UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Agenda: *Addressing the Human Rights Violations and the Humanitarian Crisis arising from the Israel-Iran-US conflict*

Chair : Shivraaj Gandoak

Vice-Chair : Aryenn Shriram

TABLE OF CONTENTS :

I) Letter from the Executive Board

II) List of Key Terms

III) Introduction to the Committee

IV) Introduction to the Agenda

IV.A) Origins and Evolution of the Conflict

IV.B) Escalation into Direct Conflict

IV.C) Current Humanitarian Situation

IV.D) Legal Frameworks Governing the Crisis

IV.E) International Responses and UN Action

V) Humanitarian Impact of the Conflict

VI) Questions A Resolution Should Address

I) **Letter from the Executive Board**

Esteemed Delegates,

On behalf of the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Rights Council at Kanakia Model United Nations, 2026, we extend our warm greeting and heartfelt welcome. We look forward to engaging in meaningful discussion and deliberations on one of the most pressing humanitarian and human rights crises confronting the international community.

The agenda before this committee, "Addressing Human Rights Violations and the Humanitarian Crisis Arising from the Iran–Israel–U.S. Conflict" concerns an issue at the intersection of civilian protection, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, humanitarian access and accountability. The continuing conflict has resulted in extensive civilian casualties, displacement, damage to essential infrastructure and the disruption of healthcare, education, food, water and other fundamental services. Its consequences have also extended beyond the immediate conflict zone, affecting neighbouring States, vulnerable populations and regional humanitarian operations.

As members of the Human Rights Council, delegates must examine the responsibilities of all relevant actors while considering the protection of civilians, vulnerable populations, independent monitoring and practical humanitarian assistance. This study guide is intended only as an introductory resource, and delegates are strongly encouraged to conduct independent research using relevant United Nations documents, legal instruments, reports and contemporary developments.

We look forward to thoughtful debate, constructive negotiations and substantive deliberations throughout the committee. We wish all delegates the very best and hope that the sessions will be both engaging and intellectually rewarding.

Warm Regards,
Shivraaj Gandoak | Chairperson

Aryenn Shriram | Vice - Chairperson

II) List of Key Terms

Human Rights - Human rights are the basic rights and fundamental freedoms inherent to all human beings, stating that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) - The OHCHR is the leading entity on human rights and serves as the focal point for United Nations human rights activities.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) - defined as a milestone document adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948 that outlines the fundamental rights and freedoms inherent to all human beings. It serves as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, declaring that these rights are universal, inalienable, and must be protected globally.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) - It is a State-led mechanism that regularly assesses the human rights situations of all United Nations Member States.

Special Procedures - The Special Procedures are individuals or groups, not employed by the UN, who speak out on themes such as education, health, free speech, and human trafficking, as well as on country situations including Ukraine, DPRK, Eritrea, and Iran, among others.

Advisory Committee - The Advisory Committee serves as the Council's "think tank," providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues.

Complaint Procedure - The Complaint Procedure allows people and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Human Rights Council.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) - Focuses on civil and political freedoms, such as freedom of speech, the right to a fair trial, and the right to vote.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) - Focuses on socio-economic and cultural rights, such as the right to education, health, and adequate work.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) -** It is an independent, neutral humanitarian organization that protects and assists victims of armed conflict worldwide.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) - regulates the conduct of war to protect victims and limit combat methods during armed conflicts.

International Human Rights Law (IHRL) - permanently protects individual rights and freedoms against state abuse during both peace and war.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) - Individuals forced to leave their homes but who remain within the borders of their own country.

Humanitarian Access - The ability of humanitarian organisations to safely and impartially reach populations in need and deliver essential assistance.

Humanitarian Corridor - An agreed route or arrangement intended to facilitate the safe movement of civilians or the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

III) Introduction to the Committee

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 states responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them. It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the **United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)**.It responds to human rights emergencies and makes recommendations on how to better implement human rights on the ground. The Council benefits from substantive, technical, and secretariat support from the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).**

The Human Rights Council does the following:

- Serves as an international forum for dialogue on human rights issues with UN officials and mandated experts, states, civil society, and other participants;
- Adopts resolutions or decisions during regular sessions that express the will of the international community on given human rights issues or situations. Adopting a resolution sends a strong political signal which can prompt governments to take action to remedy those situations;
- Holds crisis meetings known as **special sessions** to respond to urgent human rights situations, 36 of which have been held to date;
- Reviews the human rights records of all United Nations Member States via the **Universal Periodic Review**;
- Appoints the **Special Procedures**, independent human rights experts who serve as the eyes and ears of the Council by monitoring situations in specific countries or by looking at specific themes; and
- Authorizes commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, which produce hard-hitting evidence on war crimes and crimes against humanity.

