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Post-war Victimization in Israeli Aggression against Iran (2025) From the Perspective of Cultural Criminology

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Abstract

The Israeli aggression against Iran in June 2025—targeting defense infrastructure, military personnel, civilians including scientists, children, and women, as well as hospitals, schools, and national media—was not merely a military confrontation but a turning point in the collective and psychological victimization of Iranian society. The ensuing fear, urban displacement, partial economic collapse, and existential anxiety fractured Iran's cultural and moral fabric, creating conditions for new forms of post-war violence. This study examines how collective victimization reproduces violence and breaks norms in the post-war context both at cultural and psychological levels, and explores the relationship between symbolic violence in media, political discourse, and everyday life (routine activity criminology). The central premise posits that aggression — and the enduring fear of its recurrence—erodes social cohesion, normalizes aggression, and embeds violent cultural patterns into civic life, generating a cyclical process of victimization and offending, wherein society itself perpetuates violence. From a cultural criminological perspective, this cycle reflects a normalization of deviance and a redefinition of social power through violence. Breaking it requires a shift in Iran's criminal policy from a security-based to a cultural and restorative approach at legislative, judicial, and executive levels—prioritizing the symbolic reconstruction of trust, hope, and meaning alongside structural post-war recovery.

Keywords: Cultural Criminology, Israeli Aggression, Reproduction of Violence, Security-oriented Criminal Policy, War Victims

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

1. Introduction

Human history, from its very beginnings, has been marked by conflicts, confrontations, and wars. War, as a social phenomenon, is intertwined with rapid transformations and profound societal changes; yet it remains one of the most destructive and crisis-generating events, often accompanied by unforeseen and uncontrollable consequences.

The growing attention to victims, their needs, and their rights has led, in recent decades, to the emergence of victimological movements that have significantly influenced both criminal policy and crime reduction strategies. These developments have redirected the focus of criminological inquiry toward new perspectives, particularly the study of civilian victims and the protection of those affected by war crimes and armed violence. Victim-centered human rights emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a product of the interaction between the human rights movement and the victims' rights movement. Over time, this convergence evolved into an interdisciplinary field, becoming a pivotal reference point for diverse areas of study such as international criminal law, criminology, sociology of health, and sociology of war.

Conducting an integrative study at the intersection of war criminology and international human rights law—focusing on the international crimes committed by Israel during its June 2025 aggression against Iran—represents both a thematic innovation and a contribution of high research value. What distinguishes this article in particular is its adoption of Cultural Criminology—selected among dozens of criminological theories—as the analytical framework for interpreting the recent Israeli aggression against Iran. From this perspective, the paper explores a highly specific and nuanced subject: the cycle of post-war violence, the

reproduction of aggression, and the domino-like continuation of criminal behavior arising from wartime victimization.

To engage meaningfully with the concepts and discussions of this article, it must first be noted that the provision of services to international victims, given the transnational nature of such harm, requires the active participation and cooperation of states. The *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power* (1985) represents the culmination of international efforts, led by the United Nations, to strengthen victim protection and to give a global dimension to the international approach toward victims.

Within this framework, victims of terrorism and war—due to the magnitude of their material and moral suffering—require special protection and focused attention from both national governments and the international community. Their reactions frequently manifest as psychological disorders, including chronic anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and psychosomatic conditions. Even individuals not directly exposed to the war—such as refugees, observers of war-related media, or relatives of those involved in combat—may experience similar symptoms. In this context, resilience emerges as a multidimensional skill: not only a mechanism for coping with individual and collective crises, but also a gateway for transforming threats into opportunities, preserving empathy, and reinforcing social cohesion. This highlights the need for scientifically grounded and precise protocols on how war-related information is communicated—protocols that ensure accuracy and transparency, while preventing the excessive and psychologically harmful dissemination of despair-inducing content.

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

A mass departure of the population from Tehran occurred in the aftermath of the Israeli airstrikes on Iran in June 2025. The bombing of military and nuclear sites in the Iranian capital by Israel caused widespread public panic, severe infrastructural disruption, and an unprecedented wave of internal displacement in the contemporary history of the Islamic Republic. Following the attacks, a massive surge of misinformation emerged across social media platforms. This content included AI-generated videos that falsely exaggerated or minimized the military capabilities of both Iran and Israel. Certain social media accounts circulated a video—viewed more than 21 million times—falsely claiming that an Israeli F-35 fighter jet had been shot down. Analysts have linked the proliferation of such content to Russian influence networks, which have reportedly shifted their strategic focus from undermining support for Ukraine to casting doubt on the effectiveness of Western—particularly U.S.—military technology. According to this assessment, since Russia lacks systems capable of directly countering the F-35, it seeks instead to undermine global confidence in the aircraft through the strategic dissemination of disinformation and digitally manipulated content.

This study employs a qualitative analytical approach based on library resources, official reports, media reports, and theoretical texts in the fields of cultural criminology and war victimology. Data are analyzed within the theoretical framework of Cultural Criminology and key concepts such as Symbolic Violence (*Bourdieu*), Cultural Expression of Crime (*Ferrell*), and the Victimization–Offending Cycle.

