
A Cry from the Rubble: An Urgent Appeal for International Justice regarding the Attack on Minab School

21 April 2026

To:

Permanent Representatives and Permanent Missions to the United Nations

From:

A Collective of Teachers, Students, Parents, and University Faculty Members

Subject: Urgent Appeal for International Attention and Accountability regarding the Attack on the Shajareh Tayyebbeh Girls' School in Minab, Iran

Your Excellencies,

We write to you as teachers, students, parents, and members of the academic community who are deeply shaken by the devastating attack on the Shajareh Tayyebbeh Girls' School in the city of Minab, located in Hormozgan Province in southern Iran.

Across cultures and nations, schools represent places of learning, safety, and hope. They are spaces where children develop the knowledge and confidence needed to build peaceful and prosperous societies. When a school becomes the site of military violence, the impact reaches far beyond the immediate victims. It challenges the fundamental principles that underpin international humanitarian law and the collective commitment of the international community to protect civilians.

On 28 February 2026, at approximately 10:45 AM local time, the Shajareh Tayyebbeh Girls' School was struck by multiple missiles during a military operation conducted by the United States and Israel against Iran.

Available information indicates that the school had long functioned solely as an educational institution. Although it had historically been located near a naval facility belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, satellite imagery shows that the school had been physically separated from that facility for many years and operated independently as a civilian educational building with its own walls and entrances.

After the first missile struck the school, school staff gathered the students in the school's prayer hall in an attempt to protect them and ensure their safety. A large number of students were therefore assembled inside the prayer hall when it was subsequently struck by another missile. What had been a moment intended for reflection and community became, within seconds, a scene of devastation.

Reports from international media outlets indicate that at least 168 people were killed, the majority of them girls between seven and twelve years of age, and many others were injured.

Investigative reporting by major international news organizations, including *The New York Times* and *Reuters*, has suggested that the munition used in the second strike was a Tomahawk cruise missile. Public reporting has further indicated that concerns have been raised regarding the intelligence used in identifying the target.

If confirmed, these circumstances would raise serious questions regarding compliance with the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution in attack. Educational institutions are civilian objects and are entitled to protection unless they are being used for military purposes.

Under International Humanitarian Law, schools are not military objectives and states shall give due care in their operations not to cause any harm to civilians and civilian objects. Pursuant to Article 52(1) of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions and under customary international law, "civilian objects shall not be the object of attack or of reprisals." The attack on Minab School was not collateral damage; it was a direct attack on the school that killed so many children. In an international armed conflict, intentionally directing attacks on schools is a war crime under Article 8(2)(b)(ix) of the Rome Statute. Further, the same action amounted to war crimes under Article 8(2)(b)(i) & (ii) of the Rome Statute, since it both targeted children who are neither able nor willing to take direct parts in hostilities and civilian objects. How can children in Minab, aged mostly from 7 to 11, possibly take direct part in hostilities? What kind of threat were they posing to any country in the world? They were merely enthusiastic to take direct part in class discussion in order to make their teachers happy that they were following them very well. It was the last minutes of their last session in the school, and they were waiting for the next ring bell of their school to go to a 15-minute break. They finally heard a sound far much higher than the ring bell, which made many of them into shreds and made others suffer under the rubble and experience death second by second, while they were hopeful to hug their parents after school. Fathers and mothers who expected to receive end-of-term report cards instead pulled the lifeless bodies of their children from beneath the bricks.

The number of victims in this crime and the manner it was committed can indicate a policy behind this attack, making it both systematic and widespread, resulting in the commission of the crime against humanity of murder under Article 7(1)(a) of the Rome Statute. The use of outdated intelligence and the failure to verify the current status of the school represents a manifest failure to take feasible precautions, including the obligation to verify that objectives are military objectives and to take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and methods of attack.

This tragedy should also be understood in a broader context. In recent weeks, numerous civilian areas and infrastructure in several Iranian cities have reportedly come under attack, including residential neighborhoods and educational institutions. According to the latest figures released by Iran's Ministry of Education, at least 120 schools across the country have been partially or completely destroyed. This raises serious concern for the safety of civilians, particularly children, and for the protection of schools during armed conflict.

Beyond the legal framework, attacks against schools represent a profound assault on the universal right to education and on the safety and dignity of children during times of conflict.

Your Excellencies,

For the families of Minab, this tragedy is not merely a legal question but a profound human loss. Parents who sent their children to school expecting them to return home at the end of the day instead faced the unimaginable grief of searching for them among rubble.

For educators, the consequences are equally devastating. Teachers now confront the painful question of how children can be encouraged to return to classrooms if those classrooms are no longer perceived as safe.

The protection of children and educational institutions during armed conflict is not only a legal obligation but a shared moral responsibility of the international community.

In light of this tragedy, we respectfully call upon Permanent Missions to the United Nations to:

- Reaffirm the universal principle that schools and children must be protected during armed conflict.
- Encourage transparent and independent international efforts to clarify the circumstances of the attack.
- Support initiatives within the United Nations system aimed at ensuring accountability should violations of international law be established.

- Promote international dialogue and cooperation to strengthen the protection of educational institutions in situations of armed conflict.
- Support humanitarian attention to the affected families and the reconstruction of damaged educational facilities.

Your Excellencies,

The ruins of the prayer hall in Minab stand today as a painful reminder of how vulnerable children remain in times of war. Yet from beneath those ruins arises a call for justice and for the reaffirmation of humanity's shared commitment to protect the innocent.

The safety of schools and the dignity of education transcend borders, politics, and conflict. They represent a universal value that the international community has repeatedly pledged to defend.

We therefore respectfully urge all Permanent Missions to the United Nations to help ensure that this tragedy is addressed with seriousness, transparency, and compassion, and that the protection of children remains an unwavering priority of the international community.

Respectfully,

The Undersigned

12,177 teachers, students, parents, faculty members, and members of the academic community.