

RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENCE, RETALIATION AND REPRISAL UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW: THE ISRAELI-IRAN ARM CONFLICT AS A CASE STUDY*

Abstract

The current crises in the Middle-East have given rise to a lot of actions and reactions with rising legal issues in international law. Iran attacked Israel on October 1 2024; Israel returned the 'favour' on the 26 October, 2024. On each occasion of such attacks, the attacker would warn his victim not to take a reprisal action lest he be attacked worse than previously. It is a well-known position of law, both at the domestic and international planes, that the right of self-defence accrues when a person is being attacked by another. The right also accrues when an attack could be pre-empted. This leaves the place of 'retaliation' and 'reprisal' apparently uncertain in international law. At the international plane, the right is codified in article 51 of the United Nations (UN) Charter. It is now common between Israel and Iran to find the one attacked today will take its time to exercise its 'right of self-defence.' This work aimed at finding the status of retaliation or reprisal in international law with the objective of guiding the UN to condemn retaliatory and reprisal attacks or to openly legalise it in international law. It is for this reason that this work has consulted textbooks, international statutes, internet materials and case-law to find out that reprisals or retaliations in the arm conflict between Iran and Israel have been accepted by the states of the UN to be a norm and not an abnormality.

Keywords: Self-defence, Retaliation, Reprisal, Iran, Israel

1. Introduction

The right of self-defence is inherent in man.¹ From the moment a man apprehends danger, he instinctively rises to the occasion of warding it in self-preservation. At this personal level, the right is mostly associated with municipal laws. At the international level, the right accrues to a state when it is under the assault of a belligerent state. The right of states to defend themselves is provided in article 51 of the UN Charter. A state has the right to resort to violence against an aggressor in preservation of its citizens and its territorial sovereignty without violating the rules of international law in the same manner an individual could do without profaning domestic penal provisions. In other words, a rightful exercise of the right of self-defence excuses a state or person from the punishment that is consequential to the violation of law. The reason for exemption from liability for a 'breach' of the peace by a state pleading self-defence is self-preservation. This may be a partial vindication of the statement: 'International law has no alternative but to accept war...'² Accepting war by international law is not a relegation of the provisions of article 2,³ the preamble⁴ and article 4 (1)⁵ of the UN Charter. A statement such as this finds expression in the provisions of article 51 of the UN Charter. This provision guarantees the safety of a nation under the attack of a belligerent sovereign nation until the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would take steps under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter to restore peace. Going beyond any exercise of the right of self-defence under article 51 of the UN Charter, this work shall examine the situation of the conflict between the State of Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran. It has been an exchange of attacks between these two sovereign states. The common justification for the actions of the two states has been self-defence. When these actions and reactions amount to self-defence when, from all indications, they could only rightly be regarded as reprisals or retaliations is what this work sets out to achieve among other things.

2. The Nature of the Right of Self-Defence in International law

This right at the international plane, though codified in article 51 of the UN Charter, has been maintained to be intertwined with customary international law in spite of the article's none mention of customary international law at all. It has apparently been rightly opined that the tenor of article 51 of the UN Charter is incompatible with the right of anticipatory self-defence. It is the further position of this view that the matrimony of the rule of customary international law on self-defence to the provision of article 51, will legitimise such action of a state taken in preemptive self-defence.⁶ Brownlie is opposed to the recognition of the right of anticipatory self-defence in international law. It is the position of this jurist that the attitudes of states of the world from 1945 have been against the exercise of the right on preemptive grounds. He cited the Israeli preemptive attack on the nuclear reactor of Iraq in 1981 that received condemnation from states of the world as a 'clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations' in the Security Council Resolution number 487 of 1981 which was adopted unanimously.⁷ One finds it difficult to go with Brownlie on this. The very essence of the right is anticipatory. A sovereign state that has credible security report that it is about to be attacked but waits until when it is actually attacked unlawfully by another state has failed in its duty to protect its citizens and territorial sovereignty. An aggressor could have a change of mind an inch away or a fraction of a minute away from aggression but would, before that is done, leave its potential victim with no reason not to believe that he is susceptible to be attacked. It is for this reason that divorcing the provisions of article

*By M.Y. SULEIMAN, PhD, Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Bingham University, Km 12, Keffi-Abuja Expressway, Karu, Nasarawa State of Nigeria. Tel: - +2348029717918; +2348038431006, Email: - suleiman.musa@binghamuni.edu.ng or suleimanlaw1966@mail.com

¹ *Nicaragua v United States* [1986] ICJ Reports 94.

