



UNSC

STUDY GUIDE

AGENDA

US-IRAN WAR AND THE CEASEFIRE FRAMEWORK

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INTRODUCTION TO THE UN

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945. Currently made up of 193 Member States, the UN and its work are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter. The UN has evolved over the years to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. But one thing has stayed the same: it remains the one place on Earth where all the world's nations can gather together, discuss common problems, and find shared solutions that benefit all of humanity.

The main purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, promote human rights, and encourage international cooperation in addressing global challenges. The organization serves as a global platform where countries can collaborate to address common challenges such as conflict, poverty, inequality, climate change, and humanitarian crises. It operates under the principle of sovereign equality, where every member state has equal representation in the General Assembly, regardless of its economic or political stature. Through its various organs, agencies, and offices located in New York, Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi, the UN continues to play a central role in promoting peace, security, development, and human rights worldwide.

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and is primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security by resolving international conflicts, imposing sanctions, and deploying peacekeeping forces. It is the only UN body with the authority to make legally binding decisions that member states are obligated to implement according to the UN Charter Chapters V, VI, and VII. UNSC can also refer cases to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and monitor Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The Council is reliant on the support of member nations for military personnel and resources needed for the implementation of the proposed solutions.

The Security Council is composed of 15 members: 5 Permanent members (P5): China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, and 10 Non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly. Permanent members can veto; thus, if even one of the P5 countries votes “No” on a substantive resolution (not procedural), the resolution fails. When the UNSC fails to maintain peace due to a veto or deadlock, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) can step in, under the “Uniting for Peace” resolution (Resolution 377 A (V), 1950).

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Tensions built over decades through the 1979 Revolution, nuclear negotiations, sanctions, and proxy wars. But the direct war began on February 28, 2026, when the US and Israel conducted airstrikes on Iranian targets. Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks on US bases in Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain. By March-April 2026, both sides had agreed to a temporary pause through mediation led by Pakistan. However, that pause broke down in July 2026 after new attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz and renewed US strikes on Iranian air defense systems. As of July 2026, the conflict is ongoing with intermittent ceasefires that are repeatedly violated.

Although diplomatic proposals have been exchanged, no binding UNSC resolution has passed due to disagreements. Meanwhile, shipping in the Strait of Hormuz remains under threat, civilian casualties rise, and the risk of the conflict spreading to other states is high. The UNSC is the only body that can legally authorize a ceasefire, deploy monitors, and create consequences for violations. Failure to act could lead to a wider regional war and a global economic crisis. The agenda asks the Security Council to move beyond statements and create a practical, enforceable ceasefire framework that stops the US-Iran war, protects civilians, secures vital trade routes, and restarts diplomacy.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Operation Ajax & The Shah (August 1953): The CIA and British MI6 orchestrate a coup to overthrow Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh, after he nationalized the British-controlled oil industry. The US reinstates Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, cementing a pro-Western, authoritarian regime that breeds decades of deep-seated anti-American resentment.

Revolution & Hostage Crisis (1979 – 1981): The US-backed Shah is overthrown, and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini establishes the Islamic Republic. In November 1979, radical Iranian students storm the US Embassy in Tehran, taking 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. The US severs formal diplomatic ties, a rupture that remains permanently in effect.

The Nuclear Deal (2015 – 2018): Following years of crippling economic sanctions and covert cyber warfare (such as the US-Israeli Stuxnet virus), the Obama administration spearheads the JCPOA agreement. Iran agrees to severely limit its nuclear enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief. In 2018, the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from the treaty and launched a "maximum pressure" economic campaign, prompting Iran to restart its enrichment programs.

The Assassination of Qasem Soleimani (January 2020): A US drone strike in Baghdad kills Major General Qasem Soleimani, the architect of Iran's "Axis of Resistance" proxy network. Iran retaliates with a massive ballistic missile barrage on US bases in Iraq, marking its first direct, overt strike on US forces in decades.

The 'Twelve-Day War' (June 2025): A direct exchange of strikes between Israel and Iran spirals beyond control. USA intervenes by bombing 3 Iranian nuclear sites, while Iran strikes a US base in Qatar. Though a brief ceasefire holds, the UN's nuclear watchdog (the IAEA) warns that Iran has amassed enough material for a rapid weapons-grade breakout.

