

Date: April 30 , 2026

Ref: IR_MSRT-1405-007



To:
Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger
President
International Committee of the Red Cross
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No. 4, Azar Cul-de-sac, Sharifi Manesh St., Elahieh
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Iran

Subject: Urgent Request Regarding Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Armed Conflict against the Islamic Republic of Iran (Focusing on the Minab School Massacre, Destruction of Cultural Property, and Attacks on Educational Institutions)

Your Excellency,

The Union of Student Scientific Associations of Political Science of Iran, representing thousands of students across the country, has the honor to submit this request in light of your esteemed function as the guardian and guarantor of the implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) arising from the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols. First and foremost, the Union expresses its gratitude for your Excellency's visit to Tehran on April 28, 2026, and the valuable efforts of your institution to follow up on the humanitarian situation in Iran. We hereby document the systematic violations of IHL that have occurred during the course of military operations by the United States of America and Israel against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which commenced on February 28, 2026. The facts are based on confirmed international reports, official Iranian data, and the urgent session of the Human Rights Council held on March 27, 2026.

Given the presence of the ICRC office in Tehran and its unique role in monitoring respect for IHL, we request urgent action to document these violations, issue a public warning, and engage in confidential dialogue in order to prevent further harm to civilians.

I. Factual Report: Indiscriminate and Deliberate Targeting of Civilian Objects

Since the commencement of hostilities, civilians in Iran have been subjected to intense and repeated attacks. Confirmed data indicates:

- **Civilian Casualties:** More than 3,375 civilians have been killed. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had reported as of March 30, 2026, that the number of civilian deaths exceeded 2,100, and this figure has been increasing in subsequent reports. This number includes 216 children, 251 women, and three Red Crescent personnel. Furthermore, according to an OCHA report dated April 3, 2026, the Iranian Ministry of Health reported 1,881 injured children and 4,610 injured women. In addition, more than three million people have been internally displaced;

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OCHA reported that as of March 30, more than 3.8 million people had been affected by the hostilities.

- Educational Infrastructure: At least 760 schools and educational centers, as well as 29 universities, have been destroyed or damaged. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) confirmed on April 7, 2026, that more than 760 schools had been destroyed or damaged. Furthermore, 310 students and teachers have lost their lives.

- Cultural Heritage: In 20 provinces, 114 historical and cultural sites, 48 museums, and 149 irreplaceable cultural treasures have been damaged. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has officially stated that since February 2026 it has been monitoring the situation of Iran's cultural heritage and has acknowledged damage to prominent sites including Golestan Palace and Chehel Sotoun.

- Medical Facilities: At least 315 medical and relief centers have been damaged. According to an OCHA report as of April 3, 2026, more than 334 health and relief centers had been damaged, which is consistent with the report of the World Health Organization (WHO) of 23 attacks on medical facilities up to that date.

The Minab School Massacre – The Deadliest Event

On February 28, 2026, at approximately 10:45 a.m., the Shajareh Tayyebah girls' elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan Province, was struck by two American Tomahawk cruise missiles within minutes of each other – a so-called “double-tap” attack. Classes were in session. The two-story building collapsed. The confirmed number of victims is 155. The United Nations Human Rights Council, in its urgent session of March 27, 2026, dedicated its meeting precisely to this attack and described it as a “serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law.” The victims include 73 boys, 47 girls (all between 7 and 12 years old), 26 female teachers (one six months pregnant), seven parents, a school bus driver, and a pharmacy technician. No military personnel were present on the school premises. The second missile struck after first responders and relatives had gathered to rescue survivors – a tactic specifically designed to kill or injure rescuers. The planned and deliberate targeting of a school constitutes a grave breach of IHL. The use of precision-guided missiles (Tomahawk) confirms that the attack was intentional and not the result of a navigation error.

II. Comprehensive and Precise Applicable Legal Framework (International Humanitarian Law)

The following provisions of treaty-based and customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL) are binding on all parties to the conflict. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as the supervisory body and guarantor of the implementation of these rules, is entrusted with the mandate to ensure respect for them. It is noteworthy that the United Nations Human Rights Council, in its urgent session of March 27, 2026, examined the attack on the Minab school within the framework of the protection of children and educational institutions in international armed conflicts.

A. Fundamental Principles of Distinction and Protection of Civilians

- Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions (1949) – prohibits murder, cruel treatment, torture, and humiliating treatment of persons taking no active part in hostilities, including children, teachers, medical personnel, and humanitarian workers. This article is universally accepted as reflecting customary international law.