² DJ Harris, *Cases and Materials on International Law* [6th edn, Sweet and Maxwell, 2001] 886.

³ Which requires all member states of the UN to refrain from using force or the threat of the use of force to settle differences among other things.

⁴ Makes the peaceful co-existence of nations of the world its focus.

⁵ Makes love for peace a condition precedent for the admission of a new member into the UN.

⁶ IAN Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, [6th edn, Oxford University Press, 2003]700.

⁷ *ibid* at 701-702.

51 of the UN Charter from the customary practice of anticipatory attack is a fallacy. In *Nicaragua v United States*,⁸ upholding the principles of article 51 of the UN Charter on the suggestion that the areas covered by this statutory provision and customary international law are identical, the Court observed that the:

United Nations Charter, the convention to which most of the United States argument is directed, by no means covers the whole area of the regulation of the use of force in international relations. *On one essential point, this treaty itself refers to pre-existing customary international law; this reference to customary law is contained in the actual text of Article 51, which mentions 'inherent right' ... of individual or collective self-defence, which 'nothing in the present Charter shall impair' and which applies in the event of an arm attack. The Court therefore finds that Article 51 of the Charter is only meaningful on the basis that there is a 'natural' or 'inherent' right of self-defence, and it is hard to see how this can be other than of a customary nature, even if its present contents has been confirmed and influenced by the Charter.*⁹ (Emphasis supplied)

For a better understanding of the nature of this right as provided in the UN Charter, article 51 of the Charter is reproduced thus:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the *inherent right* of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security. (Emphasis supplied)

The notion of 'inherent right' in this provision insinuates that the right of self-defence that accrues to nations of the world in the UN Charter is acknowledged to be twin-born with each UN member. It is a right that cannot be alienated from nations. The right is recognised by this provision of the law to have predated the UN Charter itself. It is a rule that has evolved from the practices of nations of the world thereby crystallising into a rule of customary international law. The summary of the provision of article 51 of the UN Charter is that no requirement of a member to live up to its obligations under the UN Charter shall be held to divest it of its right to defend itself. In other words, the exercise of the right is an excuse for infringing provisions of the UN Charter especially those that promote peaceful co-existence and pacific resolution of conflicts among members states.¹⁰

3. The Case Scenario

Iran threatened to attack the State of Israel after the killing of its army generals in its embassy in Syria by Israel in an air strike in April 2024. Iran responded on 13 April, 2024 and claimed self-defence in circumstances that could not wrongly be said to be a retaliation or reprisal. On the 31/7/2024, Ismail Haniye was killed in a bomb attack in his apartment where he was hosted by the Islamic State of Iran on the occasion of the inauguration of the new president of Iran. Israel was blamed by Iran for this murder and other killings of top Hamas leaders and Hezbollah officials in the post October 7 2023 attack of Israel by Hamas. On October 1, 2024, Iran launched missiles to Israel in what it referred to as self-defence for the invasion of its territorial sovereignty by Israel on 31/7/2024. These attacks and counter attacks and more have been claimed by each of the parties to be in the exercise of the right of self-defence.¹¹ One of the glaring examples of such claims was one made by the Ambassador to the US in the UNSC when she posited that if Iran and its proxies (the Hamas of Gaza, Hezbollah of Lebanon, Houthis of Yemen) should attack Israel or American personnel after Israel's attack on Iran on the 26/10/2024 in retaliation for the 1/10/2024 attack, the United States would react in self-defence.¹² This leaves us with the problem of finding out whether each of these attacks was in the exercise of the right of self-defence or retaliation/reprisal; and if the former, what are the conditions precedent for the exercise of the right of self-defence and whether such conditions existed at the time of each of the parties' reaction.

4. The Claims and Counter-Claims of the exercise of the Right by the two combatants under Article 51 of the UN Charter

Article 51 does not spell out the conditions for the exercise of the right of self-defence the way domestic penal statutes do.¹³ It has merely provided that a state that is attacked has the right to defend itself against the aggressor. The duty placed on a state that is the victim of aggression is to respond to the attack but would appear to be required to stay action when the

⁸ [n 1].