Operation Epic Fury (February 28, 2026): Responding to heavy Iranian domestic crackdowns and the perceived imminent nuclear threat, the US and Israel launch massive joint preemptive airstrikes. The operation hits key nuclear infrastructure and results in the assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Iran retaliates with regional missile strikes and fully blocks the Strait of Hormuz, crippling the global oil supply.

The Islamabad Memorandum (June 17, 2026): Brokered by Pakistan and Qatar, a 14-point interim ceasefire is signed remotely. It trades the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and temporary oil sanction waivers for a 60-day freeze on all active hostilities. Structural issues regarding proxy networks and nuclear ceilings are completely deferred.

The Ceasefire Collapse (July 8, 2026): Because those core structural gaps remain unresolved, the interim framework violently collapses. The US launches renewed strikes on roughly 90 Iranian military targets, and the IRGC instantly retaliates against US military installations in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar. This is the exact flashpoint where your UNSC committee will convene.



CURRENT SITUATION

Following the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum (MoU) on June 17, 2026, the international community anticipated a 60-day window to negotiate a permanent settlement. Instead, the framework collapsed within three weeks, plunging the region into a volatile "no war, no peace" status. The primary catalyst for the ceasefire's failure was the disputed control over the Strait of Hormuz. Despite the MoU's core objective to reopen the strait for global oil transit, Iran sought to assert control over the waterway. Iranian naval forces began warning commercial ships to use pre-approved routes and follow regime-mandated protocols, with the ultimate goal of collecting transit fees from international shipping.

When these demands were ignored, Iran followed through on its threats, firing on multiple vessels including three commercial ships between July 6 and July 7. This direct kinetic activity tested the absolute limits of the Islamabad MoU. On July 7th, U.S. forces stepped up direct strikes against Iranian naval and coastal assets. Later that day, President Donald Trump officially declared that he considered the June truce to be over.

3 days later, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed new sanctions on Iranian financial facilitator Ali Ansari. This move violated a clause within the MoU that committed the U.S. to avoid imposing any new economic sanctions on Iran during the 60-day window. Iran responded by launching heavy ballistic missile barrages against U.S. military bases stationed in Qatar, Oman and Jordan, the very nations actively attempting mediation. President Trump announces that the U.S. military will actively blockade Iran in the Strait of Hormuz and begin charging ships for safe passage under U.S. naval protection.

The situation on the ground is deadlocked. Neither side appears capable of fully deterring the other, yet both are attempting to avoid a return to the massive, theater-wide combat seen during Operation Epic Fury in February.

ROOT CAUSES

1. **Mistrust:** Iran, following Operation Ajax, JCPOA withdrawal and Regime Change rhetoric in 2026, does not trust the USA to protect its state sovereignty and freedom. While the USA doesn't trust Iran due to its nuclear enrichment program.
2. **The Strait of Hormuz:** Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Strait is classified as an international strait where all vessels enjoy the right of transit passage. However, Iran has not ratified UNCLOS, ergo it recognizes only the more restrictive right of "innocent passage." Whenever the USA threatens Iran, it weaponises the strait's freedom of passage.
3. **The Nuclear Dilemma:** Once a nation possesses a stockpile of 60% enriched uranium, the physical and mathematical steps required to enrich it to weapons grade, which is 90%, are incredibly small. This gap can be bridged in less than a month. The USA and Israel claim to have received intelligence that Iran was close to achieving it.

4. The Israel-Iran Rivalry: Post-1979, the Islamic Republic adopted an uncompromising anti-Zionist stance, framing Israel as an illegitimate Western outpost in the Middle East. Israel operates under a defense policy (the Begin Doctrine) which dictates that no regional adversary hostile to Israel's existence can be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, pushing the U.S. toward a military solution.

5. Conflicting Hegemonic Interests: The U.S. seeks to preserve secure global tradepoints (like the Strait of Hormuz), protects its regional allies, and prevents any single hostile power from dominating the Middle East's vast energy reserves. Meanwhile, Iran has built a "Forward Defense" strategy - funding, training, and arming the Axis of Resistance (Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and various Shia militias in Iraq). Resultantly, they'll project their power in USA interest-points and make it so costly and unstable, that the U.S. is forced to withdraw.

