

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Address by
His Excellency Dr Araghchi, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs
at the
International Conference
‘International Law Under Attack: Aggression and Defence’

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Distinguished scholars and thinkers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to Tehran and to the Institute of Political and International Studies (IPIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I am delighted to have the opportunity to be here and exchange views at this conference today, on the highly significant topic of international law under attack.

Distinguished guests,

On the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, and at a time when we might have expected to witness unprecedented adherence to the principles and foundations of international law as universal virtues, and a celebration of the international community’s achievements in this domain, we are regrettably witnessing a full-scale assault on these very principles by revisionist powers.

Today, we stand before a reality to which one can no longer turn a blind eye or leave unspoken: international law is under attack. The world faces profound challenges, worrying trends, and unprecedented strategic shifts at various levels.

The foundational pillars of international law have come under the most severe attacks from powers that were expected to be its custodians as the

perpetual proponents of the post-Second World War international order. Even the established normative structure since the founding of the United Nations has descended into widespread chaos, to the extent that instead of ‘war and violence’ being the exception and ‘peace and coexistence’ the rule, violence and war have become a new norm in international relations and the use of military tools has become the standard for advancing the foreign policy objectives of certain countries.

The current situation is the fruit and upshot of anti-international law trends that have, regrettably, been pursued in recent years by the United States and some of its allied states in favour of a West-centric order, under the slogan of a ‘rules-based international order’ rather than a ‘law-based international order.’

In practice, the rules-based order has been interpreted and construed based on the transient and seasonal intentions, objectives, and interests of Western countries, and, by and large, in opposition to international law, serving in the most selective manner possible as a tool for the intoxicated hegemonic ambitions of the United States and the West.

Regrettably, the countless warnings from leading international figures and various countries, including the Global South, regarding the necessity of returning to an international law based on universality, equality, and the rejection of force and discrimination, have gone unheeded. This has reached a point where today, there is even less talk of a rules-based order, and in effect, we are witnessing an attempt by the United States and some of its allies to construct a ‘force-based international order.’

Esteemed professors and researchers,

The President of the United States came to the White House with the doctrine of ‘peace through strength.’ It was not long before it was clear that this

doctrine was, in essence, a code for operations and a cover for a new framework of action: ‘hegemony through force,’ and indeed, naked force.

What American officials repeatedly state today, without any embellishment, leaves no room for interpretation regarding this reality. The US President clearly states that America no longer wishes to act based on valid political considerations and within the framework of international law, and simply wishes to come out as the ‘winner.’ This is the manifesto of a hegemonic America, and in practice, a return to the law of the jungle.

In this manifesto, the Secretary of Defence becomes the Secretary of War, and the testing of nuclear weapons is once again on the agenda. A president who styles himself as the president of peace arbitrarily attacks wherever he pleases without reason or justification, orders the evacuation of cities, demands unconditional surrender, and violates and rips all international laws, even the commitments of his predecessors.

If this trend of the naked and reckless use of force and the continuous assault on the foundations of international law is not the law of the jungle, then what is it? From any perspective, this trend certainly cannot and must not continue.

The latest statistics that have come out indicate that the world’s military budget has approached an unprecedented \$3 trillion, the highest growth in several decades. In 2024 alone, an average of over 7 per cent of government budgets was allocated to militarism, and estimates for 2025 are at least 10 per cent. This increase spans all geographical regions of the world and will yield but only one outcome: more widespread war, violence, and tension. And that, for good reason: in the jungle that the US has created, there is no law, and to defend oneself, one must be strong.

As a consequence of this excessive militarisation, today we are witnessing widespread geopolitical fissures, increasing rivalries among major powers, the

development of missiles, nuclear arsenals, and offensive weapons, the weaponisation of peaceful technologies such as ordinary telecommunications equipment, cross-border conflicts involving regional medium powers, multi-layered chaos in the international and regional order, a decline in economic, cultural, and even military convergence among nations, and most importantly, the marginalisation of diplomacy. The truth is that when the Israeli regime attacked Iran on the 13th of June, under the order and guidance of the President of the United States, the first bombs were fired at the negotiating table between Iran and the United States—negotiations of which five rounds had been held, with the sixth round slated for two days later, the 15th of June. Diplomacy was the first victim of the 12-day war.

Distinguished audience,

The West Asia region, as one of the most internationalised regions of the world, is the primary victim of this tragic situation, and its developments are directly influenced by the aforementioned trends. Indeed, the developments in this region, particularly over the past two years, serve as a perfect mirror of these dangerous anti-peace and anti-international law trends.