⁹ See also *Caroline incident case* cited by Amos Enabulele and Bright Bazuaye, *Basic Topics in Public International Law* [Malhouse Ltd., 2014] 483.

¹⁰ Article 33 of the UN Charter.

¹¹ Mohammed Javad Zarif, 'Iran right of self-defence: VP Mohammed Javad Zarif' <<https://youtu.be/4sfHbHjPgG8?si=OK6ZGnrc4p8fLBCl>> Accessed November 2024 where the VP referred to the possible response of Tehran to the killing of Ismail Haniye in Tehran on 31/7/2024 as an exercise of the right of self-defence.

¹² Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, 'Iran Confronts USA & Israel at the UNSC emergency meeting following Israeli strike' <<https://youtu.be/S-VFlmPgc84?si=KXajaGfiMJz5A8Gh>> Accessed 15 November 2024.

¹³ See sections 59 and 60 of the Penal Code Act, Cap 532, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria [Applicable to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja], 2007; section 32(3) of the Criminal Code Laws of States of Southern Nigeria.

UNSC steps into the matter pursuant to the UN Charter.¹⁴ From the nature of the provisions of article 51 of the UN Charter, the response of a state under aggression is an interim measure to enable the UNSC step in. The tenor of the provisions of article 51 are inadmissible of any plea of retaliation or reprisal and are, nevertheless, short of spelling out the conditions that could justify an action of a state in self-defence although the right is provided for. This leaves us with the problem of, in some situations, finding legal justification for the reactions either Iran or Israel to attacks within the perimeters of the provisions of article 51 or the entire UN Charter.

5. Actual and Pre-emptive Threats

The provisions of article 51 of the UN Charter are short of making the ‘actual presence’ of a belligerent state on the territory of another sovereign state as a condition precedent for the exercise of the right of self-defence. If this were the case, then ‘actual presence’ would have meant that a belligerent state must match its army to the boarder of its ‘victim’, or fly its military jets and launch aerial attacks to meet the condition of actual presence as it were under municipal legislations. This, however, would mean a lot to hoary warfare but nothing to modern warfare that unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are launched to deliver destruction thousands of kilometres away from the sending belligerent state or when fast flying jets are despatched for the same purpose. Typical of this is the twice launched missiles from Tehran to deliver destruction to the State of Israel and the aerial attacks on Iran by Israel in retaliation. One hardly needs mention the post October 7, 2023, showers of rockets, drone and missile attacks on the State of Israel from the Hezbollah of Lebanon, Houthis of Yemen and Hamas of Gaza, all terror groups enjoying the protection and sponsorship of Tehran. The attacks and the reactions between Tehran and Tel Aviv are such that one would be completed and the response would follow weeks later yet claimed to be in self-defence. For actuality purposes, there is nothing that is actual about these attacks to justify a response in self-defence. It would be preferred that the claim of a state responding in the circumstances be rested on retaliation or reprisal. Self-defence is, as the name implies, an action in self-preservation or an action to ward off an attack. This means, an aggressor’s action is sought to be put off or put on check by the victim of aggression. When the aggression has abated, there is nothing more to ward off by the victim of aggression. This is the right rendition of the concept of the right of self-defence as would appear to be envisaged by article 51 of the UN Charter.

The notion of pre-emptive self-defence is not explicitly provided for in article 51 or any other provision of the UN Charter like it is in most domestic penal statutes. It is, however, not reasonable to expect one who sees another preparing to attack him to wait until the latter actually takes his ‘war’ crusade to his doorsteps before he responds. Recently the State of Israel launched a pre-emptive attack on Hezbollah inside Lebanon when the latter was planning an attack on the northern part of Israel in continuation of its incessant attacks from the 8/10/2023. Israel justified its attack on self-defence grounds.¹⁵ The right to anticipatory self-defence finds root in customary international law which would appear to have been ruled out by the provisions of article 51 of the UN Charter that has no mention of anticipatory right of self-defence. In the *Nicaragua* case,¹⁶ the arguments of the United States that the rule of international customary law on the right of private defence has been ‘subsumed’ and ‘supervened’ by article 51 of the UN Charter were rejected by the Court and the existence of the right under international customary law side by side with the provisions of the Charter upheld.

