongoing dispute, where there has been no limit to the number and types of air attacks used.

USA - UK - Yemen

The United States and the United Kingdom have joined forces and have conducted military strikes on Houthi sites in Yemen. The target of these nations

has been underground weapons, missile storage facilities, air defense systems, radars, and a helicopter, sites managed by the Houthis, an Islamist political and military group that originated in Yemen in the 1990s. The group was created as an opposition against the former president of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh was accused of being corrupt and alleging support from Saudi Arabia and the United States, which resulted in a coup by the Houthis. Because of the influence of the Lebanese Shia organization, the Houthis developed a hatred for the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Because of the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine and the relationship Israel holds with the USA, the terrorist group struck multiple Red Sea ships as a form of protest. The group now claims that they will stop when Israel ends its war in Gaza. The attacks have had serious effects, namely \$200 billion in trade being diverted from the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, thus resulting in higher costs for consumers and businesses.

US- Iran - Iraq - Syria

On February 4, 2024, The United States conducted major retaliatory airstrikes on seven different locations in Iraq and Syria. These attacks killed 16 people and injured 25 others. The attacks by the Americans were in response to the drone attacks of January 28, where 3 American soldiers were killed in Jordan by Iran forces. These retaliatory airstrikes are targeting Iran-backed fighters and their infrastructure in western Iraq and eastern Syria. The US actions are a response to the escalating tensions between the Israel-Hamas war, with Iran-backed fighters launching airstrikes at US military installations. Iran accuses the US of being an ally of Israel and funding their strikes. These attacks have drawn condemnation from Iran, Iraq, Syria, and other nations, which raises concerns about regional security and stability.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Russia

According to Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, Russia reiterates its opposition to US airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, and believes that the situation needs to be considered by the United Nations Security Council. As stated by Business Insider, Zakharova said the strikes showed a "complete disregard for international law" and were "escalating the situation in the region." She also stated that the attack was a terrible, "dehumanizing" crime. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, Russia has expressed support for Palestinians amid Israel's attack on Hamas following the strike in October. However, experts believe that Russia could be trying to exploit the situation to its benefit, as this crisis diverts attention away from Russia's war with Ukraine. Russia has also been responsible for various air strikes on Syria since 2015. These attacks aimed to show its support for the Syrian government by targeting opposition groups, including Islamic State (IS) militants and other rebel groups. Additionally, Russia has been suspected of offering military assistance to Iran and its allies in the Middle East, such as the Houthi rebels in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

United States

The United States has been responsible for numerous air attacks in recent years. On February 2, 2024, as mentioned previously, the United States aircraft struck seven locations in Iraq and Syria. These strikes killed 16 civilians in Iraq and injured 25 others. These attacks allegedly are in response to Iran's attack on US soldiers on January 28, killing three US service members and wounding more than 40 others. Although the United States government has not explicitly stated its stance on air strikes in the Middle East, they have been complicit in conducting air strikes conducted in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. President Joe Biden released an official statement on February 2 stating, "The United States does not seek

conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world. But let all those who might seek to do us harm know this: if you harm an American, we will respond." Lieutenant General Douglas Sims, currently the Director for the Joint Staff at the US Pentagon, has also stated that they have been successful in "hitting exactly what they meant to hit".

France

Despite France not getting involved in the US and UK air strikes in Yemen, and President Emmanuel Macron stating that France aims to avoid any escalation in the region, the French foreign ministry stated it stood by American air strikes against Iran-backed militias in Syria. The statement states that, "In light of these unacceptable attacks, which we have firmly condemned, we stand with our American allies." There have also been statements on France's condemnation of the air attack launched by Russia in Ukraine on November 25. France had been responsible for a few air attacks in the past years. Their last attack was in 2015 against the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq and Syria. This attack was the first direct French military intervention in the Middle East in more than 15 years. Supposedly, "France had previously maintained that international law prevented it from attacking targets in Syria-Paris was adamant that it would do nothing to help, even indirectly, the Assad government, says the BBC's Hugh Schofield in Paris" (BBC News).