  The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is

mandated by the **UN General Assembly** to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization, by all people, of all human rights. The Charter of the United Nations, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, and **international human rights laws and treaties** established those rights. UN Human Rights was created by the General Assembly in 1993 through its **resolution 48/141** which also details its mandate.

UN Human Rights is mandated to:

- **Promote and protect all human rights for all**
- **Recommend that bodies of the UN system improve the promotion and protection of all human rights**
- **Promote and protect the right to development**
- **Provide technical assistance to States for human rights activities**
- **Coordinate UN human rights education and public information programmes**
- **Work actively to remove obstacles to the realization of human rights and to prevent the continuation of human rights violations**
- **Engage in dialogue with Governments in order to secure respect for all human rights**
- **Enhance international cooperation for the promotion and protection of all human rights**
- **Coordinate human rights promotion and protection activities throughout the United Nations system**
- **Rationalize, adapt, strengthen and streamline the UN human rights machinery.**

IV) Introduction to the Agenda

The mandate of the UNHRC is fundamentally rooted in the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as addressing the situations of human rights violations and making recommendations to strengthen their implementation. The escalation of the conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States has placed before the international community one of the most significant humanitarian and human rights crises of the year. Since the resumption of high intensity hostilities in February 2026, the conflict has generated serious concerns regarding the protection of civilians and compliance with international humanitarian law and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights while a parallel deterioration of the domestic human rights situation within Iran has further compounded the civilian toll.

The present crisis has represented the accumulation of decades of political hostilities, strategic rivalries and disputes that were unresolved involving the three main actors. For much of this time, confrontation was mostly indirect and it was conducted through various ways. However the direct exchanges between Israel and Iran in 2024 and the major escalations in 2025 following the involvement of the United States in direct military operations against Iran further transformed what had historically been a regional rivalry into a massive conflict involving severe international implications.

The consequences of the February 2026 escalation have extended far beyond the immediate battlefield. Civilians have faced the effects of aerial and missile strikes, displacement, destruction of houses and disruption of essential services. The conflict has also had a massive impact on the healthcare systems, humanitarian operations and civilian infrastructure while its regional expansion has even affected the neighbouring States and important civilian maritime and economic activities. By August 2026, the conflict had developed into a prolonged and complex regional confrontation with significant humanitarian consequences. The crisis has additionally raised concerns extending beyond the conduct of hostilities as the armed conflicts have created situations in which access to information, freedom of expression,peaceful assembly and other fundamental rights have come under increased pressure. In Iran, these concerns intersect with an

already deteriorating domestic human rights situation that had drawn the attention of the Human Rights Council prior to the February escalation, including through the Council's January 2026 Special Session.
For the Human Rights Council, the main challenge is not just to examine the military conduct of the conflict but also to address its consequences for human dignity. The agenda requires delegates to consider how civilian protection, humanitarian access, independent monitoring and accountability mechanisms can be strengthened while remaining within the mandate of the council.

IV.A) Origins and Evolution of the Conflict

Relations between Iran and the United States had deteriorated following the 1979 Iranian Revolution while Iran and Israel ended up as major regional adversaries over questions of security, military capabilities and regional influence. These tensions were further intensified by concerns surrounding Iran’s nuclear programme and its relations with armed groups across the Middle East.

The Iranian nuclear issue became the main source of disagreement among the 3 states. In 2015, the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** tried to limit the nuclear activities of Iran in exchange for sanctions and was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through Resolution.2231. However the United States withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 and the following deterioration of the framework revived concerns surrounding the nuclear programme of Iran and further deepened regional mistrust.

For decades, confrontation remained largely indirect which involved several covert operations, cyber activity, targeted strikes and regional partners rather than the sustained direct warfare. This system of indirect deterrence began to weaken massively following the wider regional escalation after October 2023. By April 2024, Israel and Iran had crossed a major threshold when Iran launched an unprecedented direct drone and missile attack against Israel.

