

Documenting US actions, countering dangerous narrative-building should be Foreign Ministry's top priority

INTERVIEW

As Iran moved past two weeks of heightened unrest, an assessment of the causes and drivers of these tensions reveals indications of foreign government involvement in their escalation—evident in several statements and, at times, explicit or inadvertent admissions. While the unrest in Iran initially took place against the backdrop of economic woes and livelihood challenges facing the population, certain actions and remarks by current and former US officials contributed to what became one of the most difficult periods in recent Iranian history. At a time when the Iranian government, while acknowledging and lending legitimacy to public protests and economic demands, sought to move toward easing economic hardships, figures such as former US secretary of state Mike Pompeo openly spoke of Mossad agents operating on the streets of Tehran. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump, through a series of intermittent, ambiguous and contradictory posts on his social media platform Truth Social, claimed to be supporting the Iranian people and protesters. Incitement to rebellion against Iran's governing organizations and bodies, threats against the government and the existing political system, alongside political and economic pressure and admissions regarding Israeli operative's presence in Iran, constitute clear examples of interference in the internal affairs of another state—conduct that is prohibited under international law and established international norms.

To examine the relevant international legal frameworks governing such interference, the following interview was conducted with Reza Nasri, an international law expert and senior analyst of international relations.

In recent weeks, and alongside protests in Iran, US and Israeli officials made statements that appeared to influence the trajectory of these protests. From the perspective of international law, what are the consequences of inciting unrest in another country, and are there legal rules governing such interventions?

NASRI: The principle of non-intervention is one of the peremptory and foundational norms of customary international law. It is enshrined in Article 2(7) of the United Nations Charter and has been reaffirmed in subsequent interpretive instruments. Under this principle, any coercive or non-coercive interference by states in the internal or external affairs of another state—including its political, economic, social or cultural system—is prohibited.

UN General Assembly Resolution 2625, known as the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations among States, explicitly states that no state has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatsoever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. The actions taken by the United States in recent weeks constitute clear examples of such prohibited intervention.

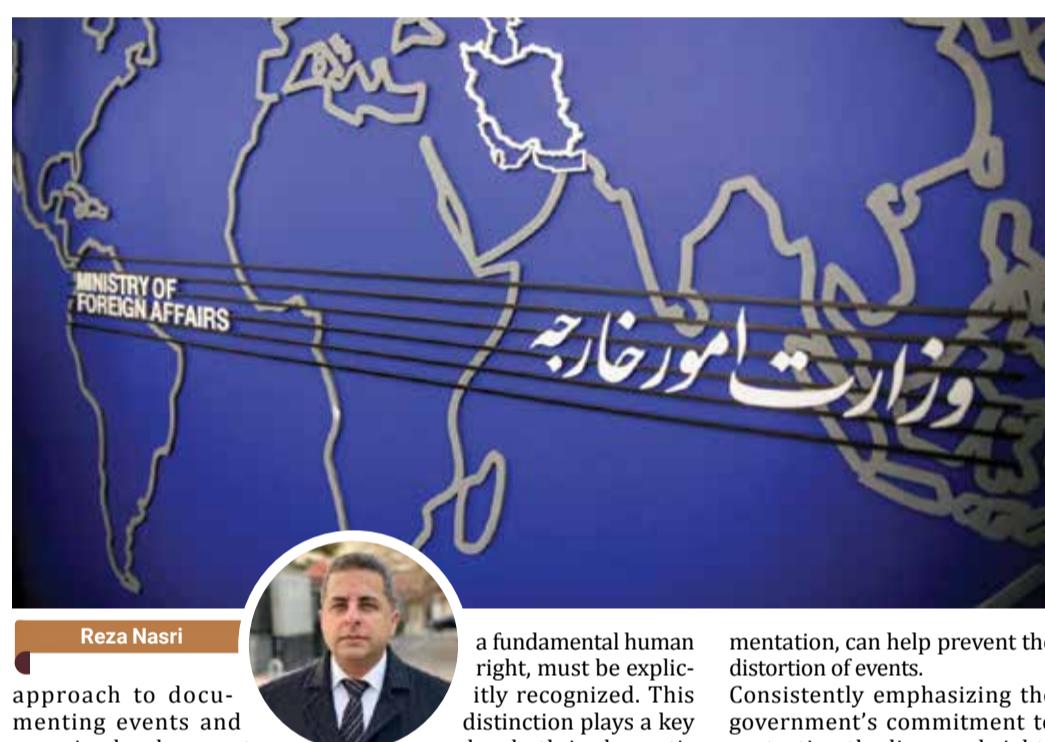
In addition, the “threat” of the use of force, just like the actual use of force, violates Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. In this regard as well, the United States has breached the Charter. This article obliges UN member states to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Even the threat of military intervention, absent any actual use of force, constitutes a violation of this provision and invalidates the legality of any subsequent action against a country such as Iran. The deliberate inclusion of the word “threat” alongside “use” reflects the clear intent of the Charter’s drafters to prevent all forms of political and military pressure on states.