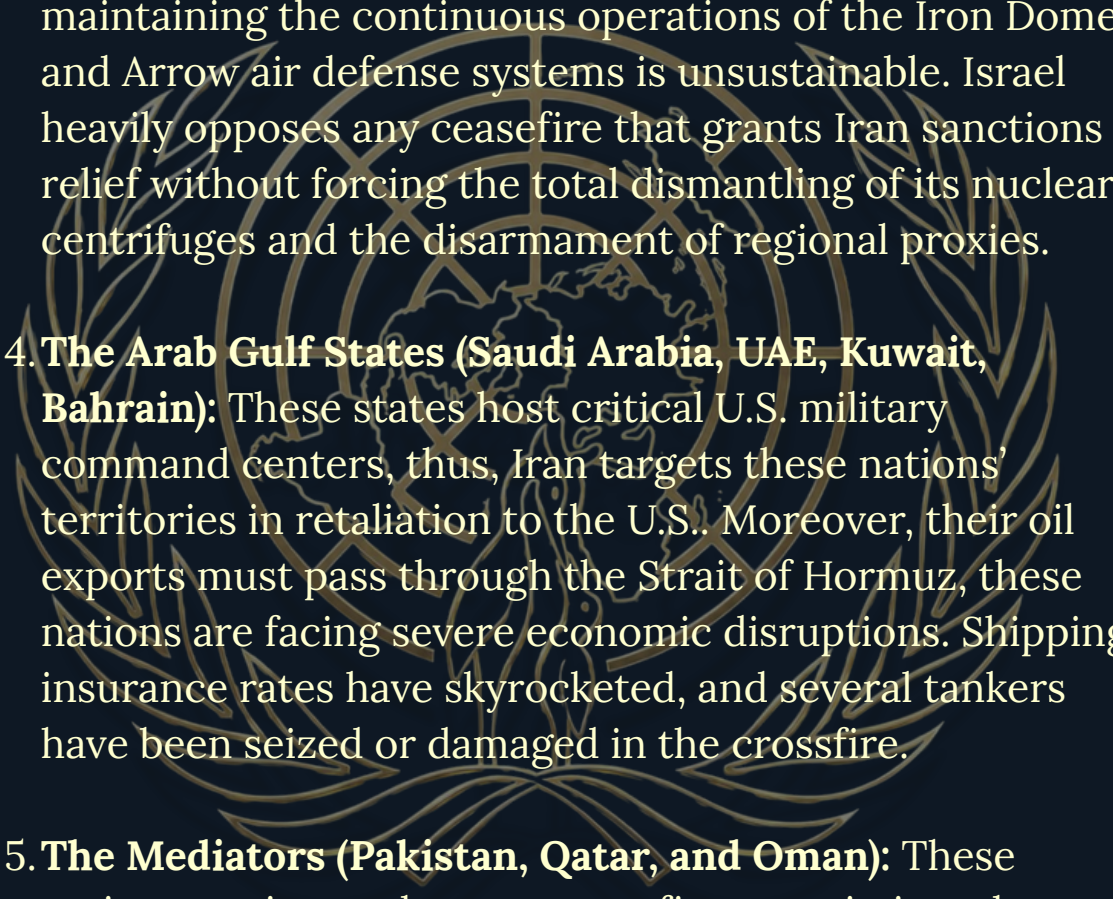
6. The Structural Defects of the Islamabad Memorandum:

The agreement ordered an immediate freeze on military operations but failed to establish a neutral, third-party UN monitoring mechanism on the ground to verify compliance. The framework demanded a ceasefire from "all active fronts," but completely ignored the decentralized command-and-control structure of Iran's regional proxy networks (the "Axis of Resistance"), which the US holds Tehran responsible for. Lastly, it left existing, complex unilateral Treasury sanctions active.



KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- 1. The United States of America:** With thousands of U.S. troops stationed across the Middle East, the U.S. is facing a severe casualty threat. Moreover, the ongoing blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has sent global oil prices spiking, triggering sharp domestic inflation in the U.S.. The administration is facing massive public pressure to resolve the crisis before economic instability damages the domestic political landscape.
- 2. The Islamic Republic of Iran:** Decades of sanctions, compounded by the complete blockade and the failure of the Islamabad Memorandum's \$300 billion stabilization fund, have pushed the Iranian economy to the brink of hyperinflationary collapse. Following the February decapitation strikes, Iran is operating under a fragile, transitional leadership structure. The IRGC has consolidated domestic security, but they are highly wary of widespread civilian unrest if food and energy shortages worsen.