Israel

Israel has been responsible for various of the air attacks conducted in recent years. They have, for example, dropped several bombs on the Gaza Strip, resulting in major casualties and extensive infrastructure destruction. Despite international concerns about the humanitarian impact of these strikes and international pressure for a ceasefire, Israel continues to attack in response to Hamas aiming for what they call "total victory". Israel has also had a history of

using airstrikes as a method of military attack. One significant event was the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, marking the beginning of Israel's use of airstrikes. Another notable event is the 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel attacked Egypt in response to their aggressions. Israel has continued to deploy aerial bombardment targeting various locations in Gaza, resulting in numerous civilian casualties and destruction.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has had strong opposition to recent air attacks, especially against Yemen's Houthis and Israel's attacks on Gaza. "Saudi Arabia categorically rejects this brutal attack, which is a flagrant violation of all international laws and norms, including international humanitarian law," the Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry, Prince Faisal bin Farhan stated.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
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1864	The first Geneva Convention in 1864 marked a significant development in the establishment of humanitarian norms during armed conflicts.
January 1915	In 1915 during World War I was the first record of airstrikes where German airships called Zeppelins bombed London. The attack resulted in 556 people's deaths and 1,357 injured.
1936-1939	During the Spanish Civil War there is a large amount of use of air bombing, including the bombing of Guernica by German and Italian aircraft in support of Franco's forces.

1977	Implementation of Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions, further expanding and updating international humanitarian law.
1990	In 1990, Resolution 678 was passed by the Security Council which allowed for the use of nuclear air strikes to get Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait. It provided the legal basis for the Gulf War airstrikes against Iraq in 1991.
2001	The United States conducted airstrikes in Afghanistan in response to the September 11 attack by Al-Qaeda.
2011	Resolution 1973. This resolution was passed by the Security Council during the Libyan Civil War and authorized member states to take "all necessary measures", including airstrikes, to protect civilians in Libya from attacks by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime.
March 2011-present	The Syrian Civil War has resulted in many airstrikes targeting rebel groups, infrastructure, and civilian populations, resulting in significant casualties and destruction.
February 2014	The Russo-Ukrainian War began after Russia occupied Crimea from Ukraine.
September 2014	2014 marked the beginning of the ongoing Yemen civil war. When the Houthi rebels went against the Sunni government.
2015	Resolution 2249. This resolution was passed by the Security Council, in which they called upon member states to take "all necessary measures" to combat and end terrorist

	attacks committed by ISIS. It allowed legally for airstrikes against ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria.
December 2023	Russia has launched the biggest air attack on Ukraine since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian War. At least 30 civilians were killed and more than 160 were wounded by the missiles.

UN Involvement

Resolution 2722 (2024)

The Security Council passed resolution 2722 regarding Houthi's attacks on January 10th, 2024. After the United States and United Kingdom maritime interception of Houthi-controlled territory into the Red Sea on January 9th, the Security Council passed the resolution urging an immediate halt of all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels by the Houthis. Before the resolution was adopted, Vassily A. Nebenzia, representative of the Russian Federation, expressed concern over the situation in the Red Sea, stating the United States favored unilateral solutions through the use of force. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, representative of the United States, underscored that the conflict in Gaza should not be falsely linked to Houthi attacks and strongly defended the strikes, claiming that they complied with international law. Thomas-Greenfield further claimed that the strikes were justified measures taken in protective measures under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Resolution 2722 was adopted with 11 votes in favor, none against, and 4 abstentions (Algeria, China, Mozambique, Russian Federation). The resolution

demanded the immediate release of the Galaxy Leader ship and its crew and affirmed Member States' right to defend their vessels following international law.

9595TH Meeting

During the 9595th meeting, the Security Council discussed the situation in Myanmar and intended to find a resolution to stop the concurrent acts of violence. On the 4th of April, 2024, nine members of the United Nations Security Council (Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, South Korea, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States) discussed their opinion of Myanmar's military for conducting airstrikes against civilians. These attacks have resulted in approximately 5,000 civilian fatalities and 2.6 million internally displaced.

"We will not allow Myanmar to become a forgotten crisis," stated the representative of the United Kingdom, condemning the airstrikes across the country by the Myanmar Armed Forces. The United States representative noted that Myanmar's military carried out 588 airstrikes across the country, expressing his request for preventative measures to limit the flow of weapons to the military and its access to jet fuel. Contrary, the Russian Federation expressed "Myanmar does not pose a threat to international security," opposing efforts by the Council to establish a peace plan.