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- Additional Protocol I (1977), Article 48 (Basic Rule) – the parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives; attacks shall be directed solely at military objectives. This rule is without doubt part of customary IHL.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 51(2) – the civilian population as such, as well as individual civilians, shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence the primary purpose of which is to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 51(4) – indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. Indiscriminate attacks are those: (a) which are not directed at a specific military objective; (b) which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or (c) which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by IHL; and consequently, in each such case, are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 51(5) – an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated (principle of proportionality), is prohibited.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 52 – civilian objects shall not be the object of attack or of reprisals. In case of doubt whether an object which is normally dedicated to civilian purposes (e.g., a school) is being used for military purposes, it shall be presumed not to be so used. All objects which do not fall within the definition of military objectives are civilian objects and shall not be attacked.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 57 (Precautions in Attack) – in the conduct of military operations, constant care shall be taken to spare civilians and civilian objects. All feasible precautions shall be taken to verify that objectives are military objectives, to choose methods and means that avoid or minimize incidental loss, and to give effective advance warning of attacks which may affect the civilian population, unless circumstances do not permit.

B. Specific Prohibitions: Double-Tap Attacks and Targeting of Rescuers

- Additional Protocol I, Article 51(4) – a double-tap attack (two successive attacks on the same location within minutes) is an indiscriminate attack because the second attack is not directed at a specific military objective (the objective, if any, had already been destroyed). Moreover, it deliberately targets rescuers, who are protected as civilians under Common Article 3. International criminal jurisprudence has firmly established that the double-tap tactic is prosecutable as a war crime.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 10 – all wounded, sick, and shipwrecked, whether or not they have taken part in the armed conflict, shall be respected and protected.
- Customary IHL Rule 15 (Precautions in Attack) – as formulated by the ICRC, parties must take constant care to spare the civilian population, civilians, and civilian objects. The double-tap tactic violates this rule because after the first attack, no feasible precaution is taken to re-assess the situation.

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- ICRC Commentary to Geneva Convention I, paragraph 1404 – acknowledges that the “double-tap” practice is generally prohibited under IHL and is allowed only in exceptional combat-related circumstances.

C. Protection of Cultural Property

- Customary IHL Rule 38 (Respect for Cultural Property) – each party to the conflict shall respect cultural property: it shall not direct attacks against such property unless imperatively required by military necessity.

- Customary IHL Rule 39 (Use of Cultural Property) – the use of cultural property for military purposes is prohibited.

- Customary IHL Rule 40 (Respect for Cultural Property) – each party shall protect cultural property: seizure, destruction, or willful damage to institutions dedicated to religion, charity, education, the arts and sciences, historic monuments, and works of art and science is prohibited.

- Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), Article 4(1) – provides: “The Parties undertake to respect cultural property situated within their own territory as well as within the territory of other Parties by refraining from any act of hostility directed against such property.” Article 4(2) allows derogation only in exceptional cases “where military necessity imperatively requires such a waiver.” This Convention is widely regarded as part of customary international law.

- Hague Convention (1954), Article 19 – extends the Convention to non-international armed conflicts.

- Second Protocol to the Hague Convention (1999), Article 6 – reaffirms respect for cultural property and defines “enhanced protection” for cultural heritage of the greatest importance.

D. Protection of Educational Institutions

- Additional Protocol I, Article 94 – educational institutions enjoy special protection. The parties shall refrain from any act of hostility directed against such institutions.

- Additional Protocol I, Article 52(3) – in case of doubt whether a building normally dedicated to education is being used for military purposes, it shall be presumed not to be so used.

- UN Security Council Resolution 2601 (2021) – adopted unanimously on October 29, 2021, to protect classrooms from conflict, it strongly condemns attacks on schools, children, and teachers; calls on parties to armed conflict to immediately guarantee the right to education; recalls that schools enjoy protection as civilian objects; and condemns the military use of schools. It strongly deplores the targeting of students, teachers, and educational institutions contrary to IHL, and calls on all parties to provide safe access to education in armed conflict.

- UN General Assembly Resolution 64/290 (2010) – in this historic resolution on the right to education in emergency situations, the General Assembly affirmed that attacks on educational buildings constitute a war crime and called on all parties to armed conflict to respect students and educational personnel. It calls upon all parties to armed conflict to fulfill their obligations under IHL and international human rights law and to refrain from actions that impede children’s access to education.

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E. Protection of Medical Personnel and Humanitarian Workers

- Geneva Convention I (1949), Articles 24, 25, and 26 – provide special protection for medical personnel, hospital staff, and the transport of the wounded.
- Additional Protocol I, Article 12 – medical units shall be respected and protected at all times and shall not be the object of attack. The protection to which medical units are entitled shall not cease unless they are used to commit hostile acts outside their humanitarian functions.
- Customary IHL Rule 25 (Medical Personnel) – medical personnel are entitled to respect and protection. They shall not be punished for carrying out their medical duties.

F. Prohibition of Reprisals against Civilians and Protected Objects

- Additional Protocol I, Articles 51(6), 52(1), and 53(c) – reprisals against the civilian population, civilian objects, and cultural property or places of worship are prohibited.
- Geneva Convention IV, Article 33 – no protected person may be punished for an offense he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and all measures of intimidation or terrorism are prohibited.