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3. **The State of Israel:** Israel's facing intermittent rocket and drone barrages from Hezbollah, Houthi forces in Yemen, and Shia militias in Syria and Iraq. The economic cost of mobilizing hundreds of thousands of reservists and maintaining the continuous operations of the Iron Dome and Arrow air defense systems is unsustainable. Israel heavily opposes any ceasefire that grants Iran sanctions relief without forcing the total dismantling of its nuclear centrifuges and the disarmament of regional proxies.
4. **The Arab Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain):** These states host critical U.S. military command centers, thus, Iran targets these nations' territories in retaliation to the U.S.. Moreover, their oil exports must pass through the Strait of Hormuz, these nations are facing severe economic disruptions. Shipping insurance rates have skyrocketed, and several tankers have been seized or damaged in the crossfire.
5. **The Mediators (Pakistan, Qatar, and Oman):** These nations are integral to any ceasefire negotiations, but also, targets. Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base, which hosts U.S. forces, was recently targeted by Iranian retaliatory strikes. For Pakistan, sharing a long land border with Iran means any total collapse of the Iranian state would trigger a massive refugee and security crisis in its western provinces (Balochistan).

6. Regional Armed Groups & Non-State Actors: The "Axis of Resistance", though not formal parties to bilateral treaties, these paramilitary groups are closely tied to funding and support from Iran. With sanctions, their funding channels decrease. Any ceasefire framework's success is contingent on whether combat operations between Israel/US and these non-state allies are included.



THE EFFECTS AND IMPACTS OF THE CONFLICT

1. **Global Economic and Energy Crisis:** With roughly 20% of the world's petroleum liquids paralyzed within the Gulf, global crude prices skyrocketed, breaching an estimate of \$140 per barrel within 48 hours of the July collapse. Maritime insurance syndicates have designated the entire Persian Gulf as a "Listed Area" (maximum risk), raising hull war premiums by over 400%. The sudden spike in energy costs has increased manufacturing and shipping costs, threatening a severe crisis across Western economies and importing nations.
2. **Humanitarian Crisis:** With an estimated 12,000+ non-combatant deaths since Feb 2026, a near-total collapse in Iranian coastal provinces, and severe shortages across Iran and parts of the Levant, Iran is facing a severe humanitarian crisis. Moreover, a lack of oil is endangering people worldwide due to depleted energy.

3. Regional and Multilateral Security Architecture:

Following the disruption of centralized command and control in Tehran, various regional proxy factions within the "Axis of Resistance" are beginning to act autonomously. While the international non-proliferation framework's credibility is depreciating. Neighboring states are driven to increase defense expenditures, expand air-and-missile defense networks, and recalculate security alliances—balancing formal security guarantees with diplomatic hedging between Western powers, China, and Russia.

4. IAEA Access & Safeguards Continuity: Conflict severely disrupts routine inspections, nuclear material tracking, and surveillance monitoring. A key term of any ceasefire framework is restoring IAEA access to verify enrichment thresholds, centrifuges, and stockpiles to mitigate breakout risks. The success of monitoring mechanisms within a ceasefire dictates broader global non-proliferation norms, setting benchmarks for how targeted military interventions affect treaty compliance and verification regimes.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: IRAQ - KUWAIT CONFLICT, UNSC Resolution 687 (1991):

Following the 1990–1991 Gulf War, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 687 to formally end hostilities between Iraq and the coalition forces. Rather than simply calling for a ceasefire, the resolution established a detailed framework governing Iraq's post-war obligations. It created the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to identify and eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes, established a demilitarized zone along the Iraq–Kuwait border monitored by a UN observer mission, linked the lifting of sanctions to Iraqi compliance, and set up a compensation mechanism for victims of the conflict.

CASE STUDY 2: LEBANON - ISRAEL CONFLICT, UNSC Resolution 1701 (2006):

Following the 34-day conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1701 to bring an end to hostilities and stabilize southern Lebanon. The resolution called for an immediate cessation of attacks, expanded the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to monitor the ceasefire, and required that no armed groups other than the Lebanese Armed Forces operate in southern Lebanon. It also emphasized humanitarian access for civilians and called for the disarmament of armed groups alongside respect for the Blue Line.

CASE STUDY 3: IRAN-IRAQ WAR, UNSC Resolution 598 (1987):

After eight years of conflict between Iran and Iraq, the Security Council adopted Resolution 598 in an effort to end one of the longest conventional wars of the twentieth century. The resolution demanded an immediate ceasefire, required both sides to withdraw to internationally recognized borders, and asked the UN Secretary-General to deploy observers to verify implementation. It also called for negotiations on the exchange of prisoners of war and a broader post-conflict settlement.

