

The Escalating U.S.-Israel-Iran Conflict: The EU's Diplomatic Role

Audience: EU policymakers / European Union decision-makers. Role: European Union Foreign Policy Analyst.

Summary

KEY POINTS

1. It demonstrates that the conflict is no longer confined to the Middle East and that an expansion is emerging that will extend into the realm of global diplomacy.
2. As the crisis deepens, diplomatic norms and international law are increasingly being violated.
3. Someone will have to put an end to this situation, and that actor could be a state or a group of states.

This policy brief addresses the escalation of the conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran, as well as its broader implications for international diplomacy. The central question is: How can the European Union contribute to de-escalation while upholding international law and strengthening diplomatic cooperation? The analysis focuses on three key points. First, the conflict has transcended Middle Eastern borders and reached a scale capable of impacting global diplomacy. Second, as the crisis deepens, diplomatic norms and international law are facing increasing pressure. Third, resolving the conflict may require action by a single state or a group of states. In this context, the European Union can leverage its diplomatic role to foster dialogue, promote respect for international law, and cooperate with international partners. Accordingly, this policy brief proposes a stronger and more coordinated EU diplomatic response to the crisis.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The conflict is no longer limited to the Middle East and has reached a level that can affect global diplomacy.

The conflict has increasingly developed beyond a regional dispute. Its effects have reached international diplomacy, energy security and maritime trade. During the UN General Assembly in September 2026 indirect talks between the United States and Iran focused not only on ending the conflict but also on issues such as the Strait of Hormuz and the wider consequences of the war.(1)

The United Nations has also warned that the conflict poses a serious threat to international peace and security.(2) Thus the war came to affect other regions as well.

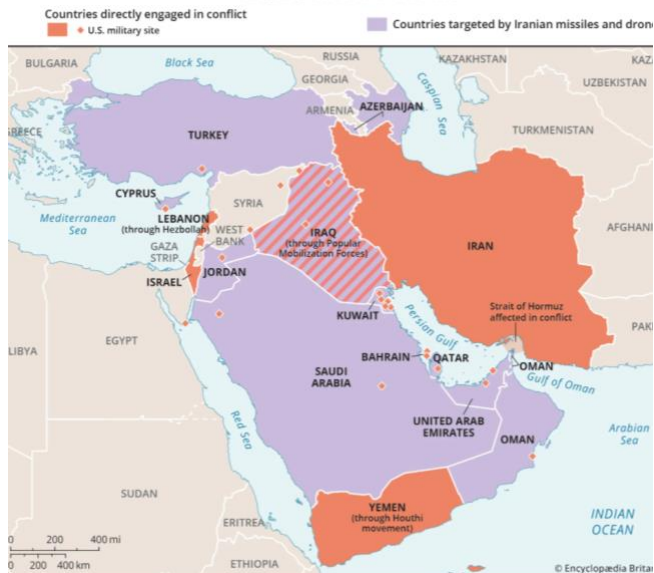
As the crisis deepens, diplomatic norms and international law are increasingly violated.

The escalation of the conflict has also raised concerns about international law and diplomatic norms. The European Council has called on all parties to respect the UN Charter and international humanitarian law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.(3) In September 2026, the EU also stated at the United Nations that international law must be applied consistently during armed conflicts. These concerns show that the conflict is not only a military crisis but also a challenge to the international legal order.(4) Non-compliance with international law has severely affected many people.

Someone needs to bring this situation to an end, and this actor could be a state or a group of states.

In this context international actors have an important role in supporting diplomatic efforts. The European Union has repeatedly stated that diplomacy should remain central to resolving the conflict. Following the April 2026 ceasefire the EU called for continued negotiations and stated that it would contribute to diplomatic efforts in coordination with international partners.(5) The EU later reiterated its willingness to engage with regional partners and support diplomatic efforts toward a lasting settlement.(6)

2026 IRAN WAR



RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordinate with International and Regional Partners

The EU should work more closely with international and regional partners in diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

Cooperation with states involved in mediation could help create more opportunities for dialogue and support a longer-term solution. The EU should therefore act as part of a wider diplomatic effort rather than acting alone.

Support Respect for International Law

the EU must continue to advocate for respect for international law throughout the conflict. It should utilize diplomatic channels to call upon all parties to respect the UN Charter and international humanitarian law, particularly regarding the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. This approach demonstrates the EU's commitment to the international legal order in its diplomatic response.

1. “The conflict is no longer limited to the Middle East and has reached a level that can affect global diplomacy.”(september 23 /2026)

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hope-progress-after-us-iran-hold-first-shuttle-talks-months-2026-09-23/>

2. The United Nations has also warned that the conflict poses a serious threat to international peace and security.(28 february 2026)

<https://turkiye.un.org/en/310903-bombing-iran-and-retaliatory-strikes-%E2%80%98-grave-threat-international-peace-and-security%E2%80%99>

3.The European Council has called on all parties to respect the UN Charter and international humanitarian law and to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/03/19/european-council-conclusions-on-middle-east/>

4.the EU also stated at the United Nations that international law must be applied consistently during armed conflicts.

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-un-security-council-arria-meeting-upholding-international-law-situations-armed-conflict_en

5. The European Union has repeatedly stated that diplomacy should remain central to resolving the conflict

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/04/09/statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-ceasefire-agreed-by-the-united-states-and-iran/>

6.The EU later reiterated (april 2026)

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-position-situation-middle-east/>

Author: Erhan Harun Kılıç

This Policy Brief has been prepared as part of the participants / students’ assessment in the framework of the EU Politics lecture.

The content of this policy brief lies entirely with the author. It does not reflect the official opinion of Çağ University.