2. Research Background

Nasimi et al. (1403 [2024 A.D.]), in their article *Criminal Policy in*

Support of Victims of Terrorist Crimes, argue that the effective protection of victims of terrorism requires the adoption of specific policies and measures within criminal justice systems. According to the findings of this study, genuine compensation for victims of terrorism—based on the standards of international humanitarian law—necessitates coordinated international action and harmonized operational frameworks. The authors emphasize that the harm suffered by victims of terrorist acts must be compensated without discrimination and regardless of nationality, race, color, religion, or gender, in a manner that is fair, proportionate, and timely.

It should be noted that this article was written and published prior to the twelve-day Israel–Iran war, and therefore does not incorporate a cultural-criminological approach, nor address the phenomenon of *post-war victimization*. Consequently, its analytical orientation and theoretical framework differ entirely from those of my own study.

Findings from several other studies indicate that during the June 2025 Israeli aggression against Iran, the cognitive warfare campaign was structured around three principal axes: narrative hegemony, public opinion engineering, and disruption of decision-making processes. In response, Iran successfully neutralized a substantial portion of this offensive through counter-narrative construction, strategic media defense, command-level cohesion, and broad civic participation[1].

Overall, ten abstract conceptual categories were identified, encompassing notions such as the defeat of the adversary's narrative, consolidation of intelligent deterrence, societal psychological resilience, delegitimization of international

1 . See Emadi, 1404 [2025 A.D.]

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

institutions, and enhancement of Iran's cognitive capital within global public perception.

Other studies, without focusing on the victims of any specific or particular war, have generally proposed comprehensive mechanisms for the effective protection of victims of international crimes. Among the recommended measures are the following: Facilitating the compensation process (for victims of terrorism through the coordinated involvement of both public and private sectors in repairing their material and moral damages, irrespective of the identification or prosecution of the perpetrators); Enacting a special law on the protection of victims of terrorism (ensuring a clear statutory framework for their rights and entitlements); Expanding police powers (to identify, arrest, and detain individuals suspected of engaging in terrorist activities); Establishing a specialized governmental office (dedicated to addressing the needs and claims of victims of terrorism); authorizing Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) (to participate actively in reporting terrorist incidents, filing complaints, and contributing to judicial proceedings); Providing free judicial assistance and legal aid (to victims, as well as ensuring timely access to information regarding the progress of criminal proceedings); Offering immediate and cost-free medical and psychological services (to victims of terrorism); Exempting victims and their families from all forms of taxation, court fees, and medical expenses (related to the consequences of terrorist acts); Utilizing insurance companies, public donations, and philanthropic resources (as complementary financial mechanisms); Establishing a special compensation fund for victims of terrorism (to guarantee prompt payment of damages and facilitate their recovery).

These measures collectively emphasize a multidimensional and

victim-centered approach to counterterrorism policy—one that integrates criminal justice, humanitarian, and social welfare dimensions in line with the principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.

3. Theoretical Foundations

About victim-to-offender Transition cycle in criminological and victimological discourse It should be noted that within the domains of criminology and victimology, the concept of the *cycle of transition from victimization to offending* represents a complex and multi-causal phenomenon, illustrating that the experience of being a victim can, indirectly, constitute a criminogenic factor leading to future offending behavior. The cycle of transition from victimization to offending describes a sociopsychological process in which individuals or groups who have experienced harm, trauma, or humiliation internalize patterns of aggression and later reproduce them in their own behavior. Through mechanisms such as desensitization to violence, loss of trust, and cultural normalization of retaliation, victimized communities gradually transform from passive sufferers into active agents of harm. Over time, this recursive dynamic blurs the boundary between victim and offender, sustaining a self-perpetuating culture of violence within the social fabric.

From the standpoint of both classical and contemporary criminological theories, victimization is not simply a passive condition; rather, it may trigger cognitive, emotional, and behavioral transformations that increase the propensity for deviant conduct. In this process, a crime victim—through feelings of injustice, shame, anger, or distrust toward the criminal justice

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

system—may gradually shift toward norm-breaking or even retaliatory behavior. From a clinical-criminological perspective, the psychological consequences of victimization—such as post-traumatic stress, personality disorganization, or the learned reproduction of violence—can alter an individual's behavioral inhibition mechanisms, effectively transforming the person from a passive victim into an active offender.

Within the framework of *Interactionist Criminology*, the transition from victimization to offending is viewed as a product of symbolic processes and social labeling. According to Howard Becker's and Edwin Lemert's *Labelling Criminological Theory*, society, by ascribing stigmatizing identities such as 'victim', 'problematic', or 'deviant' to an individual, places that person on a trajectory of deviant self-identification (Karas, 2024). When victims, due to social neglect or victim-blaming, internalize feelings of worthlessness or exclusion, their interaction with institutions of authority and social order becomes disrupted. Consequently, they gradually detach from the normative community and may become integrated into deviant networks or subcultures of social resistance. This process is particularly evident among adolescents and female victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse, as dominant social attitudes often stigmatize rather than support them—thereby facilitating the internalization of a deviant role within their self-concept.

From the standpoint of Cultural Criminology, the cycle of victimization and offending is not simply a psychological or social process, but a fundamentally *cultural and meaning-making phenomenon*. This perspective, emphasizing *emotions, symbols, and narratives*, posits that the experience of victimization within a specific cultural context may generate a form of resistance

narrative or symbolic reappropriation of power (Arab et al., 1400 [2022 A.D.]). A victim abandoned by institutions of authority—such as the police, courts, or even the family—may seek to restore a lost sense of agency through the reproduction of violence or the transgression of normative values. In this sense, crime operates as a *symbolic act* that enables the former victim to reclaim control and self-definition—a concept articulated in contemporary theories such as *Crime as Cultural Expression* and *the Aesthetics of Deviance*. This line of analysis interprets the victim-to-offender transition not merely as the reproduction of trauma, but as a *form of cultural resistance* against domination, humiliation, and systemic exclusion.