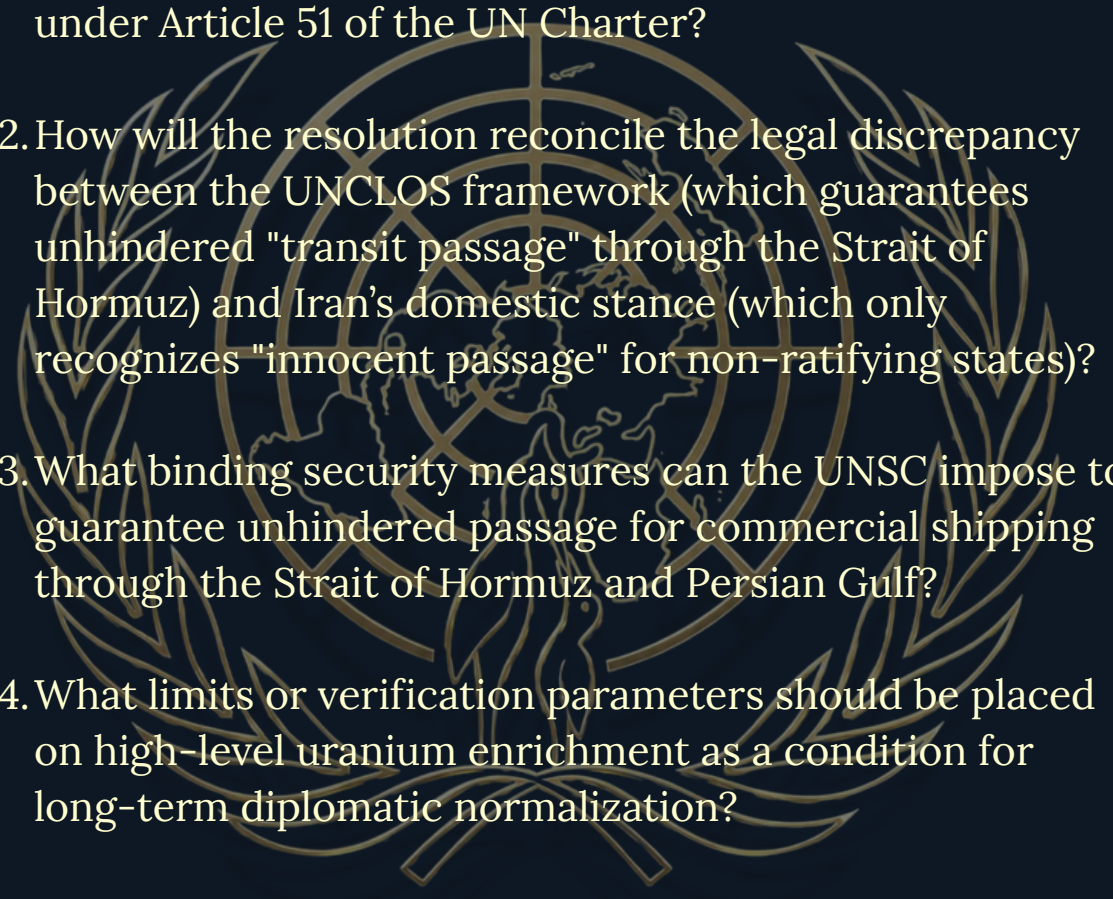
KEY INTERNATIONAL BODIES INVOLVED

1. **The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):** The UN's primary nuclear watchdog, responsible for verifying compliance with non-proliferation agreements (like the NPT and the former JCPOA) and actively monitoring nuclear material. Following the outbreak of joint U.S.-Israeli strikes, the agency reported a total loss of "continuity of knowledge" across Iran's declared nuclear facilities, with inspectors currently having no situational awareness regarding Iran's centrifuge production, heavy water inventory, or uranium enrichment levels.
2. **The International Maritime Organization (IMO):** The UN specialized agency responsible for the safety, security, and environmental performance of international shipping. The IMO is on the front lines of the Strait of Hormuz blockade, attempting to implement a highly dangerous evacuation plan for thousands of civilian seafarers stranded on merchant vessels confined within the Gulf. On July 13, 2026, the IMO Council adopted a firm resolution condemning the attacks on commercial ships, demanding de-escalation, and explicitly rejecting any attempts to impose tolls or charges on transit passage in accordance with international law.