It is illusionary to posit that there must be an actual attack before the right of self-defence can accrue. In the fraction of a minute when action is taken in self-defence before the accomplishment of an attack, the response is anticipatory no matter how eminent the attack is before the reaction. Here lies the wisdom in allowing anticipatory self-defence as decided by the court in the *Nicaraguan case*.¹⁷ The test lies not in how long it would take the intending aggressor to accomplish his mission but in how reasonable the anticipation of such an attack is. In modern warfare, when an aggressor could accomplish his aggression by launching UAVs, it suffices if one pleading the defence would show that an intending aggressor was already preparing to launch his UAVs. The actuality of the attack should be in the reasonableness of its anticipation and not in the accomplishment of the event otherwise the exercise of the right becomes another thing else and not self-defence be it at the municipal plane or the international plane.

6. Retaliation/Reprisal and Self-defence Compared

After the assault on the nation of Israel by Hamas on the 7/10/2023, the right of Israel to self-defence would appear to have abated but for the hostages taken of Israeli citizens by Hamas into Gaza that extended the right to as long as the captives remain with Hamas.¹⁸ The attacks on Hezbollah and its terror infrastructure by Israel has been a series of responses to actual and anticipatory attacks. The attacks on Israel by Hezbollah have been ceaseless since 8/10/2023 giving Israel reasonable grounds to anticipate more from the tunnels built to its boarders for the purpose of the attacks. Here lies the vindication of Israel’s assaults on terror command centres and missile launchers positioned inside Beirut and other parts of Lebanon. The

¹⁴Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.

¹⁵ ILTV, ‘Israel lunches preemptive attacks on Hezbollah’ < https://youtu.be/8RFZ4NkLuCI?si=_MYodi62prbnTspN> Accessed 04 November 2024.

¹⁶ [n 1].

¹⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁸ Musa Y Suleiman ‘THE VETO VOTE IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AGAINST THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PALESTINE IN THE UNITED NATIONS, AND THE VIRTUES OF THE RULE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW’ *African Gender, Peace and Security Studies Review*, [2024] 3 [1] 150-151.

Israeli war against the Arabs in 1967 was anticipatory self-defence. Israel pre-empted being attacked by the Arab coalition thus it struck first. Israel was not blamed for its role in the war.¹⁹

The scenario above could be distinguished from the circumstances of the killing of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. This Hamas leader was killed on the occasion of his attending the inauguration of the new president of Iran on 31 July, 2024. Tehran vowed ‘self-defence’ when retaliation or reprisal was its reason. Israel’s action was alleged to be a violation of the sovereignty of Iran that has been sanctioned by the ICJ in the *Corfu Channel case*²⁰ thus: ‘Between independent sovereign independent States, respect for territorial sovereignty is an essential foundation of international relations.’ While Iran languished in the pains of the violation of its sovereignty by Israel, this was followed by the killing of Hassan Nasrallah, a leader of Hezbollah, that Iran depended heavily on to accomplish its purpose of terrorist activities in the Middle East. Iran launched a multi-missile assault on Israel on the 1/10/2024 in response. Ordinarily, in municipal law, the right to react would not have been self-defence but provocation which is time bound.²¹ Unfortunately, this defence is not provided for by the UN Charter. Earlier, in April, 2024, Iran launched about one hundred and eighty missiles into Israel after weeks’ long wait period in response to Israel’s killings of its top army officers in Iran’s embassy in Syria. In all these situations, the popular song from international supporters of the two countries is that Iran or Israel has the right to defend itself in circumstances that are purely retaliatory or reprisals.

The concept of reprisal or retaliation is not provided for by the UN Charter and may have link only with customary international law if not from the ancient time of our international legal history, then in the recent practices of sovereign states that have come to be accepted as the norm. An aggression of one state by another is certainly repugnant to the spirit and letters of the UN Charter. It has been suggested that reprisals by means of the use of force ‘...undertaken during peace-time are thus unlawful, except they fall within the framework of the principle of self-defence.’²² Reprisals during arm conflicts cannot come within the purview of the law of self-defence. Once an act of an illegal use of force has been accomplished by one state against another, the remedy would appear not to be within the precincts of the law of self-defence. The victim would appear to be entitled to seek redress in the UN or the ICJ but should not resort to reprisal attacks that could develop into a vicious circle of reprisal attacks. However, reprisals by means of the use of force appear to have received endorsement in the case of *Naulilaa Dispute*.²³ This was a case between Portugal and Germany. Germany went into Angola and destroyed properties in a military raid in reprisal for the mistaking killing of three German soldiers that were lawfully in the Portuguese’s territories.