Ultimately, the implications of this cycle for criminal policy and social decriminalization are profound. The traditional criminal justice system—focused narrowly on punitive sanctions and neglecting psycho-social interventions—often fails to detect or interrupt this cyclical process. In contrast, modern policies, inspired by Restorative Justice, victim-centered prevention, and victim empowerment seek to re-establish social belonging and trust, thereby preventing victims from evolving into offenders. If left unaddressed, the victimization-offending cycle not only reproduces criminality, but also generates *counter-cultural subcommunities of resistance* against the justice system. Hence, recognizing the structural determinants of this cycle—such as poverty, inequality, gender discrimination, and symbolic violence—is essential for developing comprehensive criminological policies. Ultimately, the offending behavior of many former victims represents an *echo of the injustices* they have suffered.

Within this framework, Cultural Criminology pays more systematic attention than any other criminological branch to the

role of *mass media* in both crime causation and prevention. From this perspective, the media often contribute to rising crime rates through *moral panic*, *populist narratives*, and the amplification of fear. Complementary theoretical traditions—such as the *Dominant Ideology Thesis*, *Pluralism*, and *Labelling Theory*—converge on the view that media constructions significantly shape public perceptions of deviance and the boundaries of legality (Karaminaghibi et al., 1401 [2022 A.D.]).

Moreover, Islamic pedagogical teachings, emphasizing concepts such as *Jihad-e-Tabyin* (the struggle for truth-clarification), *patience (ṣabr)*, *sacrifice (īthār)*, and *social responsibility*, have played a vital role in strengthening religious identity and national cohesion during times of crisis. A legal-analytical reading of the recent war demonstrates that, from a cultural-criminological standpoint, the *media representation of resistance*—particularly in the education of younger generations—has provided an opportunity to institutionalize religious and national values. Integrating Islamic education, the doctrine of legitimate defense, and media literacy thus offers a strategic, civilization-building model for confronting future hybrid wars within a framework that fuses cultural resilience, legal legitimacy, and criminological insight (Agazadeh, 1404 [2025 A.D.]).

3. 1. War Victimology and the Chain of Violence

Among the challenges of criminological analysis of international crimes, the following can be mentioned: the identity-based nature of crimes, the distinction between the morality or non-morality of international criminal behavior analysis, the problems of criminalizing and punishing these crimes, the high number of

crimes, the difficulty of collecting statistics and data, the problems of the presence of witnesses and victims in the investigation process, and finally, the unfamiliarity of the Western literature that governs criminology with the space and cultural world that governs crimes, which is sometimes Eastern or Southern, or sometimes in the same Western culture, the occurrence of crimes is novel, unexpected, and accompanied by surprise (Razavifard, 1404 [2025 A.D.]). From the perspective of Criminology of War, armed conflict not only produces physical and geographical devastation but also dismantles the moral, normative, and psychological structures of society. Populations affected by war experience a form of collective victimization, the consequences of which transcend individual suffering. Such victimization erodes both social and psychological resilience, undermines public trust in formal institutions, and destabilizes the sense of order and predictability in everyday life.

Under these conditions, individuals and communities are often drawn into a Durkheimian state of anomie, in which normative regulation weakens and the boundary between lawful and unlawful behavior becomes blurred. War—particularly when prolonged or internal—imprints upon the collective memory a pervasive sense of helplessness and injustice, which, in turn, fosters conditions conducive to the proliferation of interpersonal violence, acts of revenge, trafficking, and crimes against property and public security.

War precipitates a profound erosion of social and moral capital both at individual and collective levels. Confronted with the existential pressures of survival, individuals tend to abandon pre-existing moral norms, replacing them with a form of situational morality that adapts to immediate needs rather than ethical

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

principles. Repeated exposure to death, insecurity, and the absence of institutional protection gradually diminishes moral sensitivity toward violence.

From the standpoint of *Social Learning Theory*, continuous contact with violent behavior, the habitual use of weapons, and the internalization of power dynamics grounded in coercion lead to the assimilation of new behavioral patterns. This internalization of violence persists even after the cessation of hostilities, resulting in a post-war surge in violent crimes such as homicide, assault, street fighting, and domestic violence.

Moreover, *social disorganization*—arising from population displacement, infrastructure destruction, and family disintegration—creates a fertile ground for the expansion of property crimes, human and goods trafficking, and the emergence of organized criminal networks (Jefferson & Hall, 2021).

From the standpoint of Critical and Structural Criminology, war can be conceptualized as a form of state-organized crime—a systematic exercise of power imposed from above that reshapes the legal order in favor of domination and survivalist logic. Consequently, in post-war contexts, societies often experience a deep structural distrust toward law and governance. When state authority is weakened and the capacity to enforce legal norms deteriorates, formal mechanisms of social control lose their functionality, while informal controls simultaneously disintegrate due to economic instability and family breakdown. Within this institutional vacuum, the informal and underground economy expands, and crimes such as embezzlement, bribery, war profiteering, looting of public resources, hoarding, and administrative corruption proliferate. The blurred boundary between legality and illegality in wartime and post-war conditions

renders the concept of economic legitimacy ambiguous. In this environment, individuals and groups engage in networks and activities that, under normal circumstances, would be deemed criminal but now function as mechanisms of survival amid systemic collapse.

