

International Law at the United Nations: *In Brief*

April 2026 - June 2026



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Introduction

The Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore is pleased to launch the second issue of its 2026 volume of newsletters highlighting developments at the United Nations, with a focus on international law. This edition explores a number of thematic areas such as peace and security, human rights and humanitarian affairs, climate change and the environment, global health, and activities at the International Court of Justice.

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Highlights

- The war in the Middle East dominated the UN's **peace and security** agenda. China and Russia vetoed a Security Council draft resolution aimed at protecting shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and calling on Iran to halt its military attacks. The International Maritime Organisation suspended its evacuation of seafarers stranded in the Strait as tensions escalated.
- The **Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory** found that Israeli authorities continued to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes against Palestinian children, even after the October 2025 ceasefire.
- The **Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan** decried persistent violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by the Sudanese Armed Forces, Rapid Support Forces, and their allies. The Council also adopted a resolution on accountability for crimes against UN peacekeepers.
- UN work on **human rights and humanitarian crises** worldwide continued. Agencies reported on dire conditions in Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Lebanon, Haiti, Yemen, and Afghanistan, highlighting widespread displacement, hunger, conflict-related sexual violence, and limited humanitarian access.
- Other developments included reports on the impact of **anti-personnel mines**, rising violence against **children in armed conflicts**, growing risks faced by **migrants**, UNESCO's decision to provide enhanced legal protection to 39 cultural properties in Lebanon, and the release of the **New Humanitarian Compact** as part of the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative.
- The **International Court of Justice** marked its 80th anniversary, elected a new Registrar, and delivered its Advisory Opinion on the *Right to Strike under ILO Convention No.87*. The Court also held hearings on the merits in *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899* (Guyana v. Venezuela), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo filed proceedings against Rwanda, alleging violations of the Genocide Convention, CERD, CEDAW, and the Convention against Torture.
- On climate change, the environment, and global health, the **General Assembly** endorsed the ICJ's *Climate Change* Advisory Opinion. The **Secretary-General** launched a Call to Action on Methane and an AI Environmental Transparency Initiative. **UNICEF's** Children's Climate Risk Report 2026 found that 1.1 billion children are affected by overlapping climate hazards, while joint **FAO-WMO and FAO-WFP** reporting warned of the threats posed by extreme heat to food security. Additionally, the **WHO** declared Ebola outbreaks in the DRC and Uganda as a public health emergency of international concern.
- Other developments include the election of the **President of the General Assembly** at its 81st session, the election of Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe as **non-**

permanent members of the Security Council for 2027-2028, and the opening of the 77th session of the **International Law Commission**.

Week of 1 April 2026

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

UNESCO grants enhanced legal protection against attack and use for military purposes to 39 cultural properties in Lebanon.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Week of 6 April 2026

Peace and Security

China and Russia veto a Security Council draft resolution, which sought to improve the safety of shipping and navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, and called for Iran to halt its military attacks and any other impediments to shipping in the Strait.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 13 April 2026

Peace and Security

The Security Council adopts a resolution expressing concerns over escalating tensions in Libya and, to this effect, outlines provisions concerning arms embargos, travel bans and asset freezes, and the prevention of illicit exports of petroleum. It extends the measures imposed by the Sanctions Committee as well as the mandate of the Panel of Experts.

Read more [here](#).

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/252 (2026) on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflicts, recognising that the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme helps ensure the implementation of the Security Council sanctions on the trade in conflict diamonds.

Read more [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

UN Women releases a brief on “The Cost of War in Gaza on Women and Girls”, finding that over 38,000 women and girls were killed in Gaza between October 2023 and December 2025. It calls for adherence to the ceasefire, stronger accountability, and compliance with the relevant international law rules.

Read more [here](#).

International Courts and Tribunals

The International Court of Justice commemorates its 80th anniversary.

Read more [here](#).

Sustainable Development

The ECOSOC Youth Forum is held under the theme of “Innovate, Unite and Transform: Youth Shaping the Road to 2030”, with the aim to advance sustainable development.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Global Health

The World Health Organisation (WHO) releases the report “Towards Immunization Agenda 2030 Targets: Two decades of immunization efforts in the WHO African Region”, noting that nearly 20 million lives were saved across the continent through stronger vaccination schemes.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Week of 20 April 2026

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that nearly 8,000 migrants were killed or missing around the world in 2025, bringing the total to more than 82,000 fatalities since 2014 and an estimated 340,000 family members directly affected.

