Egypt’s legal positions regarding tensions in the Strait of Hormuz

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International humanitarian law & Law of the sea & Use of force | Jul 31, 2026

Last updated (31 July 2026)

This post documents Egypt’s legal official positions concerning the tensions in the Strait of Hormuz arising between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America following the United States’/ Israel’s attacks on Iran.

On 11 March, **Egypt co-sponsored draft resolution (S/2026/155) presented to the United Nations Security Council condemning Iran’s attacks** against Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan, which constitute a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security. The draft resolution further **reaffirms that the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms by merchant and commercial vessels, in accordance with international law, must be respected, particularly around critical maritime routes, and takes note of the right of Member States, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks and provocations, including those that undermine navigational rights and freedoms**. **It condemns actions or threats by Iran aimed at closing, obstructing, or otherwise interfering with international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, or threatening maritime security in the Bab Al Mandab and affirms that any attempt to impede lawful transit passage or freedom of navigation in these international waterways constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security**; and calls upon Iran to refrain immediately from any actions or threats in accordance with international law.

On 7 April 2026, another draft resolution (S/2026/273) was submitted by Bahrain alongside Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations Security Council concerning the protection of international navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. The draft resolution failed to be adopted due to the vetoes exercised by the Russia and China, both permanent members of the Council. Russia and China justified their vetoes on the basis that the proposed resolution was politically unbalanced and directed primarily against Iran without addressing the broader regional context, particularly the military actions undertaken by the United States and Israel. Both States argued that the draft could contribute to further escalation rather than promote a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

No statement concerning this resolution was documented on behalf of Egypt. However, Egypt delivered a statement during the 79th meeting of the General Assembly, convened to discuss the aforementioned use of the veto. **Egypt expressed its complete rejection of all forms of aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Arab nations in the Gulf, as well as Jordan and Iraq.** It also referred to its co-sponsorship of Security Council resolution 2817, adopted by the Council on 11 March.

Egypt further stressed the need for full compliance with the United Nations Charter and international law, including international humanitarian law. It emphasized the obligation to refrain completely from attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including energy facilities, water desalination plants, and residential areas, describing such acts as grave violations of international law. Egypt also emphasized that there is no military solution to the crisis, as continued escalation would only lead to further violence, destruction, and human suffering. Finally, Egypt highlighted its efforts toward de-escalation and welcomed the initial steps taken by the Secretary-General to revitalize the role of the United Nations in addressing the conflict, including the appointment of a Personal Envoy for this matter.

Egypt stressed the importance of building on diplomatic efforts toward de-escalation, while ensuring full adherence to the cessation of hostilities and the protection of freedom of navigation.

On 27 April, Egypt participated in the open debate session held by the Security Council on the security and protection of international waterways. Egypt stated that **UNCLOS establishes a balance between two obligations: coastal states must not impede the transit passage of commercial vessels (Articles 38 and 42), while also holding the right to adopt laws and regulations governing maritime traffic within their waters (Article 41). Egypt presents this balance as the legal basis for its own role in managing the Suez Canal.**

Egypt then outlined four principles it says guide its position on maritime security and freedom of navigation. First, **Egypt stated that international waterways should remain inviolable under UNCLOS and under customary and treaty-based norms**. Second, Egypt **opposed any measures or threats that could impede or disrupt international navigation or jeopardize the safety of commercial and civilian vessels, characterizing such actions as threats to international peace and security.** Third, Egypt asserted that **primary responsibility for arrangements governing international waterways lies with the littoral states bordering them**, and on this basis states its opposition to involvement by non-littoral states in ways that would infringe on littoral states' sovereignty. Fourth, Egypt **opposed the militarization of waterways or subjection to international control,** stating that such developments could increase regional

tensions and reduce trust among states — which it described as inconsistent with UNCLOS's stated purpose of the peaceful use of the seas. It also cited the Suez Canal–Red Sea Economic and Maritime Development Initiative, launched in October 2025, as a concrete initiative reflecting this approach — one that Egypt describes as bringing together international cooperation, blue economy development, maritime infrastructure, and a model of regional governance over the economic and security affairs of the waterway.

Regarding attacks in Strait of Hormuz, Egypt issued a statement on 4 May 2026 condemning the attack on a UAE Oil tanker in Strait of Hormuz. **Egypt stressed that attacks against commercial vessels and interference with international maritime routes constitute a clear violation of international law, particularly those related to safeguarding freedom of navigation and the security of international waterways.**

Along the same lines, Egypt issued a statement on 10 May 2026 condemning the targeting of a Commercial Cargo Vessel in the Territorial Waters of Qatar. **Egypt stressed that attacks against civilian and commercial vessels constitute a clear violation of international law and the principles guaranteeing freedom of maritime navigation.** (Subsequent statements regarding ongoing attacks have been documented and can be found here, here, here, here and here)

On the other side, no direct statements were documented following the announcements (see here and here) by the United States of America to blockade ships entering or existing Iranian Ports.

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