Reprisals or retaliation would appear not to have justification in international law since the UN Charter forbids the use or threat of the use of force in matters of conflicts between states.²⁴ In other words, reprisal with the use of force is unlawful just like the attack that prompted it was unlawful in the first place.²⁵ On the opinion that ‘Reprisals as such undertaken during peace-time are thus unlawful, unless they fall within the framework of the principle of self-defence;’²⁶ getting it right from this point before further comments on this opinion, this work’s focus is on the arm conflict between Israel and Iran. The termination of an aggression by one state against another should necessarily vanquish the right of the latter to self-defence. Retaliation or reprisal would, in the circumstances, be more appropriate to describe the conduct of the victim of such attack leaving this work with the burden of seeking vindication for retaliation or reprisal in international law.

7. The Possible place of Retaliation/Reprisal in the Israel/Iran Arm Conflicts under International Law.

The entire UN Charter has no provision for retaliation or reprisals. It would, in fact, appear to be against the position of the UN Charter on the none use or threat of the use of force in resolving differences between member states of the UN;²⁷ The condition precedent for the admission of a new member in the UN;²⁸ and the overall global peace objective of the UN²⁹ to take to reprisal or retaliation after the cessation of an aggression. The provision of article 51 of the UN Charter that confers on member states the right to self-defence requires that after the exercise of the right, the matter be reported to the UNSC for its necessary action; most likely under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Bearing in mind that in its interpretation of article 51 of the UN Charter, the Court held in *Nicaragua v United States*³⁰ that the application of pre-existing customary international law is provided for in article 51 of the UN Charter in the notion of the right of self-defence being ‘inherent’ in every member state. It is the position that if pre-existing customary international law is enclosed in article 51 of the UN Charter, any change in the pre-existing status that is shown to be acceptable to nations of the world or any locality of the international community, attains the status of customary international law.³¹ It is the acceptance of a rule of custom by

¹⁹ Malcolm M Shaw, *International Law* [6th edn Cambridge University Press, 2008] 789-780.

²⁰ [1949] ICJ Reports 35.

²¹ *R v Green* [1955] 15 WACA 73.

²² Malcolm N Shaw, [n 17] 786.

²³ [1928] 4 ILR 526.

²⁴ Article 2, para 4 of the UN Charter.

²⁵ Malcolm M Shaw [n 17].

²⁶ *ibid* 786. See also *The legality of the Threat of the Use of Nuclear Weapons* [1996] ICJ Reports para. 46; [1996] 35 ILM 823.

²⁷ Article 2 paragraph 4 of the UN Charter.

²⁸ Article 4, paragraph 2 of the UN Charter.

²⁹ See Article 1 and the Preamble of the UN Charter.

³⁰ [n9].

³¹ *Nicaragua v United States* [n 1]; *North Sea Continental Shelf cases* [1969] ICJ Reports 3; [1969] ILR 29.

members of a group it is claimed to bind that makes it law³² in the sense of the Latin expression *opinion juris*. It is in this sense that it has been opined that ‘...custom is a mirror of accepted use.’³³

In the arm conflict between the Islamic State of Iran and the State of Israel, each, after an attack would vouch retaliation in the UN or the UNSC without condemnation from any member state of the UN or the UNSC. Instead, allies of such a state would argue that such a victim of attack has the right to self-defence in the circumstances. One of such instances could be found in the statement of the United States Ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, in the UNSC above.³⁴ Iran threats of retaliatory attack on the State of Israel sequel to the invasion of its territorial sovereignty by the latter when Ismail Haniye was killed on the 31/7/2024 never received condemnation on the platform of the UN. This, by implication, means that the UN views with favour the right of a victim of aggression to retaliatory or reprisal attack with the condition, may be, being the proportionality of the attack to the aggression of the state that launched the attack. States non-condemnation of this practice is an acquiescence to it thereby conferring on it the status of a rule of customary international law.

