Ottawa, July 27, 2023

His Excellency António Guterres

Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017

**Subject: The UN Editorial Control Section says, “care to be taken to ensure the appropriate use of the term Persian Gulf and NOT the shorter name Gulf”.**

Your Excellency:

I, Mahmoud Masaeli, a retired professor of international law and relations, I am grateful for your efforts to promote international norms and the values that are imperative in preserving a peaceful lifeworld. I am writing to bring your attention to the critical situation caused by one of the coastal countries of the Persian Gulf and urge you in your capacity as the Secretary General of the United Nations to remind all members of the United Nations that:

It is the “Persian Gulf,” as the *UN Editorial Control Section* mentioned on August 18, 1994, and NOT the shorter name Gulf,[[1]](#footnote-1) or intentionally and politically forged name Arabian Gulf.

I strongly request you to remind the United Nations members that infringing territorial integrity and political independence of the nations is a breach of the peremptory norms of general international law (*jus cogens*).[[2]](#footnote-2)

Here is a short presentation of the politically constructed crisis.

As you know, the United Arab Emirates, and some allied countries, have been trying to damage the territorial integrity of Iran pertaining to the Lesser and the Greater Tombs and Abu Mousa islands in the Persian Gulf. The false claim of this country is a flagrant violation of the purposes and obligations of states specified in the United Nations Charter. Further, in a futile attempt to ignore the historical name of Persia for the Persian Gulf, this country, and its allies, are trying to undermine the historical facts which have been acknowledged by the United Nations.

These futile efforts are a violation of the mandatory rule of international law to respect the territorial integrity and political independence of countries according to paragraph 1 of article 2 of the United Nations Charter, hence are conducive to international responsibility according to article 31 of the *Draft Articles on State Responsibility for Internationally Wrongful Acts*. “The responsible State is under an obligation to make full reparation for the injury caused by the internationally wrongful act”.[[3]](#footnote-3) The *United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names* in the addendum dated 18 August 1994 directly and clearly urges “care to be taken to ensure the appropriate used of the term Persian Gulf in documents, publications, statements prepared by the Secretariat” The addendum continues that “The full-name Persian Gulf should be used in every case instead of the shorter term Golf including in repetition of the term after this initial use in the text”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Given the responsibility of the members of the United Nations to undertake, with good faith (article 2 part 2),[[5]](#footnote-5) all obligations contained in the Charter, legal opinions, and instructions of the *United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names* must be strictly followed.

*United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names*, found unanimously in historical documents the term Persian as the proper historical name for the closed sea in the south of Iran today. The group on working paper number 61 of 2006 considered the ancient names as the *human knowledge built in the course of history* (emphasis added) of different nations. Names are associated with the identity of nations, as such the Persian Gulf is the ancient name for the Persian Gulf. The Group emphasizes that:

No water channel has been so significant as PERSIAN GULF (emphasis in the original text) to the geologists, archaeologists, geographers, merchants, politicians, excursionists, and scholars whether in the past or in the present. This water channel which separates the Iran Plateau from the Arabia Plate has enjoyed an Iranian Identity since at least 2200 years ago.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The group of experts reminds us that researchers, who have researched about the name of the Persian Gulf, became unanimous in considering the name of the Persian Gulf. During all the centuries, and at least during the past 2500 years, i.e., as of the time of the powerful Pars Empire, there has never been seen such unanimity in the Middle East among writers and historians on one name during history.

The UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names further argues that no written deed has remained since the era before the Pars Empire, but in the oral history and culture, the Iranians have called the southern waters: the Jam Sea, Iran Sea, and Pars Sea (emphasis added). In this way, the group cites historical documents that are all specifying the name Persian for the Persian Gulf:

In the travel account of Pythagoras, several chapters are related to the description of his travels accompanied by Darioush, a king of Achaemenid, to Shoush and Persepolis, and the area is described. From among the writings of others in the same period, there is the inscription and engraving of Darioush the Great, installed at the junction of waters of Arabian Gulf (Ahmar Sea) and Nile River and Rome River (current Mediterranean) which belongs to the 5th century BC where, Darioush, the king of Pars Empire has named the PERSIAN GULF Water Channel: PARS SEA. From among the other significant deeds written in this field, the world map: Hecataeus (472 to 509 B.C.) can be stated where PERSIAN GULF (emphasis in the original text) and Arabian Gulf (Red Sea) have been clearly shown. Also, a map remained from Herodotus, the great historian of Greece (425-484 B.C.) which introduces the Red Sea as the Arabian Gulf.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The said group of experts cites the name Persia for the Persian Gulf in a series of international agreements which are all, according to article 38 of the ICJ Statute, the main sources of international law:

1. General contract with Arabian Emirs on January 08, 1820,[[8]](#footnote-8) between Sheikhs of United Emirates at PERSIAN GULF, signed by General Cairo and 11 chiefs of Arab Tribes, the word: *Alkhalij Alfarsi* (emphasis added) has been used in the Arabic texts.
2. Contract of 1947 on Prohibition of Slaves Sales.
3. Permanent Contract of Peace in 1853.
4. Treaty of 1856 on Slaves Trade.
5. Contract on Independence of Kuwait (this deed was registered on June 19, 1961, with the Secretariat of the United Nations.
6. Treaty on Determination of Border Lines of Iraq and Kuwait (1996).