January 12, 2024, Statement

On January 12, 2024, the United Nations released a statement in response to the United States and United Kingdom's Air Strikes on Yemen that violated International Humanitarian Laws. The press release was delivered by the Spokesman for UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. The message emphasized the vital need to comply with the UN Security Council resolution 2722 (2024), stating that "[a]ttacks against international shipping in the Red Sea

area are not acceptable, as they endanger the safety and security of global supply chains and have a negative impact on the economic and humanitarian situation worldwide" (*Following Air Strikes, Secretary-General Urges Adherence to International Law, Avoidance of Acts That Could Exacerbate Situation in Yemen* | *Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*). The press release called upon Houthis immediate ceasefire and requested all those attempting to stop these attacks to do so following international law. The UN's ultimate goal is to de-escalate the conflict, leading Yemen towards peace and security.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

UN Investigation

The United Nations once conducted a recent investigation on the violation of IHL. Particularly in the Israel-Palestine conflict, where the UN accuses both countries of committing several war crimes and committing several violations of the IHL. These violations include indiscriminate attacks, targeting civilians, and the use of prohibited weapons like white phosphorus. The UN has been trying to hold both nations accountable for these accusations, but to no avail.

Sanctions

After Iran attacked Israeli territory on April 14, 2024, Israel's UN envoy, Gilad Erdan, called for "all possible sanctions" to be imposed on Iran "before it is too late." The Group of Seven (consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the European Union a non-enumerated member) has also discussed sanctions against Iran and the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization. Nevertheless, due to the recency of these proclamations, there have been no actual sanctions applied to Iran. The USA has also imposed sanctions on Iran, In February 2024, the government of Joe Biden imposed sanctions on IRGC officers and officials for their roles in threatening the security

of water utilities and aiding in the manufacture of Iranian drones. The US has also imposed sanctions against 9 individuals for selling oil to finance military groups like Hamas and Hezbollah

Possible Solutions

Education on International Humanitarian Laws (IHL)

Teaching the future generations and upcoming world leaders about the importance and implications of IHL. Raising awareness of the importance and meaning of International Humanitarian Laws (IHL) is an essential step in preventing the repetition of catastrophic conflict that endangers humanitarian well-being, thus ensuring a much safer future for the next generations and humanity as a whole.

Diplomatic Negotiations

Although diplomatic negotiations are the most customary way of resolving issues, they are also the most effective way of congregating world leaders and peacefully working towards a common goal. The UN and other indispensable organizations like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) or The Arab League, could serve as mediators of peace and help countries peacefully express their views and opinions so that all parties can come up with an agreement without the need of unnecessary bloodshed.

Access to Weapons of Mass Proliferation

Because of the increased accessibility to weapons of mass proliferation, particularly in the Middle East, this geographic region has been characterized by the use of this artillery in armed conflict. Limiting access to these weapons would not only prevent unnecessary deaths but would force nations to find alternative solutions to international conflict, particularly more peaceful and accessible approaches like intercontinental negotiation.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

Measures to address violations of International Humanitarian Laws regarding targeted air attacks in the Middle East connect mainly to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive communities for sustainable development, ensure access to justice for all, and create effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Targeted air attacks may jeopardize peace and stability, as they may lead to greater conflict by heightening tensions between countries. Conflict, violence, and instability may emerge from this, opposing SDG 16's objective. SDG 16 advocates for inclusive and responsible governance, the building of institutions, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These initiatives can help by preventing violations of International Humanitarian Laws and lowering its collateral risks. Also, SDG 16 asks for worldwide justice, which is crucial to tackling the dangers posed by air strikes. Those who propagate the use of this artillery may also be held accountable with the support of strong legal systems and efficient diplomatic institutions.

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Appendix

I. Resolution 2722 (2024)

A. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2722>

1. This link helps to see the resolution presented by the Security

Council regarding Houthi's attacks on the Red Sea

I. International Humanitarian Laws

A. <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/protecting-people-in-armed-conflict/international-humanitarian-law>

1. Here are the actual set of rules that compose the International Humanitarian Laws (IHL)

I. Geneva Convention

A. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/geneva-res-1949>

1. This link provides a variety of resolutions that were made in the Geneva Convention, the convention that started International Humanitarian Laws (IHL)