In short, Iran is an independent state, and interference in its internal affairs constitutes a violation of international law; the threat of force is prohibited; the US government has no legal justification for military intervention; and the creation of a crisis in order to justify intervention is itself unlawful.

From a legal standpoint, and in light of the events of recent weeks in Iran, what steps should the Islamic Republic take to document these actions?

From a legal perspective, and given recent developments, the Iranian government can and should adopt a coherent, multi-layered



Reza Nasri

approach to documenting events and pursuing legal accountability. As a first step, comprehensive and standardized documentation is of fundamental importance. This includes the systematic collection of all material and digital evidence, such as photographs and videos, forensic medical reports, witness statements, telecommunications data, and official documents from law enforcement and judicial bodies. Accurately recording the timing, location and sequence of events, as well as clearly establishing the causal link between provocative statements by foreign officials and the actions of organized armed groups inside the country, is essential to ensure that these materials are admissible and credible in international organizations.

Alongside this, drawing a clear legal distinction between peaceful protests and violent or armed actions is critically important. The right to peaceful protest, as

a fundamental human right, must be explicitly recognized. This distinction plays a key role—both in domestic law and in the international legal narrative—in preventing conceptual confusion and political exploitation.

In this context, reliance on established frameworks of international law, particularly the UN Charter and the rules governing the international responsibility of states, is essential for legally framing the issue. The publication of official, well-documented judicial reports—written in precise legal language and accessible to international audiences—serves as a key reference point within this framework.

Finally, active legal diplomacy and evidence-based dissimulation of information play a complementary yet vital role. Submitting substantiated reports to the UN Secretariat, the Human Rights Council and other relevant mechanisms, coupled with targeted engagement with international media based on verifiable docu-

mentation, can help prevent the distortion of events.

Consistently emphasizing the government’s commitment to protecting the lives and rights of peaceful protesters, ensuring transparency in statistics and reporting, and demonstrating accountability for any potential violations are not only human rights obligations but also important assets for strengthening the country’s legal position at regional and international levels.

Another issue that must be taken seriously is countering the dangerous narrative-building that has emerged in recent days concerning Iran’s political independence and territorial integrity. In recent days, some US think tanks and media outlets have spoken about the necessity of occupying Kharg Island and seizing Iran’s oil resources. While these remarks were not made by official authorities, such narratives and proposals must not be allowed to gain traction or be normalized in the international arena.

It is essential both to inform the

public about the hostile schemes of the opposing side and to respond, in the international media space, to such verbal provocations and planning directed against Iran’s rights, interests and security. The public should be aware that the monarchist movement—and Mr. Reza Pahlavi, [the exiled son of the deposed shah], who at one point wrote to National Geographic magazine to prevent the Persian Gulf from being renamed the “Gulf” in an effort to appear “national”—has today aligned itself under the banner of overtly anti-Iranian movements and lacks even the courage to respond to such blatant affronts to Iran’s territorial integrity.

How effective can Iran’s legal actions be in this context, and to what extent can they move beyond symbolic gestures toward holding intervening actors accountable? What should be the Iranian Foreign Ministry’s main priority and mission under current conditions?

The reality is that a remarkable number of international organizations—particularly those with executive or quasi-judicial authority—are, in practice, influenced by the structural power imbalance, political pressure and disproportionate influence of the United States. This influence manifests not only in decision-making processes but also in the setting of priorities, agenda-building and even the interpretation of international legal rules.

As a result, securing a binding resolution or enforceable decision against the United States—especially on issues that directly affect its strategic interests—appears unlikely under current international conditions.

That said, this reality should not lead to abandoning or downplaying engagement with international organizations. On the contrary, legal and diplomatic recourse to these bodies, even when a negative outcome is anticipated, serves important strategic functions.

First, it contributes to formally documenting the country’s legal positions and leaves behind a written, citable record for history. Second, such engagement helps inform global public opinion and challenges the dominant narrative advanced by powerful states. In effect, even defeat within formal institutions can translate into success in the arena of public opinion.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no instrument other than diplomacy at its disposal, and it must deploy that instrument to the fullest extent possible to reduce tensions and neutralize threats.

This interview first appeared on IRNA in Persian.



The photo shows a wall in the conference hall of the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

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A building and several cars are set ablaze during riots in Tehran, Iran on January 9, 2026.

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