Also, in the political, legal, and economic accords concluded between the United Emirates and the other countries during the years of 1806 to 1971, the word: Bahre Fars or PERSIAN GULF has been used.

The *UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names* earnestly stresses the name Persia for the Persian Gulf by citing several maps endorsed by Britain during the course of its expansion in the region in the 18th and 19th centuries:

1. The map of the Empire of Persia was prepared by the photographer, Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon D'Avnille in 1770.
2. A New Map of the Empire of Persia prepared by D'Avnille in 1794.
3. Persia Map prepared for the new Atlas by Thomson’s in 1818.
4. Persia map prepared by Orme, Brown Longman, and Rees in 1828.
5. Persia with part of the Ottoman Empire prepared by G. Long in 1831.
6. Central Asia Map, prepared by Alex Burnes in 1834.
7. Persia Map (1840) prepared for Atlas Black.
8. Persia Map prepared for Atlas B lack in 1884.
9. Persia & Cabool Map prepared by A. K. Johnston in 1844.
10. Map of Persia, Kabul, etc. prepared by J. Arrowsmith in 1873.
11. Map of Persia & Afghanistan prepared by A. C. Block in 1854.
12. Maps under the title: Map of Persia published in 1886 (this map was prepared upon instruction by the Ministry of Seafaring and by Information Services of Ministry of War of England.)
13. Map of Persia prepared by Captain St. John upon instruction by Vice-Minister at Indian Affairs, England Cabinet in 1874.
14. Map of Persia prepared by the Information Sector of the English Ministry of War in 1891.
15. Map of Iran, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan published under the supervision of Kerzen in 1891 and 1892.
16. Maps under the title Map of Persia, prepared in Shimla Drawing Department in 1897.

### The correct name Persian Gulf has also been applied by international organizations. *Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea* (DOALOS), *Office of Legal Affairs*, and the *UN Editorial Control Section*, formally used the name Persian Gulf: “States of the Persian Gulf”. Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are all coastal countries located in the south of the Persian Gulf.

The Expert Group extends this reference to the Persian Gulf and the formal name of the waterwayexisting at the south side of Iran. The Group also urges attention to the other instructions of the United Nations:

* Note No. LA45.82 dated Aug. 10, 1984 (New York)
* Circular No. CAB/1/87/63 dated 16.02.1987 of Managing Director of UNESCO.
* ST/CSSER/29 dated Jan. 10, 1990.
* AD/311/1/GEN dated March 5, 1991.
* ST/CS/SER.A/29/Add.1 dated Jan. 24, 1992.
* ST/CS/SER.A/29/Add.2 dated Aug. 18, 1994.
* ST/CS/SER.A/29/Rev.1 dated May 14, 1999.

The Group is insisting that ignoring the prefix Persian for the Persian Gulf is a politically motivated plan by the countries located in the Arabian south of the Persian Gulf. This is a motivation to intentionally change the name of PERSIAN GULF. It is purely political, and the motivation to change the name of PERSIAN GULF is purely political.

Your Excellency:

All members of the United Nations should comply with the purposes contained in the Charter, among them developing friendly relationships with good faith. Since such an obligation by the UN members is grounded on a deeper duty to respect the territorial integrity of the member states, I request you to instruct the UN Editorial Control Section to issue once again a legal document urging the use of the term Persian for the Persian Gulf. No derogation from this legally established norm is to be permitted.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Mahmoud Masaeli

1. Subject: USE OF THE TERM "PERSIAN GULF". The purpose of the present addendum is to urge that care be taken to ensure the appropriate use of this term in documents, publications and statements prepared by the Secretariat. The full term "Persian Gulf" should be used in every case instead of the shorter term "Gulf", including in repetitions of the term after its initial use in a text. ST/CS/SER.A/24/ADD.2., August 18, 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Conclusion 2. Definition of a peremptory norm of general international law (jus cogens): A peremptory norm of general international law (jus cogens) is a norm accepted and recognized by the international community of States as a whole as a norm from which no derogation is permitted and which can be modified only by a subsequent norm of general international law having the same character. Report of the UN Legal Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Draft Articles on State Responsibility for Internationally Wrongful Acts, *International Law Commission*, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Supra note 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Charter, article 2 (2): All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Working Paper, No. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Supra note 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. # Article six: The friendly Arabs, if they choose, shall send an Envoy to the British Residency in the Persian Gulf with the necessary accompaniments… see: Qatar Digital Library. File 2902/1916 ‘Treaties and Engagements between the British Government and the Chiefs of the Arabian Coast of the Persian Gulf’ [‎131r] (272/448).

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)