Read more [here](#).

The Secretary-General reports on the surge of conflict-related sexual violence in 2025, which overwhelmingly targeted women and girls, and outlines the causes and consequences of such atrocities. The report finds that growing militarisation coupled with funding cuts to the UN and restricted humanitarian access have exacerbated such violence and impeded assistance to survivors.

Read more [here](#).

Wider UN Affairs

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) publish a report, outlining the threats posed by extreme heat to agriculture and food security, noting that the durable solution lies in “ambitious, multilateral climate change litigation”.

Read more [here](#).

UNESCO publishes the first global assessment report titled “People and Nature in UNESCO-Designated Sites: Global and Local Contributions”, highlighting that UNESCO-designated sites are strengthening the resilience of vital ecosystems that sustain 900 million people worldwide and deliver meaningful results for both people and nature.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 27 April 2026

Peace and Security

The Security Council extends the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 30 April 2027, and further details the manner in which this mandate should be executed.

Read more [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports on the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. It finds that over 304,000 people have been displaced, over 7.8 million people are expected to face crisis-level hunger or worse, and more than 10 million people (two-thirds of the population) will need humanitarian assistance in 2026.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

The New Humanitarian Compact is published, as part of the Secretary-General’s UN80 Initiative, with the aim of strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian efforts in times of crisis.

Read more [here](#).

Wider UN Affairs

The “UN80 Initiative: Progress and Next Steps” guide is released, providing Member States with comprehensive and practical summaries of the UN80’s three workstreams.

Read more [here](#).

The International Law Commission opens its 77th session, scheduled to be held for 11 weeks between 27 April and 30 July 2026. On the agenda for the session are: the draft conclusions on “Subsidiary Means for the Determination of Rules of International Law” (first reading), draft guidelines on “Settlement of Disputes to which International Organizations are Parties” (first reading), draft articles on “Immunity of State

Officials from Foreign Criminal Jurisdiction” (second reading), and “General Principles of Law” (second reading) Additionally, the Commission will consider the Special Rapporteurs’ reports on “Prevention and Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea,” “Compensation for the Damage Caused by Internationally Wrongful Acts,” “Due Diligence in International Law,” and “Non-legally Binding International Agreements,” as well as conduct working group sessions on “Succession of States in respect of State Responsibility”.

Read more [here](#).

Artificial Intelligence

The UN Department of Global Communications releases an issue brief on “Strengthening Information Integrity: Advertising, Artificial Intelligence and the Global Information Crisis”, examining how AI should be used in advertising to uphold information integrity.

Read more [here](#).

UN Women published a report on “Tipping Point: Online Violence Impacts, Manifestations and Redress in the AI Age,” noting the impact of online violence on the participation of women in public life in the AI age, and pathways for legal redress.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 4 May 2026

International Courts and Tribunals

Santiago Villalpando of Argentina is elected as the Registrar of the International Court of Justice for a seven-year term, succeeding Philippe Gautier, whose term ends on 31 July 2026.

Read more [here](#).

The International Court of Justice holds public hearings on the merits in *Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (Guyana v. Venezuela)*.

Read more [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

IOM releases the World Migration Report 2026, finding that restricting legal pathways for migration increases recourse to dangerous routes that create greater risks for migrants.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

The second International Migration Review Forum is convened to review progress in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 11 May 2026

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The World Food Programme (WFP) warns of near-record malnutrition facing almost 5 million mothers and children in Afghanistan, intensified by the effects from the Middle East conflict, the closure of the border with Pakistan, natural disasters, and a sharp drop in humanitarian funding.

Read more [here](#).

Global Trade | Climate Change | Sustainable Development

ECOSOC holds a special meeting on “Safeguarding energy and supply flows: Supporting global development through international cooperation”, warning that disruptions in global energy supply and flows are having significant consequences on development, trade, the cost of food and energy, transport, and financial and economic growth. There are increased fiscal burdens on countries already facing high debts.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Global Health

The WHO determines that the Ebola disease epidemic caused by Bundibugyo virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda is a public health emergency of international concern.

Read more [here](#).