The examination of how resilience is developed and strengthened among war casualties and the families affected by the twelve-day conflict with Israel constitutes a critical component of this study. Considering the wide spectrum of wartime harm—from the killing of high-ranking military commanders and nuclear scientists to the deaths and injuries of ordinary soldiers, rescue personnel, and civilians—the June 2025 Israel–Iran war resulted in a broad range of victims, spanning from fatalities to those suffering from severe and minor injuries.

Critical cultural criminologists believe that international crimes, in addition to direct harm to victims such as sexual assault and death, also cause indirect harms, such as hunger and disease. Moreover, economic sanctions and foreign support for repressive regimes inflict indirect harms on people and nations. International crimes target individuals, but they also have profound effects on regions, neighborhoods, and entire ethnic and racial groups. Social institutions, especially in areas of war and widespread conflict, are fragile and often dissolved. Schools, hospitals, and places of worship lose their effectiveness (Klein, 2011). Families are torn apart. People go missing, buildings and homes are destroyed, and basic needs for adequate nutrition, clean water, and safe sanitation cannot be met. Psychological and emotional damage often translates into collective suffering.

Understanding the dimensions of harm and the necessity of a

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

differentiated approach requires a systematic and evidence-based analysis of the degree and depth of victimization during the conflict. These harms encompass a diverse set of physical, psychological, social, and economic consequences—each demanding distinct forms of support, intervention, and policy response:

1- *Martyrdom and Loss of Loved Ones*: Families of martyrs experience profound grief, a pervasive sense of loss, and an enduring need for long-term psychosocial support. For this group, *resilience* signifies the capacity to reconstruct life after an irreparable loss, integrating mourning into a renewed sense of purpose and social continuity);

2- *Severe Injuries (War Veterans)*: Individuals who sustained severe injuries face not only chronic physical pain but also permanent disabilities, complex requirements for physical and psychological rehabilitation, and fundamental transformations in their lifestyle and professional identity (DiPietro & Baker, 2023). For them, resilience entails accepting altered bodily and social conditions, discovering remaining capabilities, and rebuilding a coherent self-identity within new physical and social realities;

3- *Mild Injuries and Hidden Psychological Trauma*: Many individuals may not display visible physical wounds yet suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and relational difficulties. In this group, resilience means the early identification and treatment of psychological injuries to prevent their chronicization and long-term social withdrawal;

***4- Social and Economic Victimization*:** The destruction of infrastructure, loss of employment and housing, and the collapse of social networks affect all layers of society. Building resilience at

this level requires comprehensive social and economic reconstruction, aimed at restoring collective trust, social capital, and opportunities for dignified livelihoods.

How is resilience achieved among the wounded and affected population of the twelve-day war with Israel? The realization of resilience under wartime conditions—particularly in a sudden and large-scale crisis such as the twelve-day conflict—emerges through a combination of individual, familial, social, and institutional factors**:**

***A-1) Immediate Support and Rapid Emergency Response*:** During the 12-day aggression, the rapid reaction of emergency forces, medical teams, and the Red Crescent in evacuating the injured and providing initial medical assistance played a crucial role in preserving lives and reducing the severity of injuries. This prompt intervention constituted the first step toward maintaining physical and psychological resilience**.**

***A-2) National Cohesion and Social Solidarity*:** Reports indicate that during the war, national unity and collective solidarity reached unprecedented levels. Public donations, volunteer participation, and emotional support for the wounded and their families fostered a strong sense of belonging and hope. Such *social support* represents the most fundamental buffer of resilience in times of crisis.

***A-3) Role of Supportive Institutions (Welfare Organization, Martyrs Foundation, NGOs)*:** The Welfare Organization and various non-governmental organizations deployed psychological teams to affected areas to address trauma and strengthen social resilience. The Martyrs and Veterans Foundation assumed responsibility for supporting the families of martyrs and injured veterans, providing both material and emotional assistance.

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

***A-4) Continuity of Medical and Rehabilitation Services*:** Despite the damage to medical infrastructure, continuous efforts to maintain hospital operations and surgical interventions for the wounded proved essential. Sustained medical treatment and physical–psychological rehabilitation is vital for restoring lost capabilities and preventing long-term disability.

***A-5) Information and Communication Management*:** Accurate and timely dissemination of information regarding the condition of the wounded and ongoing relief efforts helped to reduce rumors, alleviate public anxiety, and strengthen collective trust in both institutions and community response mechanisms.

B) The ethical approach to international humanitarian law in conflicts has led to the establishment of international legal obligations to observe the principles of the ethics of war in five areas (strategy of conflict, tactics of conflict, commitment of marines to personal ethics, manner of treating prisoners of war, property, places, and the environment) (Khaghani Esfahani & Seyed nasseri, 1404 [2025 A.D.]). The non-compliance of the party or parties involved in the war leads to the commission of war crimes or other crimes (crimes against humanity or genocide) and causes severe physical, psychological, economic, security and infrastructural damage to the people who suffer from the war. This damage causes long-term disruption in the lifestyle of the people who are victims of the war (even the short-term 12-day Israeli aggression against Iran in 2025) and leads the victims of the aggression to commit financial crimes due to the destruction of their lives, or domestic and social violence due to the psychological trauma of the war; a situation that can be called the criminalization of the victims of war and the reproduction of the cycle of war violence.