IV.B) Escalation into Direct Conflict

The transition from shadow confrontation and minor conflicts into conventional warfare occurred over several years, marked by an increasingly dangerous cycle of direct retaliation. Following the historic direct missile and drone exchanges in April 2024 sparked by the Israel-Palestine issue, the de-facto framework of large scale deterrence that had historically contained hostilities across the region collapsed. Throughout 2025, retaliatory exchanges escalated into sustained offensive operations. The United States' military intervention into the region alongside Israel targeted key strategic, command, and logistical facilities, prompting retaliatory ballistic strikes across critical corridors. What had once been fought through proxy factions, maritime disruption, and cyber operations rapidly solidified into direct, international confrontation.

On 28 February 2026, the situation reached a devastating turning point as high-intensity military hostilities resumed with unprecedented scale. Combat operations quickly moved past remote military installations and began impacting densely populated civilian centers. The deployment of advanced aerial bombardments, long-range missile systems, and unmanned aerial drones resulted in immediate civilian casualties and widespread devastation across urban landscapes. Alongside direct strikes, the conflict heavily crippled dual-use civilian infrastructure, including electrical grids, fuel depots, communication nodes, and municipal water purification facilities. As blackouts and structural destruction spread, the daily survival of millions of ordinary citizens was thrown into immediate jeopardy. Concurrently, belligerent governments instituted nationwide states of emergency, which swiftly curtailed basic freedoms. In Iran, these wartime declarations were accompanied by extensive domestic security crackdowns, characterized by sweeping internet blackouts, aggressive censorship of independent journalism, bans on peaceful assembly, and widespread detentions under the justification of safeguarding national security.

IV.C) Current Humanitarian Situation

By mid-2026, months of uninterrupted regional hostilities culminated in a complex and compounding humanitarian emergency. Mass internal displacement emerged as one of the most urgent crises, with hundreds of thousands of civilians driven from their homes by sustained bombardment and structural devastation. These displaced populations have been forced into makeshift shelters, overcrowded community halls, and under-resourced public buildings that completely lack fundamental sanitation, clean running water, and adequate food distribution systems. Overcrowded conditions have fueled the rapid spread of waterborne illnesses and infectious diseases, while the complete collapse of regional supply chains has left urban centers facing critical shortages of daily essentials and astronomical inflation for basic staples.

Simultaneously, the healthcare infrastructure across the affected territories has buckled under the immense strain of war. Hospitals and local clinics, already damaged by surrounding combat and paralyzed by prolonged power outages, are operating far beyond their intended capacity while facing severe shortages of emergency medical supplies, trauma kits, anesthetics, and life-saving medications for chronic conditions such as diabetes and renal failure. The civilian toll has fallen disproportionately upon vulnerable demographics, particularly children, pregnant women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Primary and secondary schooling has been halted across entire provinces, severing youth from essential education and safe community spaces while leaving an entire generation exposed to acute physical trauma and enduring psychological distress. Compounding this tragedy, international relief operations managed by organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations humanitarian agencies remain severely obstructed by persistent shelling, fuel deficits, and complex military checkpoints that effectively blockade the delivery of life-saving aid to trapped populations.

IV.D) Legal Frameworks Governing the Crisis

This crisis engages an overlap of **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** and **International Human Rights Law (IHRL).** It is important to distinguish between the rules governing the conduct of the hostilities and those protecting the individuals during and beyond the armed conflict. IHL, primarily reflected in the four **Geneva Conventions of 1949** and their **Additional Protocols**, regulates military operations through the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. It also establishes the protections for civilians, medical personnel, humanitarian workers and objects indispensable to civilian survival. These standards are central to assessing attacks to civilian infrastructure.

IHRL continues to apply during the armed conflict and is subject to lawful limitation or derogations. **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** remains relevant to the protection of life, freedom from torture, arbitary detention and restrictions on expression, particularly in relation to the domestic crackdown and communication blackout in Iran. **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** further protects economic and social rights, including access to healthcare, food, water, housing and education. Accordingly, the destruction or disruption of essential services must be assessed not only as a humanitarian concern but also in relation to the affected population's fundamental rights.

The protection of displaced persons is addressed through the **1951 Refugee Convention**, its **1967 Protocol** and the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning individuals to places where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. The UDHR provides the normative foundation for these protections, while **Human Rights Council Resolution 60/251** establishes the Council's institutional mandate. Within this framework, the Council may examine alleged violations through special sessions, Fact-Finding Missions, Special Procedures and reporting mechanisms while supporting accountability, humanitarian access and the protection of civilians.