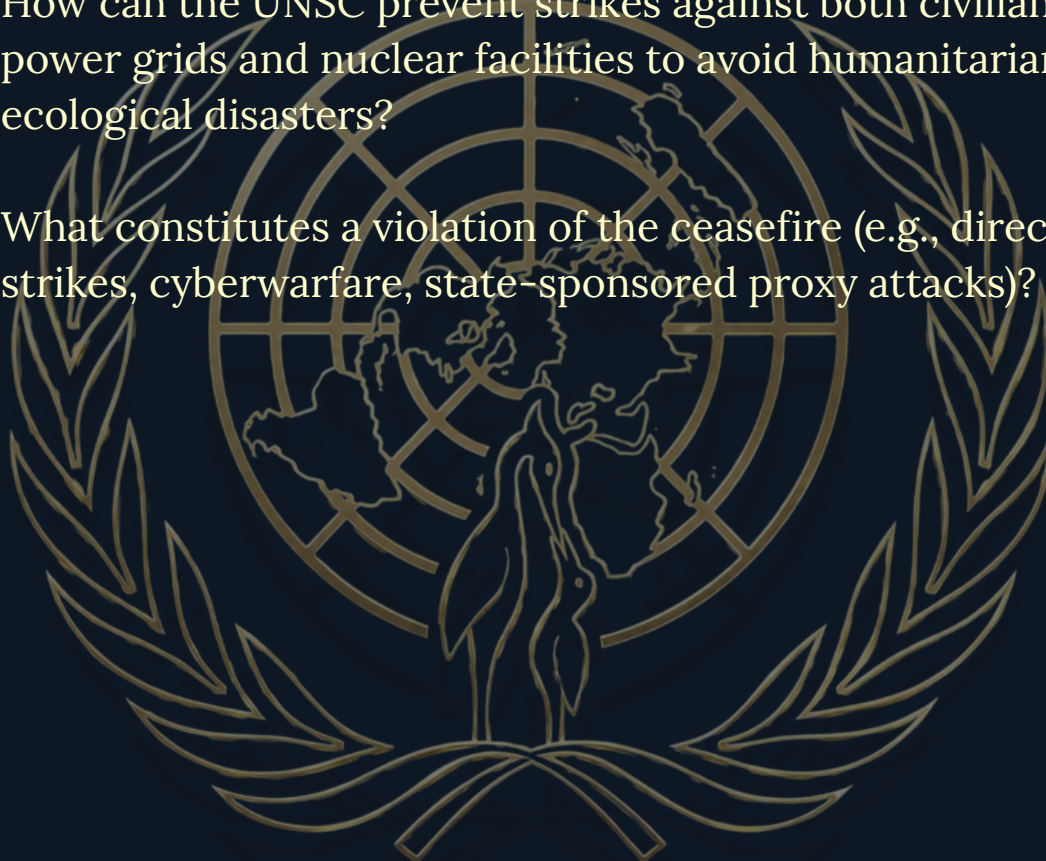
3. **The International Court of Justice (ICJ):** The principal judicial organ of the UN, responsible for settling legal disputes submitted by member states and providing advisory opinions on international law. While the UNSC handles the security crisis, the ICJ provides the underlying legal framework for implementation.



QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

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1. How will the resolution address the United States' claim of "preemptive individual and collective self-defense" under Article 51 of the UN Charter?
 2. How will the resolution reconcile the legal discrepancy between the UNCLOS framework (which guarantees unhindered "transit passage" through the Strait of Hormuz) and Iran's domestic stance (which only recognizes "innocent passage" for non-ratifying states)?
 3. What binding security measures can the UNSC impose to guarantee unhindered passage for commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf?
 4. What limits or verification parameters should be placed on high-level uranium enrichment as a condition for long-term diplomatic normalization?
 5. Under what specific timeline or compliance benchmarks could UN or unilateral economic sanctions be conditionally frozen or lifted?
 6. How will the resolution legally account for the actions of non-state actors (e.g., Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthi forces in Yemen, Shia militias in Iraq)?

7. What specific demands will the resolution place on regional proxy networks to secure Israel's northern and southern borders?
8. How can the UNSC prevent strikes against both civilian power grids and nuclear facilities to avoid humanitarian or ecological disasters?
9. What constitutes a violation of the ceasefire (e.g., direct strikes, cyberwarfare, state-sponsored proxy attacks)?



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