3. 2. Victimization and Criminality in International Crimes from the Perspective of Cultural Criminology

Cultural criminology as a new trend in criminology, sociology and criminal justice examines the symmetry of culture and criminal processes in contemporary social life. By distancing itself from the causes of generally external investigations and emphasizing too much on individual and structural contexts, cultural criminology, as a meeting point of criminology and cultural studies, considers crime and criminal to be a social construction. They must have a serious reflection on the social context and power relations in the society (Alimi et al., 2024). In other words, cultural Criminology is one of the late-twentieth-century approaches that has attracted growing attention among criminological theorists (Ferrell, 2015). This paradigm is influenced by several sociological and philosophical traditions—including interactionism, Marxism, structuralism, and certain schools of criminological thought such as Critical Criminology, Neo-Marxist Criminology, the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, and postmodern philosophy.

From the perspective of Post-War Criminal Policy, the most significant threat is the consolidation of the 'victimization–criminalization–anomie' cycle. A society that has suffered the trauma of war, if deprived of restorative justice reconstruction, public trust regeneration, and economic rehabilitation, gradually moves toward the normalization of crime. In such contexts, violence becomes embedded in everyday language and political culture, and new generations grow up in an environment where the law has lost its moral legitimacy. Therefore, war should not be viewed simply as a source of crime but as a structural generator of criminality—a phenomenon that must be addressed through multi-level interventions encompassing psychological, economic, legal,

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

and cultural dimensions. Without such interventions, a war-torn society transforms into a crime-producing society, one in which the boundary between victim and offender becomes permanently blurred.

4. The Israel Aggression against Iran (June 2025); A Criminological Approach

Before proceeding to the criminological analysis, it is necessary to provide a brief legal characterization of the Israeli aggression against Iran from the standpoint of international law. Two days prior to the commencement of the sixth round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States in Muscat—aimed at reviving the nuclear agreement—on June 13, 2025, the Israeli regime launched unlawful military attacks on several locations within the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Shany & Cohen, 2026; Dannenbaum & Hamilton, 2026). By any legal or humanitarian definition, these attacks constitute the unjust imposition of aggression upon the Iranian nation.

Immediately following the strikes, many residents of Tehran began to evacuate the city toward neighboring provinces. During this twelve-day conflict, humanitarian and relief agencies estimated that tens of thousands of individuals temporarily or permanently left Tehran. Hospitals in adjacent provinces reported a noticeable surge in patients exhibiting symptoms of stress and anxiety. In response, the Iranian Red Crescent Society established mobile medical clinics along major highways and rest areas to provide urgent care and psychological assistance to displaced civilians.

The Israeli attacks targeting civilian areas, military facilities, and nuclear installations constitute a blatant violation of

international law, including multiple binding instruments and *peremptory norms (Jus Cogens)*. These actions violate Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state; relevant resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors; Articles 18 and 19 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; Article 56 of the Additional Protocol I to the First Geneva Convention; the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (1980) and its 2005 Amendment; and Article 8 bis (2) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which defines the *crime of aggression*.

Accordingly, Israel has committed the international crime of aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, accompanied by war crimes, and, through its domestic agents and infiltrated operatives, has carried out acts amounting to internal military intervention within the Iranian territory. In light of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter—including sovereign equality and independence of states, non-intervention in internal affairs, the obligation to eliminate threats to international peace and security, the prohibition of the use of force, and the promotion of friendly relations among nations—the actions of the Israeli regime represent an unequivocal and manifest breach of the Charter's fundamental principles. The large-scale and unlawful use of armed force against the Islamic Republic of Iran therefore constitutes a clear and self-evident case of aggression in violation of international law and the foundational norms of the United Nations system.

Targeted assassinations carried out outside the framework of armed conflict constitute a flagrant violation of fundamental principles of international law, including the right to life, the

prohibition of extrajudicial executions, and the right to a fair trial. In accordance with the established criteria for the formation of international crimes—namely *severity, systematic nature, and breach of peremptory norms (jus cogens)*—many legal scholars have argued that such assassinations may amount to crimes against humanity[1].

This classification arises from the fact that these acts are part of a widespread or systematic policy directed against a civilian group or identifiable population for political objectives, thus satisfying the definitional elements contained in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Some overstated studies have claimed that *"in the domain of public opinion, the psychological resilience of the Iranian population amid cognitive warfare was among the most significant domestic achievements"* (Salehi & Salmani Farahmand, 1400 [2022 A.D.]), p. 409). According to these accounts, the initial rumors concerning the collapse of air defense systems and the assassination of commanders were rapidly neutralized through official media outlets, expert analysts, and proactive social media users. The spontaneous and intelligent engagement of users in digital spaces—through counter-narrative content production, hashtag campaigns, and media exposés—reportedly influenced both domestic and international public perceptions. These studies identify two levels of cognitive engagement among the Iranian populace during the twelve-day conflict: 1- Cognitive Defense, encompassing counter-narrative strategies, media cohesion, perceptual command, and the restoration of public trust; and 2- Perceptual Resistance, involving the psychological stabilization of society and the cognitive defeat of the adversary.