IV.E) International Responses and UN Action

In response to the spiraling violence, the international community has struggled to mount a cohesive, unified diplomatic intervention. Early warnings regarding the region's trajectory were formally registered in January 2026, when the United Nations Human Rights Council convened a Special Session to address the alarming degradation of domestic civil liberties, arbitrary detentions, and state crackdowns within Iran. However, as the localized human rights crisis expanded into sustained regional warfare in February 2026, the diplomatic focus of the United Nations shifted toward urgent civilian protection, the enforcement of International Humanitarian Law, and the prevention of mass atrocities. High-ranking UN officials and human rights bodies have repeatedly condemned the indiscriminate targeting of civilian hubs and appealed directly to all involved state parties to respect the inviolable principles of the Geneva Conventions.

Despite the mounting urgency, high-level diplomatic resolution has been systematically impeded by sharp geopolitical fractures. Within the United Nations Security Council, emergency sessions and draft resolutions calling for immediate humanitarian pauses, diplomatic de-escalation, and secured relief corridors have repeatedly collapsed under the weight of political deadlocks and vetoes cast by permanent members. In the absence of an enforceable political settlement, United Nations humanitarian agencies—including the World Food Programme, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization—have mobilized regional emergency appeals, attempting to deploy mobile medical clinics and food convoys under exceptionally hazardous conditions. At the Human Rights Council, independent experts and Special Procedures mandate-holders have increasingly emphasized the critical need for independent fact-finding mechanisms and international monitoring teams. These bodies continue to press for unrestricted access to conflict areas, asserting that establishing impartial documentation of civilian harm and potential war crimes is an indispensable prerequisite for achieving accountability and preserving basic human dignity.

V) Humanitarian Impact of the Conflict

The humanitarian crisis characterizing this agenda is directly tied to the chronological breakdown of regional deterrence, marked by direct military exchanges, deliberate and collateral destruction of civilian centers, and retaliatory state actions. Prior to the eruption of internationalized hostilities, the human rights landscape inside Iran was already fracturing. On December 28, 2025, widespread domestic demonstrations erupted across Iranian cities following the collapse of the national currency. In response, Iranian state authorities and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) initiated an aggressive domestic suppression campaign. On January 8, 2026, the Iranian government imposed a nationwide communications and internet blackout to halt public mobilization and block the flow of information to the outside world. Security forces utilized live ammunition, lethal force, and mass detentions against street demonstrators, actions that international human rights organizations and UN special mandate-holders reported had claimed thousands of civilian lives.

In response to this domestic deterioration, international mechanisms attempted to intervene. On January 23, 2026, the United Nations Human Rights Council convened its 39th Special Session in Geneva specifically addressing the human rights crisis in Iran. The Council adopted a formal resolution condemning the state's use of disproportionate lethal force, demanding an immediate end to capital punishment for demonstrators, calling for the unconditional lifting of the internet blackout, and extending the mandate of the independent international fact-finding mission. However, the domestic crisis rapidly merged into a wider geopolitical confrontation as diplomatic talks over Iranian nuclear enrichment and regional military posturing collapsed, setting the stage for direct interstate warfare.

On February 28, 2026, the nature of the conflict fundamentally transformed when the United States and Israel launched a massive, joint military air campaign targeting command facilities, air defense networks, nuclear installations, and leadership compounds across 28 regions of Iran. Commencing midmorning, nearly 900 strikes were carried out within the first 12 hours under the American military designation "Operation Epic Fury," coupled with the largest offensive air sorties in the history of the Israeli Air Force. The strikes killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ali

Khamenei and multiple senior cabinet and defense officials. Beyond political and military headquarters, the bombardment inflicted immediate and severe civilian tolls. That same morning, an aerial strike hit directly adjacent to the Shajareh Tayyebeh primary school in Minab while targeting a neighboring IRGC naval base; human rights monitors, including Amnesty International, reported that the strike killed approximately 156 civilians, including 120 school children, raising immediate accusations of violations of International Humanitarian Law regarding the principles of distinction and precaution.

Within hours of the February 28 assault, Iran executed an extensive retaliatory campaign, firing hundreds of ballistic missiles and thousands of unmanned aerial loitering munitions across the Middle East. Rather than limiting strikes to military assets, Iranian forces launched 23 waves of missile salvos targeting urban centers and military bases across Israel—including central Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and southern districts—damaging residential properties and civilian neighborhoods. Simultaneously, Tehran expanded its retaliatory operational footprint by firing drones and ballistic missiles into neighboring sovereign states hosting foreign military assets, striking sites across Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. This broad retaliation triggered extensive destruction in port and transit hubs, killed foreign migrant workers and local residents, and caused regional commercial aviation and maritime networks to completely freeze. Furthermore, Iranian forces effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz—the maritime bottleneck carrying roughly a quarter of the world's seaborne petroleum—by seizing commercial vessels, laying naval mines, and harassing cargo carriers.

