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Iran: President Trump's apocalyptic threats of large-scale civilian devastation demand urgent global action to prevent atrocity crimes

Responding to the United States President Donald Trump's statement about Iran on Truth Social on 7 April 2026, warning that "a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again", Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International said:

"President Trump's very act of making such apocalyptic threats, including his warning of ending 'a whole civilization', reveals a staggering level of cruelty and disregard for human life. It becomes all the more terrifying when coupled with his explicit threats to directly attack civilian infrastructure by bringing about the 'complete demolition' of Iran's power plants and bridges.

"International humanitarian law strictly prohibits direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects. The US President's threat of extermination and irreparable destruction brazenly shreds core rules of international humanitarian law, with potentially catastrophic consequences for over 90 million people. It may constitute a threat to commit genocide, a crime defined by the Genocide Convention and by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as committing one or more defined acts 'with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.'



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"The stakes could not be higher. The international community, including the UN Security Council, regional bodies and all states must urgently intervene to avert an impending catastrophe and unequivocally affirm that inciting, ordering or committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide entail individual criminal responsibility under international law.

"President Trump's threats, coupled with escalating USA and Israeli attacks destroying civilian infrastructure, are terrorizing millions of people in Iran and their distressed relatives abroad as tens of millions of lives hang in the balance. We call for immediate action to stop unlawful attacks that would plunge an entire country into darkness and deprive millions of their fundamental human rights to life, water, food, healthcare, and an adequate standard of living.

"In recent days, US and Israeli forces have attacked civilian infrastructure, including power plants, bridges, universities, steel factories and petrochemical facilities, killing and injuring civilians, condemning the population to years, if not decades, of deepened economic hardship, inflicting serious harm on civilian health and the environment, and leaving long-lasting damage to civilians' lives and livelihoods.

"Intentionally attacking civilian infrastructure constitute war crimes under international law. Even in the limited cases that civilian infrastructure qualify as military targets, a party still cannot attack them if this may cause disproportionate harm to civilians. Power plants, water systems and energy infrastructure are indispensable to civilian life, underpinning access to clean water, medical care, hospital electricity, food supply chains, and basic livelihoods. Attacking them would be disproportionate and thus unlawful under international humanitarian law and could amount to a war crime."

Background

In recent days, President Trump has repeatedly issued escalating threats against Iran's energy and transport infrastructure, **warning** that unless the Iranian authorities reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the United States would carry out the "complete demolition" of the country's power plants and bridges. He also threatened to bomb Iran "back to the Stone Age".

On 5 April, President Trump **warned** that Iran could be "taken out in one night" and set a deadline of 8pm Eastern Time on 7 April for Iranian authorities to comply. He further vowed that every power plant and bridge in the country would be left "burning, exploding, and never to be used again".

On 7 April, the Israeli military issued an overly broad **warning** to civilians in Iran to avoid trains and railway lines nationwide, stating that being near such infrastructure would "endanger your life".

During the same period, USA and Israeli strikes across Iran struck bridges, petrochemical facilities and steel factories, killing and injuring civilians and heightening fears of widespread, unlawful attacks on essential civilian infrastructure.