1. See Salehi & Salmani Farahmand, 1400 [2022 A.D.]

However, the reality differs from such claims, as large segments of the Iranian population—after being victimized by the Zionist regime's attacks, suffering direct physical, financial, and psychological harm, or experiencing indirect victimization from those assaults—lost their psychological resilience and committed crimes stemming from fear of the future, including certain financial and security-related offenses.

5. Recurrence of Forms of Violence; Criminality of War Victims (Crimes against Security, Persons, Property)

Criminologists typically categorize crimes into several broad groups—such as violent crimes, white-collar crimes, and organized crimes, among others. Fundamentally, criminological classification does not follow the same classical legal taxonomy used in criminal law, which distinguishes *crimes against persons*, *property*, *state security*, and similar categories. Rather, the criminological classification of offenses is a sociological typology designed to facilitate a more systematic and scientifically coherent study of crime. Consequently, such classifications have no direct legal effect; they are neither exhaustive nor binding, but rather illustrative and symbolic frameworks intended to simplify analytical understanding within criminological research.

Within the framework of *War Criminology* and the study of national security crises, direct military assaults—such as Israel's June 2025 attack on Iran targeting vital defensive, deterrent, and scientific infrastructures—constitute not only a military threat but also a psychological and structural blow to the country's *socio-legal order*.

Under such conditions, the most immediate consequence is the increase in domestic security-related offenses, rooted in heightened feelings of insecurity, collective anxiety, and the erosion of political trust. Crimes such as spreading rumors, disseminating false information to disturb public opinion, collaboration or communication with foreign media, intelligence espionage, sabotage of critical infrastructure, incitement against the state, and membership in opposition networks—virtual or real— tend to escalate during such crises.

From the perspective of *Political Anomie Theory*, when the legitimacy of the political order becomes unstable in the minds of citizens and the future appears uncertain, segments of the population experience a cognitive detachment from governing authority (Bernburg, 2002). As a result, certain individuals may perceive anti-system actions not as crimes, but as symbolic acts of resistance or protest.

Simultaneously, this environment—characterized by an atmosphere of media distrust and heightened public anxiety—facilitates the expansion of cyber-security offenses and digital psychological operations, reflecting the transformation of traditional forms of political deviance into technologically mediated resistance behaviors.

From a socio-economic perspective, war disrupts production and distribution chains, restricts access to foreign currency resources, increases inflationary expectations, and generates a state of economic anomie. Under such conditions, economic crimes intensify—particularly the hoarding of essential goods, currency and gold smuggling, speculative trading in non-productive markets, price manipulation and profiteering, cyber fraud, and money laundering.

According to the Crisis Rational Choice Theory, individuals,

acting opportunistically and with calculated reasoning, justify economic offenses as means of self-preservation and capital protection in the absence of effective government oversight and amid the weakness of administrative control systems. During the temporary evacuation of Tehran and the slowdown of formal economic activity, the emergence of black markets for scarce commodities (fuel, medicine, communication equipment) and the proliferation of informal distribution networks represented a recurring pattern of war economy—itself a criminogenic structure. In such a situation, class inequality widens, and the resulting perception of economic injustice fuels anti-social and criminal behaviors.

From the perspective of violent and personal crimes, war and the resulting state of emergency activate latent patterns of aggression within society. Based on the theories of Violence Learning and *Aggression Normalization*, repeated exposure to images and narratives of war, the dominance of coercive power discourse, and the visible presence of armed forces in public spaces diminish the society's moral sensitivity to violence. Consequently, offenses such as domestic homicides, street altercations, armed robberies, sexual assaults, domestic violence, and child abuse tend to increase.

These crimes are often not motivated by professional criminal intent, but by the release of accumulated emotions, existential anxiety, and feelings of social helplessness. In societies lacking effective post-conflict psychological support and social intervention mechanisms, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) manifests itself on a collective scale, blurring the boundary between defensive behavior and aggression. Within such a climate, even law enforcement and military personnel may experience control fatigue and engage in unlawful aggressive reactions,

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

reflecting the deep psychosocial erosion of regulatory capacity under prolonged crisis conditions.

In summary, from the perspective of Macro-Structural Criminology, Israel's aggression against Iran generated a cycle of national victimization, psychological instability, and institutional vulnerability which—if not addressed through a multi-layered criminal policy framework—may evolve into a condition of sustained criminality. When the state becomes preoccupied with military and defensive reconstruction, its capacity for social order supervision diminishes. This regulatory vacuum, compounded by public distrust and uncertainty about the future, fuels the growth of opportunity-driven crimes and reactive offenses.

Accordingly, beyond the physical consequences of war, its criminological implications must be recognized: the erosion of social solidarity, the expansion of both symbolic and physical violence, the increase in economic and security crimes, and the gradual decline in the legitimacy of social control. If the post-war government fails to prioritize restorative justice, economic reconstruction, and the redefinition of collective hope, society will gradually shift from a state of *victimization* to one of structural criminality—a trajectory repeatedly observed in post-conflict contexts such as Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

Victimization caused by war is among the deepest and most complex sources of criminal behavior in societies emerging from violent crises. War, by destroying economic structures, dismantling social order, and weakening both formal and informal mechanisms of control, systematically creates a fertile ground for deviant conduct. From the perspective of Merton's and Agnew's *Strain/Anomie theory*, war not only blocks legitimate pathways to socially approved goals—such as security, livelihood, and status—

but also adds intense emotional pressures, including anger, humiliation, and existential fear, that push individuals toward illegitimate means. The inability to achieve legitimate aspirations, coupled with economic instability and perceived injustice, weakens moral restraints and turns aggression into a rational survival strategy. Gradually, the notion of 'law-abiding behavior' is replaced by the logic of 'self-preservation', and crime becomes a tool for adaptation.