Throughout March 2026, the humanitarian toll escalated dramatically as infrastructure became the central focus of warfare. On March 21, following persistent maritime gridlock in the Strait of Hormuz, the United States issued an ultimatum threatening the direct destruction of major Iranian domestic energy facilities. Subsequent strikes severely compromised electrical generating plants, fuel refineries, and telecommunications towers across several western Iranian provinces. The destruction of electric grids immediately crippled water purification plants and municipal sewage networks, cutting off millions of urban residents from reliable potable water and initiating sharp outbreaks of waterborne illness, notably acute diarrheal disease and hepatitis among displaced children. The collapse of the regional cold-chain infrastructure caused the

destruction of temperature-sensitive medical supplies, including insulin, blood plasma, and childhood vaccines, leaving municipal hospitals completely paralyzed.

A temporary diplomatic opening materialized on April 7–8, 2026, when an interim two-week humanitarian ceasefire was brokered by Pakistan with diplomatic pressure from regional states and China. High-level direct bilateral talks were convened in Islamabad on April 11–12 between the United States and Iranian delegations—representing the highest-level direct diplomatic engagement between the two nations since 1979. Despite this engagement, talks collapsed over maritime access. When Iranian authorities refused to lift restrictions on the Strait of Hormuz without a total lifting of foreign sanctions, the United States declared a naval blockade of all commercial transit heading to Iranian ports. Although major air bombardment temporarily slowed, the enforcement of the naval blockade severely curtailed imports of food, raw agricultural components, and specialized medical technologies, exacerbating an acute food insecurity crisis across vulnerable Iranian urban populations.

Hostilities reignited forcefully in early June 2026, driven by regional cross-border fire. On June 1, following Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon, Iran launched renewed missile barrages toward Israeli military and logistics hubs, prompting retaliatory air operations and naval engagements near Hormuz. Between July 7 and July 9, 2026, the United States and Iran engaged in their largest direct exchange of heavy ordnance since the February invasion. The United States and Israel conducted renewed strike packages against logistics depots, while Iranian authorities formally declared that all regional territory and critical maritime corridors would be considered active targets. By August 2026, civilian displacement across the region reached unprecedented levels, with over 1.2 million individuals internally displaced or stranded in border camps across the Middle East. Essential health services have reached the point of structural failure, with medical workers operating without sterile supplies or anesthesia.

Under the purview of the UN Human Rights Council, delegates must recognize that these successive waves of warfare have created structural human rights violations that extend far

beyond combat zones. Belligerent parties face documented allegations: the United States and Israel for launching strikes against populated areas and dual-use energy grids that cause disproportionate civilian casualties and structural deprivation; the Iranian state for deploying unguided or indiscriminate ballistic missiles and drones against civilian cities across the Gulf, unlawfully choking international humanitarian maritime routes, and utilizing internal wartime martial laws to arbitrarily execute and suppress its domestic population. The immediate imperative before the Council is establishing clear mechanisms for humanitarian corridors, securing the protection of civilian infrastructure, and ensuring independent accountability for international human rights and humanitarian law violations committed by all state parties.

VI) Questions A Resolution Should Address

There are various problems that a resolution passed in this committee should solve. They include:

- How can the international community incentivize fighting parties to spare facilities that civilians depend on for survival?
- What practical agreements or verification methods could keep essential facilities running during active hostilities?
- How should safe passage for aid workers and emergency supplies be organized and guaranteed?
- Who should oversee and monitor aid corridors to ensure they remain safe and strictly non-military?
- What immediate steps can international agencies and regional neighbors take to improve conditions in displacement camps?
- What programs or protections should be prioritized for children, the elderly, and injured civilians?
- Where is the acceptable boundary between a state protecting its security and upholding basic human rights like communication and free expression?
- How can people trapped in war zones stay connected to family members and critical emergency updates if networks are restricted?

VII) Bibliography

- *https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/about-council*
- *https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr*
- *https://www.amnesty.org*
- *https://www.hrw.org*
- *https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions*
- *https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights*
- *https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights*
- *https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights*
- *https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/overview/1951-refugee-convention*
- *https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/special-sessions*