Wider UN Affairs

The 13th session of the World Urban Forum is held under the theme “Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities”. The Baku Call to Action was released as the result of comprehensive stakeholder consultations ahead of the Forum.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Week of 18 May 2026

Peace and Security | Sustainable Development

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/262 (2026) on “the role and importance of neutrality in maintaining and strengthening international peace, security and sustainable development”, noting the role of neutral States and mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, and conflict prevention and resolution.

Read more [here](#).

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/259 (2026) on “promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.”

Read more [here](#).

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/261 (2026), stressing the importance of dialogue and international cooperation among Member States for the peaceful settlement of border disputes in achieving lasting and mutually acceptable solutions, consistent with the UN Charter’s purposes and principles.

Read more [here](#).

International Courts and Tribunals

The ICJ delivers its Advisory Opinion on the *Right to Strike under ILO Convention No. 87*, holding that “the right to strike of workers and their organisations is protected under the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No.87).”

Read more [here](#).

Climate Change

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/263 (2026) welcoming the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on the *Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change* and affirms the Opinion as an authoritative contribution to the clarification of existing international law.

Read more [here](#).

Sustainable Development

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/260 (2026) on “strengthening regional cooperation and economic integration to ensure sustainable development in the Central Asian region.”

Read more [here](#).

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/257 (2026), proclaiming 2026-2035 as the Fourth Industrial Development Decade for Africa, aiming to accelerate inclusive and resilient industrial transformation.

Read more [here](#).

Wider UN Affairs

The General Assembly endorses the Progress Declaration of the International Migration Review Forum, deciding to enhance cooperation on international migration, and reviewing progress in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Read more [here](#).

The UN FAO warns that the Strait of Hormuz closure and broader conflict in the Middle East could lead to a severe crisis in global food prices within 6 to 12 months, and outlines a series of recommendations.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 25 May 2026

Peace and Security

The Security Council adopts a resolution condemning the escalating violence in South Sudan and, to this effect, adopts a number of provisions concerning arms embargos and targeted sanctions. It renews its sanctions on South Sudan until 31 May 2027 and extends the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 1 July 2027.

Read more [here](#).

Wider UN Affairs

The Secretary-General releases a progress report on UN 80 initiatives.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 1 June 2026

Peace and Security

Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe are elected as non-permanent members of the Security Council for 2027-2028, marking Kyrgyzstan's first election to the Council.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

OCHA reports intensifying hostilities in Lebanon with at least 3,526 deaths, 10,733 injuries, and 196 attacks on healthcare workers and facilities since 2 March. The United Nations and the Lebanese Government launch the revised Flash Appeal, seeking USD 639.9 million in funding to assist 1.4 million people affected by the conflict.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

The IOM reports that nearly 1.5 million are displaced in Haiti due to the severe humanitarian crisis caused by worsening gang violence across the country.

Read more [here](#).

The UN-backed IPC reports on growing food insecurity in Yemen, as the FAO, WFP, and UNICEF call for increased humanitarian assistance to prevent further deteriorations.

Read more [here](#).

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/264 (2026) on the “Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia”.

Read more [here](#).

Wider UN Affairs

The General Assembly elects HE. Mr. Khalilur Rahman from Bangladesh as President of its 81st session.

Read more [here](#).

Sustainable Development

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/266 (2026) and Resolution 80/267 (2026) on “Education for Peace” and “Promotion of durable peace through sustainable development in Africa” respectively.

Read more [here](#).

Global Health

The General Assembly adopts Resolution 80/265 (2026) on “Global health and foreign policy: accelerating the fight against diseases driven by social determinants of health.”

Read more [here](#).

Week of 8 June 2026

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression publishes her report on “Freedom of Expression in New Frontiers,” later to be presented to the Human Rights Council at its 62nd Session.

Read more [here](#).

Global Health

UNICEF releases two reports on the Ebola virus outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, outlining the responses by international actors.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#)

Week of 15 June 2026

Wider UN Affairs

The 62nd session of the Human Rights Council opens.

Read more [here](#).

Sustainable Development

UNCTAD, the UN trade and development agency, publishes a report on the rising costs of borrowing, which is impeding the ability of developing countries to invest in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and climate action. It calls for domestic and international efforts to reduce these financial barriers and improve access to long-term finance.

Read more [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan updates the Human Rights Council, detailing the plights of civilians caught in the conflict as it enters its fourth year. It decries violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by both parties to the conflict, and raises particular concern over reports of arbitrary detention, torture, and enforced disappearances.