G. Obligation to Respect and Ensure Respect (Common Article 1)

- Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions – the High Contracting Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the Conventions in all circumstances. This imposes an obligation on all states, including member states of the ICRC, to take action to bring violations to an end.

III. Legal Analysis: Application of the Rules to the Established Facts

A. The Minab School as a Civilian Object – Violation of Distinction (Articles 48, 52, 57 of Additional Protocol I)

The Minab school was an active girls' elementary school, a civilian object by its very nature. The presence of any military installation in the vicinity does not transform the school into a military objective. Under Article 52(3), any doubt as to its status must be resolved in favor of its civilian character. The use of precision-guided Tomahawk missiles confirms intentional targeting. The acknowledgment by the United States Central Command that the attack resulted from “outdated intelligence” demonstrates a failure to take feasible precautions under Article 57. Consequently, the attack constitutes a direct and deliberate attack on a civilian object in violation of the principle of distinction.

B. Double-Tap Attack – Indiscriminate Attack and Targeting of Rescuers (Articles 51(4) and 57 of Additional Protocol I; Customary Rule 15)

The second missile struck minutes after the first, without any re-assessment of the military status of the target and without warning. First responders, parents, and neighbors had gathered to rescue survivors. This pattern is not directed at a specific military objective (the school had already been destroyed) and cannot be justified by military necessity.

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It is therefore an indiscriminate attack under Article 51(4). It also violates the protection of medical personnel and the wounded under Article 10 of Additional Protocol I. The ICRC Commentary confirms that double-tap attacks are generally prohibited. International criminal jurisprudence has consistently treated this tactic as a war crime.

C. Violation of Precautionary Obligations (Article 57 of Additional Protocol I)

The failure to use real-time information to verify the target, and the failure to cancel or suspend the second attack after the first struck a civilian object, constitute a serious violation of Article 57. The obligation to “do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are neither civilians nor civilian objects” was manifestly disregarded.

D. Attacks on Schools and Universities – Violation of Special Protection (Article 94 of Additional Protocol I; Security Council Resolution 2601; General Assembly Resolution 64/290)

The destruction of more than 760 schools and 29 universities and the killing of 310 students and teachers constitute a systematic violation of Article 94 of Additional Protocol I and Security Council Resolution 2601. General Assembly Resolution 64/290 affirms that attacks on educational buildings constitute a war crime. The Minab massacre is the most severe example. Under Article 52(3), any doubt as to the military use of a school must be resolved in favor of its civilian status. No evidence of any such use has been presented.

E. Destruction of Cultural Property – Violation of Customary Rules 38-40 and the 1954 Hague Convention

The damage to 114 historical and cultural sites, 48 museums, and 149 cultural treasures, including areas near UNESCO World Heritage sites, constitutes willful damage to cultural property prohibited by Customary Rules 38-40 and the 1954 Hague Convention. The Preamble to the Convention declares that “damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind.” Military necessity does not justify attacks on Golestan Palace (in central Tehran, far from any alleged military objective) or areas adjacent to Persepolis. Such actions constitute grave breaches of IHL.

F. Violation of the Right to Life and Prohibition of Arbitrary Deprivation of Life under IHL (Common Article 3)

The killing of 3,375 civilians, including 216 children and 26 teachers in Minab alone, violates Common Article 3, which prohibits “violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds.” IHL requires no separate human rights analysis; these killings are unlawful because they result from attacks directed at civilians or from indiscriminate attacks.

IV. Specific Requests to the ICRC

In light of the foregoing, the Union respectfully requests the ICRC to take the following actions:

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1. Issue a public statement addressed to the United States and Israel calling for the immediate cessation of all attacks on civilian objects, in particular schools, cultural property, and medical facilities, consistent with the ICRC's own guidance on the limits of armed conflict.
2. Dispatch a fact-finding mission to Iran to independently investigate and document the violations, especially the Minab double-tap attack, the destruction of educational institutions, and the damage to cultural heritage.
3. Engage in confidential bilateral dialogue with the parties to the conflict, utilizing the ICRC's unique humanitarian diplomacy, to demand compliance with IHL, including Articles 48, 51, 52, 57, and 94 of Additional Protocol I and Customary Rules 15 and 38-40.
4. Coordinate with the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran to ensure humanitarian access to affected populations, care for the wounded, and assistance to displaced persons.
5. Transmit documented findings to competent bodies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNESCO, without prejudice to the ICRC's neutral role.
6. Actively assist in the protection of cultural property in coordination with UNESCO, given that Iran's heritage is part of the common heritage of humanity.

The Union is prepared to cooperate with the ICRC in examining the dimensions of these crimes.

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

Respectfully,

Copy to:

- ICRC Tehran Office (teheran@icrc.org)
- Islamic Committee of the International Crescent (info@icic-oic.org)
- Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – for information
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – for information
- Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office in Geneva – for information



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