At the micro level, *Routine Activity Theory* (*Cohen* & *Felson*; *Clarke*) posits that war and post-war disruptions alter daily activity patterns, reduce environmental surveillance, and paralyze policing and urban services, thereby completing the classic triangle of crime: abundant motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. This dynamic raises the incidence of opportunistic crimes—from theft and fraud to street violence. Simultaneously, *Social Disorganization Theory* (*Shaw* & *McKay*; *Sampson*) explains how urban evacuation, displacement, and forced migration erode neighborhood networks and shared moral values, severely weakening a community's capacity for informal social control.

On the political and psychological levels, the experience of war undermines the legitimacy of legal and law-enforcement institutions. According to *Procedural Justice theory* (*Tyler*), perceived injustice and inefficiency within judicial and policing systems diminish voluntary compliance with the law and encourage reliance on private or vigilante justice. This condition resonates with *Defiance Theory* (*Sherman*), which holds that victims of severe violence who view authorities as unjust or indifferent respond not with obedience but with retaliatory defiance. Such defiance—particularly among disempowered and unemployed

youth—can trigger cycles of revenge-based violence and secondary offending.

Beyond structural and institutional mechanisms, the psychological and cultural dimensions of victimization play a decisive role. The *General Aggression Model* demonstrates that continuous exposure to existential threat, misinformation, and fear keeps individuals in a state of chronic arousal, lowering their threshold for aggression and transforming minor conflicts into violent encounters. Meanwhile, Cultural Criminology—drawing on Bourdieu and Ferrell—explains how violence shifts from the physical to the symbolic level. Media representations of revenge, political satire, and humiliation discourse convert violence into a form of cultural capital and everyday aesthetics. Violence thus ceases to be an anomaly; it becomes visible, narratable, and even admirable. This process constitutes what Vaughan termed the *Normalization of Deviance*—the gradual moral neutralization of aggression through repetition and symbolism.

Economic breakdown acts as fuel to this process. Collapse of livelihoods, inflation, unemployment, and scarcity of vital goods intensify both the motivation and rationalization for crime, legitimizing informal and black-market economies. People turn to illegal means for survival, erasing traditional moral boundaries. From a ***Life-Course Criminology*** perspective, war severs key social bonds—stable employment, marriage, education—that typically redirect individuals toward lawful behavior. Consequently, a society once victimized by violence becomes a reproducer of it; victims of war, in the absence of restorative opportunities and justice, turn into Victim-Offenders within a self-perpetuating cycle of victimization and offending.

In the context of Iran after the Israeli armed aggression of June

2025, these mechanisms became tangible. The Israeli attacks—targeting Iran's defensive infrastructure, scientific centers, and vital facilities—produced economic dislocation and widespread public fear. Urban evacuations in Tehran and other sensitive areas, partial administrative paralysis, and the surge of disinformation in digital media amplified feelings of insecurity and abandonment. Fear of renewed attacks and declining trust in institutional protection eroded social cohesion, opening space for reactive and aggressive behavior. Disruptions in municipal and policing services, combined with population displacement, increased opportunities for opportunistic crimes. Meanwhile, the financial crisis triggered by halted production and currency depreciation pushed segments of society toward informal and sometimes criminal economies.

From a theoretical criminological standpoint, war-induced victimization reshapes the psychological, social, and moral landscape in ways that systematically channel victims toward three broad categories of crime—offenses against security, offenses against persons, and offenses against property **(**Hodavand & Tofigh, 1399 [2021 A.D.]). War ruptures the normative order and generates what Durkheim described as a state of *anomie*, in which collective moral regulation collapses and individuals act under the logic of survival rather than legality. The trauma of sudden loss, displacement, and fear of recurrence transform trust into suspicion and compliance into resistance.

Within this vacuum, offenses against security arise when collective fear and disillusionment erode political legitimacy: the disoriented citizen no longer perceives the state as a guarantor of protection but as an entity incapable of justice or stability. This breeds anti-institutional behavior—sabotage, unlawful possession of arms, dissemination of subversive information, or collaboration

Journal of **WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES** | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

with illicit networks—that are rationalized as self-defense or political expression. Offenses against persons, meanwhile, stem from the psychological sequelae of trauma: aggression normalization, PTSD-related impulsivity, and the internalization of violent scripts learned during conflict. Domestic violence, assaults, revenge attacks, and even vigilante justice become symbolic extensions of the violence once suffered. Finally, offenses against property emerge from both economic strain and moral deregulation. When war dismantles employment, supply chains, and access to credit, theft, fraud, smuggling, and black-market trading are reinterpreted not as moral failings but as legitimate tools of survival. Across these three domains, the erosion of social cohesion, the weakening of institutional guardianship, and the normalization of deviance jointly transform victimhood into deviance—a process consistent with Agnew's General Strain Theory, Cohen and Felson's Routine Activity framework, and Sampson's theory of collective efficacy.

