



Statement on the Deployment of Military Assets in Densely Populated Areas

March 2026

This statement is submitted to draw the attention of legislative bodies, international organisations, and human rights monitoring mechanisms to the legal and humanitarian implications of deploying or concealing military equipment in densely populated urban environments. Such practices—regardless of the actor or political context—pose severe risks to civilian populations and constitute violations of core principles of international humanitarian law.

Under the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, parties to any armed conflict are obligated to distinguish at all times between civilian objects and military objectives. The placement of military assets within civilian areas disregards this distinction and exposes civilians to direct and foreseeable harm.

Article 51 of Additional Protocol I explicitly prohibits the use of civilians to shield military objectives from attack. Concealing weapons or military infrastructure within residential neighbourhoods, public facilities, or civilian infrastructure may constitute a form of human shielding and is therefore prohibited under international law.

The 2022 Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas underscores that the deployment or use of such weapons in urban settings is inherently indiscriminate and results in extensive civilian harm. This Declaration reinforces the obligation to avoid any military positioning that increases risks to civilian populations.

All parties must take constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects. The deliberate positioning of military equipment in populated areas violates the principles of proportionality and precaution by creating foreseeable civilian casualties and damage in the event of hostilities.

Such conduct may constitute a **serious violation of international humanitarian law**.

- Commanders and responsible officials may face **individual criminal liability**, including for war crimes.
- States or armed groups engaging in such practices may incur **international responsibility** for resulting civilian harm.
- These actions contribute to **long-term instability**, destruction of essential infrastructure, and heightened humanitarian crises.

In light of the above, parliaments, international organisations, and human-rights bodies are urged to:

- Support **independent documentation, monitoring, and verification** of such practices.
- Reaffirm the imperative of **civilian protection** and strict adherence to international humanitarian law.
- Utilize diplomatic, legal, and oversight mechanisms to **prevent recurrence** of such violations.
- Promote **accountability and transparency** through appropriate international and domestic processes.

The deployment or concealment of military equipment in densely populated civilian areas is incompatible with the foundational principles of international humanitarian law and poses grave risks to civilian life and societal stability. International institutions have a critical role in ensuring oversight, prevention, and accountability in response to such conduct.

The Iranian Democracy Front is a coalition of freedom-loving political organizations committed to promoting democracy and human rights..

1819 Polk Street · Suite 173 · San Francisco · CA 94109 * Phone: (650) 619-7623 ·

www.iraniandemocracyfront.com