



**Statement of the President of the American Branch of the International Law Association  
Regarding the United States Attack on Iran  
March 6, 2026**

Founded more than one hundred years ago, the American Branch of the International Law Association (ABILA) is dedicated to the study, clarification, and development of International Law and the advancement of peace, human rights, and justice worldwide. At its last quarterly meeting, on January 16, 2026, by a vote of 30-0, the ABILA Board issued a statement condemning the U.S. intervention in Venezuela as unlawful and unjustifiable under international law. Between Board meetings, it sometimes falls to the ABILA President to issue Statements on important matters of international concern related to our mandate.

In the past week, the United States and Israel have unleashed massive aerial attacks against Iran and have targeted and killed the country's leader. Iran has responded with an explosion of violence across the Middle East.

Having consulted with the ABILA Board, I issue this Statement to condemn the unlawful U.S. military intervention against Iran and to express grave concerns about the scope of Iran's retaliation.

The prohibition on the use of force became a universal norm with the adoption of the U.N. Charter after World War II, and with the imposition of accountability for violations at Nuremberg – accomplishments in which the United States played a leading role. That prohibition is the keystone of the modern international legal order. Not coincidentally, despite intermittent conflicts, the 80 years since the establishment of the United Nations have been the most peaceful in human history, enabling unprecedented advances in human rights, development, and equality.

Those achievements are now at risk, with potentially devastating consequences.

The U.S. attacks against Iran cannot be justified as lawful self-defense. Iran has not attacked the United States, and even the Pentagon recognizes that there was no evidence of an imminent Iranian attack.

Rather, a decision was made to “pre-empt” any possible Iranian attack on a theory of self-defense against speculative future threats, such as nuclear proliferation or terrorism. However, the notion of preemptive war, which is the same theory that the Russian Federation invoked for its illegal invasion of Ukraine, has never been accepted as legitimate. Acceptance of such a doctrine would not only destabilize the Middle East but also increase the risk of war everywhere.

Some have suggested a further rationale: ending the atrocities committed by the Iranian regime. Iran has unquestionably supported terrorism abroad and perpetrated widespread violence against peaceful protesters at home. But humanitarian intervention under the “responsibility to protect” (R2P) doctrine must be carried out pursuant to Chapters VI and VII of the U.N. Charter under the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, which would have required United Nations authorization in this case.

Much debate in the United States has focused on whether the decision to launch a war by the President complied with U.S. law since Congress is given the power to declare War under Article



I § 8 of the U.S. Constitution and the War Powers Act in implementation thereof. This is indeed a weighty question, but it is not the only one. U.S. military action abroad is governed by both U.S. law and international law. Accordingly, U.S. military intervention in Iran would have violated international law even had Congress approved it.

Only by respecting the limits on the use of force can the United States credibly condemn unlawful aggression and war crimes by other States, such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. If this most fundamental rule of international law is weakened through repeated violations, the world risks returning to a system in which power, rather than law, dictates outcomes—a world incompatible with peace, human rights, equality, and sustainable development.

While the ABILA is non-partisan in nature, it is committed to peace, justice, and the rule of law – values that are threatened by the U.S. attacks on Iran. The ABILA therefore urges the United States to end this unlawful military action without delay and to reclaim its rightful role as a defender of the international legal order it helped to build, and from which the American people have immeasurably benefited.

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