Article 38(1) (c) of the ICJ Statute provides for the power of the Court to apply the rules of international customary law in hearing matters submitted to it. This does not only further vindicate the application of rules of customary international law pursuant to article 51 of the UN Charter, but also in matters that a practice such as the rights of states to take reprisal or retaliatory measures after an attack assumes the status of a rule of customary international law by *opinio juris*. This position that has gained acceptance by member states of the UN has its intrinsic danger. A country attacked by another would take its time to prepare its retaliation. This is an assault on the powers of the UNSC to step into such situations in pursuit of peace pursuant to articles 33(2) and 34 of the UN Charter. One strike in retaliation has only one guarantee, another in a further retaliation, etcetera. Israel aerial strikes on the Iranian embassy in Syria on April 1, 2024, that killed generals of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)³⁵ at a time that tension was high between the two countries was only an occasion for a retaliation. The attack was an elimination drive by the State of Israel of military officers of Iranian extraction that give support to terrorists such as Hamas of Gaza, Hezbollah of Lebanon and the Houthis of Yemen whose aim is the destruction of Israel among other things. This was followed by another attack on Israel on the 14/4/2024 with over three hundred drones³⁶ in fulfilment of Iran’s vow to do so. Israel, in the same month, returned the ‘favour’ in another attack on Iran. It has been a session of ‘a tooth for a tooth’ with none of these two countries turning the other cheek neither has the world risen against it beyond running commentaries on the fear of escalation of the situation. The last of the session was the attack on Israel on the 1/10/2024 by Iran that called for a retaliatory attack on the 26/10/2024 by Israel. On each such attacks, the threats of worse further attacks should the victim opts for retaliation has never hindered the response of the last to be attacked.

The aerial warfare between these two countries appears to have fallen within the norm of states of the UN, who, by their reference to retaliation as self-defence or outright silence, have accepted retaliation or reprisal as a part of international law. The ‘mirror of accepted usage’ that this practice of states has become has foundation in both articles 38(1) (c) of the ICJ Statute and 51 of the UN Charter. These two provisions have not created rules of customary international law for state members of the UN. Article 38(1) (c) of the ICJ Statute has only created grounds conducive for the application of any practice that is shown to have been evolved and accepted by states or any group of states as a rule of customary international law. On its own part, article 51 of the UN Charter has merely endorsed the rule of customary international law it met in practice.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

In a total deviation from the law of self-defence at the municipal plane, the arm conflict between Iran and Israel has projected one practice of states; that a state attacked by another can take its time to plan its revenge that could be branded as self-defence. The reaction of the international community not going beyond the fear of escalation without the UNSC taking any step against it mean one thing, that the practice is now a norm. The UN is forced by reality to accept retaliation or reprisal in situations of the attack of one state by another. This is, perhaps, because the short time a victim would take to retaliate would not be enough for the bureaucratic procedure of the UNSC that entails evaluating the situation of the threat to world peace;³⁷ make recommendations and give interim directives to the parties to the conflict without prejudice to their rights in the conflict situation;³⁸ employ non-military strategies pursuant to articles 41 and 42 of the UN Charter to restore peace; calling member states of the UN to raise an army and military hardware to restore peace.³⁹ It must be admitted that it is difficult to secure restraint from a victim of the aggression of a belligerent state; and, in view of the bureaucratic procedure involved in any intervention of the UNSC, it is the suggestion that the UNSC should not fail to act at all but should set the machinery of its intervention in motion and to step in after the last retaliation at any time it is ready.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Per Bairamian FJ in *Owonyin v Omotosho* [1961] NSCQR 179 at 183, line 45.

³⁴ [n 11].

³⁵ Kareem Chehayeb and Albert Aji, ‘Israeli Strike on Iran’s consulate in Syria killed 2 generals and 5 other officers, Iran says.’ <- airstrike-iranian-embassy-edca34c52d38c8bc57281e4ebf33b240? utm_source=copy&utm_medium=share> Accessed 19 November 2024.

³⁶ Aljazeera, ‘Iran attacks Israel with over 300 drones, missiles...’ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/14/> Accessed 19 November 2024.

³⁷ Article 39 of the United Nations Charter.

³⁸ Article 40 of the United Nations Charter.

³⁹ Article 43 of the United Nations Charter.