It is no secret how the Tel Aviv regime, as an agent and appendage of the United States in the West Asia region, pursues its boundless and dangerous geopolitical ambitions by attacking the most fundamental principles of international law. This regime, relying on a blank cheque from Washington and some European states, and emboldened by billions of dollars in NATO and Western weapons and military equipment, and the immunity they have created for it in international forums, has committed and continues to commit the most heinous of crimes against humanity, mass killings, murder, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.

Over the past two years, the regime has attacked seven countries, and in addition to Palestine, has occupied new areas in other countries, including Lebanon and Syria, while shamelessly speaking of redrawing the regional order of West Asia and a 'Greater Israel.' It has now become an established fact that no country in the West Asia region is safe from the military and security aspirations of the Israeli regime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following this same logic and within the framework of its geopolitical illusions and aspirations, the Israeli regime—under the full direction and guidance of the United States, as its president recently admitted—launched a surprise attack at midnight on the 13th of June, just two days before the sixth round of nuclear negotiations in Muscat, against diplomacy and the possibility of reaching an agreement through peaceful means.

The Zionist regime's aggression into Iranian territory, the martyrdom of a number of civilians, the assassination of commanders in their residences, and the targeting of peaceful nuclear facilities not only violated the most fundamental principles of international law and repeated articles of the UN Charter but also constituted an all-out assault on the safeguards and non-proliferation regime.

On the eightieth anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki tragedies, the United States, with its aggressive, rogue, and profoundly irresponsible attacks on peaceful nuclear sites on Iranian soil that are under IAEA supervision, committed another crime and once again became the number one threat to global peace and security.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on the right of legitimate defence of its land and people against an unlawful aggression, not only stopped the aggressors but also, with the severe blows it dealt them, demonstrated that although the Iranian nation is a peace-loving nation, in times of war it stands firm to the end

and makes the aggressor regret its actions. Everyone witnessed how, within nine days, the message of ‘unconditional surrender’ changed to that of a request for an ‘unconditional ceasefire,’ and the initial illusions about the Iranian nation and establishment faded out.

The conduct of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as one of the founders of the United Nations, has always been in full compliance with international law. Iran’s nuclear programme is fundamentally based on our recognised rights under Article IV of the NPT. The development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, including enrichment, is the inalienable right of the Iranian nation—a right from which we have never deviated. For years, Iran was fully under the most comprehensive IAEA verification regime and adhered to all its technical obligations.

Following the 2015 nuclear deal, the Islamic Republic of Iran fully upheld its commitments under the JCPOA and UN Security Council Resolution 2231, as verified by 15 consecutive IAEA reports. It was the United States, , not Iran, that unilaterally and without any reason withdrew from the agreement. Had the United States remained committed to its obligations under the JCPOA, we would be in a completely different situation today.

Iran’s response to the aggression of Israel and the United States was carried out precisely in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, namely the ‘inherent right of self-defence.’ Our defensive operation was designed in observance of the principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction between military and civilian targets. Iran, even at the height of threat and aggression, observed the norms of international humanitarian law. Unlike the Israeli regime, which massacres hundreds of civilians at the slightest pretext, none of Iran’s actions were directed at residential or civilian areas. The Islamic Republic of Iran has proven that in all crises and conflicts, it acts within the bounds of the law, while the aggressors have trampled upon the UN Charter, the non-proliferation

regime, the principles of justice, and even the peremptory norms of international law before the eyes of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

International law, although under unjust attack, is still alive—provided, of course, that we all defend it. The challenges I mentioned earlier also come with great opportunities, including global and regional awareness of the current critical situation, and a consolidated global will for inclusivity, avoidance of militarism, and cooperation based on collective interests. We must all return to an approach founded on a recommitment to the valuable human achievements in the rule of law, the prohibition of force and aggression, and the advancement of the spirit of the UN Charter. If this dangerous trend of lawlessness, extra-legal behaviour, and the use of brute force is not stopped today, we may all witness more bitter experiences in the future.

The world and the region are today at a crossroads, choosing between two discourses. On the one hand, there is the discourse of domination, hegemony, and the quest for supremacy; the use of force and securitisation; militarism, war, and violence—in a word, the law of the jungle. On the other, there is a global discourse based on law and universal international law; egalitarianism based on convergence, dialogue, and peace within a collective framework. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes in the latter path and is prepared, in cooperation with the Global South and responsible governments, to play its part in returning the world order to a law-based one.

In our surrounding region, Iran seeks a strong region based on common understanding, brotherhood, and peace. We need an inclusive approach that taps into all regional capacities. The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the security of the regional countries to be the security of its own and desires for ‘lasting trust’ to be the foundation and axis of the new ambient in this region. We must all play

our positive role in this region and establish a new doctrine for security, peace, prosperity, and convergence.

Thanking my colleagues at the IPIS, I hope that today's conference will contribute to the development of the theoretical and practical foundations of this discourse.

Thank you for your attention.