



## The Legality of Operation Roaring Lion

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### Why the Operation Roaring Lion is Part of an Ongoing Armed Conflict?

Operation “Roaring Lion” was not the initiation of a new armed conflict. Rather, it was conducted within the framework of a years-long ongoing armed conflict between Iran and Israel.

For years, Iranian aggression against Israel has included:

- Extensive and systematic attacks through Iranian proxies and affiliated armed groups (including Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Houthis).
- Direct attacks by Iran against Israel across multiple domains (including ballistic missile and drone attacks in April and October 2024).
- Sustained cyber operations and covert attacks.

This is part of an armed conflict that Iran initiated and has waged for years through a sustained pattern of direct and proxy-based armed attacks against Israel. This conduct has been accompanied by repeated public statements by senior Iranian officials expressing the intent to destroy the State of Israel.

The Operation was therefore carried out within the wider ongoing armed conflict between Iran and Israel. It addressed escalating threats, including nuclear weaponization efforts and ballistic missile expansion.

In sum, It is not that Israel “started” a new war, but that it conducted military operations as part of an already existing international armed conflict that Iran had sustained for years through direct and indirect armed attacks.

Iran started this campaign of aggression, and Israel will ensure the threat is brought to an end.

## The Legality of Targeting the Supreme Leader of Iran

### Factual Background

- On Saturday, the IDF eliminated arch-terrorist Ali Khamenei in a precise aerial strike.
- By virtue of his role as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in accordance with the regime’s laws, Ali Khamenei served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces.
- Accordingly, Khamenei functioned as the highest military authority within the Iranian regime and the final decision-maker on all military matters in Iran.

- During the ongoing armed conflict between Iran and Israel, Khamenei actively exercised his authority as Commander-in-Chief and was the guiding and approving authority for the use of force against Israel.
- In this capacity, he was responsible for the direction, funding, and strengthening of the regime's proxies, foremost among them Hezbollah, the Houthis, Shiite militias in Iraq, and other Iranian-backed actors that have operated against Israel.
- The strike was carried out while Khamenei was together with other senior military officials, who themselves also constituted clear military targets.

## **Legal Framework**

- The strike was conducted within the context of an ongoing armed conflict between Iran and Israel, in accordance with international law. In the conflict between Israel and Iran, the international law of armed conflict applies.
- In accordance with the principle of distinction, and given his role as Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, Khamenei constituted a lawful military target.
- The neutralization of the Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces, together with the senior command echelon, carried a concrete, direct, and significant military advantage, including impairing the ability to plan, direct, and coordinate attacks against Israel. In accordance with the principle of proportionality under the law of armed conflict, this military advantage was weighed in advance against the expected incidental harm from the strike, and it was assessed that the anticipated incidental harm would not be excessive in relation to the expected military advantage.
- In accordance with the obligation to take precautions, feasible operational measures were taken to minimize incidental harm.
- The strike against arch-terrorist Khamenei fully complied with international law.

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