Read more [here](#)

The new Hunger Hotspots report, released jointly by the FAO and WFP, recognises that armed conflict remains the main cause of hunger. It identifies 13 “hunger hotspots” where acute food insecurity is likely to worsen, with South Sudan, Sudan, Palestine, and Yemen characterised as the most affected.

Read more [here](#).

The OHCHR’s Human Rights Count provides an overview of the state of human rights around the world, detailing attacks on human rights defenders, conflict-related deaths, the prevalence of discrimination, and the state of national human rights institutions.

Read more [here](#).

Climate Change | Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

UNICEF releases its “Children’s Climate Risk Report 2026,” detailing the overlapping climate hazards, including heatwaves, droughts, fires and floods, that now affect around 1.1 billion children.

Read more [here](#).

The FAO releases its flagship “The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture” report, as part of “The State of the World” series, highlighting the critical role of seafood in supplying food, nutrition, and income for sizable populations around the world. It also notes the risks posed to the natural environment by intensive fishing and aquaculture, as well as the strains already caused by climate change and environmental degradation.

Read more [here](#).

The World Meteorological Organisation publishes its State of the Climate in Africa 2025 report.

Read more [here](#).

Peace and Security | Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights publishes a report detailing the impact of anti-personnel mines on the enjoyment of human rights, and recommends measures that States may adopt to mitigate these risks and ensure compliance with the relevant rules of international law.

Read more [here](#).

The Security Council opens its annual debate on Women, Peace and Security.

Read more [here](#).

The Secretary-General's annual "Children and Armed Conflict" report finds an unprecedented number of international human rights and humanitarian law violations against children in 2025. Government forces were responsible for a majority of those violations.

Read more [here](#).

The Security Council extends the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and further details the manner in which this mandate should be executed.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 22 June 2026

International Courts and Tribunals

The Democratic Republic of the Congo institutes proceedings against Rwanda before the ICJ, alleging violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Climate Change

The Secretary-General launches a "Call to Action on Methane," providing guidance for States, industries, and financial institutions to reduce their methane emissions this decade.

Read more [here](#).

The Secretary-General launched the "AI Environmental Transparency Initiative," calling on all major AI companies to publicly disclose the environmental impacts of their activities.

Read more [here](#).

The Secretary-General provides an outline for global clean energy transition.

Read more [here](#).

Global Health

The High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS is convened to negotiate the 2026 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. Speakers note that, despite considerable progress in eradicating AIDS since it first emerged as a global crisis four decades ago, financial pressures and dwindling support threaten to undermine this work.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

The UN global fund for education in crises, Education Cannot Wait, releases a report highlighting the growing education emergency that is especially affecting the most vulnerable communities.

Read more [here](#).

The UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, finds that Israeli authorities and security forces have continued to commit the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes against Palestinians. It focuses on crimes committed against Palestinian children, and highlights the extent and nature of violence that has continued even after the October 2025 Gaza peace plan ceasefire.

Read more [here](#).

Peace and Security

The Security Council adopts resolution 2823(2026) to strengthen the identification, investigation, and prosecution of those committing crimes against UN Peacekeepers.

Read more [here](#).

The International Maritime Organisation begins evacuating seafarers stranded in the Strait of Hormuz. However, as tensions escalated, the rescue operations were soon suspended and thousands remain stranded.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

The Security Council adopts a resolution to renew the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) until 31 December 2026. It also expresses concern over violations of the 1974 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Syria, and calls on the parties to comply with the relevant Council resolutions.

Read more [here](#).

Week of 29 June 2026

Peace and Security

A new report by the UN Development Programme underscores the heavy financial toll of the war in the Middle East on developing countries, whose efforts to mitigate the fuel crisis detract from investments in other critical sectors.

Read more [here](#).

A new report by UNCTAD finds that, while reopening the Strait of Hormuz is critical to the recovery of global trade and energy markets, it is only a first step. The repercussions of the conflict and the closure of the Strait will continue to be felt, most acutely by vulnerable economies.

Read more [here](#).

The Security Council renews the sanction regime concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo until 1 July 2027 and extends the mandate of the Group of Experts until 1 August 2027.

Read more [here](#).

The General Assembly adopts several resolutions concerning the financing of numerous UN peacekeeping and stabilisation forces.

Read more [here](#).