

I deplore the military strikes across Iran this morning by Israel and the United States of America, and the subsequent retaliatory strikes by Iran. As always, in any armed conflict, it is civilians who end up paying the ultimate price.

Bombs and missiles are not the way to resolve differences but only result in death, destruction and human misery.

To avert these terrible consequences for civilians, I call for restraint and implore all parties to see reason, to de-escalate, and for a return to the 'negotiating table' where they had been actively seeking a solution only hours earlier. This is the only way durably to resolve the deep differences between States that exist.

I have already warned that failing to do so risks an even wider conflict, that will inevitably lead to further senseless civilian deaths and destruction on a potentially unimaginable scale, not just in Iran but across the Middle East region.

I remind all parties that international law with respect to armed conflict is very clear: the protection of civilians is paramount. Each and every actor involved must ensure compliance with these laws. Violations of them must lead to accountability for those responsible.