Socially, Iranian society faced numerous divisions on the eve of this conflict. The generation gap between young people with different demands and lifestyles and previous generations was one of these. Disappointment about their career and social future, dissatisfaction with social restrictions, and a sense of invisibility could make young people susceptible to different ideas. Furthermore, the long-standing demands of ethnic groups and religious minorities in some regions, which had become a potential for rupture due to insufficient attention or security approaches, constituted another vulnerable point. The increase in social vulnerabilities such as addiction, marginalization, and psychological problems resulting from the pressures of life contributed to the relative collapse of social capital and reduced the

resilience of society to crises. These deep social divisions provided an opportunity for external elements to infiltrate disaffected groups and foment discord, weakening national cohesion and making the home front more vulnerable to potential conflict.

Traitors could use anonymous social media accounts, encrypted emails, or even hidden file-sharing platforms to send information to servers designated by the enemy. This method allowed for the transfer of large volumes of data in the shortest possible time; it also carried the risk of digital tracking and detection by cyber rapid response teams. Creating a network of digital 'gateways', through which information was indirectly transmitted to enemy networks, was one of the tactics used to reduce the direct digital footprint. Even seemingly simpler and more traditional methods were still in use. These included the use of pre-designated hiding places (dead drops) in public or secluded locations, where individuals would place information and pass it on to the next agent without the need for a direct meeting (Ahmadinejad, 1404 [2025 A.D.]).

At the operational level, the impact of traitorous information was even more tangible. By gaining details about unit deployments, logistical support routes, the location of air defense systems, and even the timing of future operations, the enemy was able to deliver more precise and effective strikes. For example, identifying ammunition depots or troop concentration centers allowed them to be precisely targeted and destroyed without the need for large-scale and costly attacks. In addition, knowledge of security weaknesses in defense lines or troop movement plans gave the enemy the opportunity to plan surprise attacks, exploit weaknesses, and achieve maximum success with minimal casualties. At the tactical level, this information allowed field commanders to begin local engagements with an advantage. Accurate knowledge of the

Journal of WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

tactical arrangement of opposing forces, the type of weapons used in a particular area, or even patrol patterns and observation points, significantly aided special operations and ambushes.

According to the definition of 'victim' in the declaration of the U.N general assembly about supporting Victims of Crimes and Abuse of Power (1985) and according to article 8 (2) of the Statute of International Criminal Court (1998), the Iranian Islamic Criminal Code (enacted in 2013) has criminalized crimes against national and transnational security in articles 498 to 512, Iran legal policy provides more preventive criminal law protection in this realm. Moreover, Iran's Criminal Procedure (enacted in 2013) in addition to defining the victim and his legal rights, his position during the criminal trial and the role of his viewpoint in determining the type and amount of penalty by the judge and the effect of his passing on the possibility of commutation or forgiveness of the offender's penalty have been identified.

In addition, Article 4 of the code "Intensifying and Aggravating Punishment of Espionage and any Aid to Israeli Regime" (enacted in 2024) has provided special preventive punishment for mental health of Iranian people toward crimes against security. Article 4 of this new law has not been analyzed in published research papers to this day, and contains important information from cultural criminology perspective. According to article 4 of this law, any political, media, cultural and advertising activities that create or reflect false damage, create or spread false news or any form of content that will not be subject to public panic or contrary to Iran national security, is condemned to 2-3 years imprisonment and detachment from public services. In addition, sending videos, images or information to the networks, media or virtual screens, if contrary to national security. and sending any content to malicious

adversaries will be punishable by 1-2 years imprisonment and permanent detachment from public services. Undoubtedly, criminal protection of social security and mental health of the people depends on adopting a coherent criminal policy against security crimes that interfere with national cultural rights and social integrity and social cohesion. In addition to the implementation of punishment against offenders, criminal law acts beyond the punishment of offenders and protection of victims of these crimes, especially protection of Iranians, is the duty of criminal entities and in addition to the implementation of punishment against offenders, criminal law goes beyond punishment and in criminal policy, the mental health of victims of security crimes, place both value and rank with the importance of punishment.

Prior to engaging in criminological analysis, it is essential to present a concise legal characterization of the Israeli aggression against Iran from the perspective of international law. On 13 June 2025—two days before the sixth round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States in Muscat, which were intended to revive the nuclear agreement—the Israeli regime initiated unlawful military strikes against multiple sites within the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

6. Conclusion

The findings indicate that in the post-war context, violence shifts from the level of physical action to the level of meaning and representation, being reproduced through revenge-oriented discourses, political satire, language of humiliation, and everyday aggressive behaviors. From a cultural criminology viewpoint, the June 2025 Israeli aggression transformed violence from a physical

Journal of WORLD SOCIOPOLITICAL STUDIES | Vol. 10 | No. 2 | April 2026

event into a discursive phenomenon. Social media and digital platforms turned revenge-oriented humor and political ridicule into outlets for collective anxiety, but these expressions also contributed to the symbolic reproduction of violence. In such an atmosphere, violence ceased to be exceptional—it became a normalized part of everyday life. Thus, a cycle emerged in which collective victimization, through the erosion of trust, chronic anxiety, and symbolic legitimation of aggression, drove society toward the reproduction of crime.

To break this cycle, Iran's criminal policy must shift from a narrowly security-based paradigm to a cultural and restorative criminal policy. This requires placing the symbolic reconstruction of trust, hope, and meaning alongside the material reconstruction of infrastructure. Rebuilding institutional legitimacy, enhancing procedural justice, introducing trauma-informed interventions for victims, and suppressing black-market economies are essential measures. Only through the parallel advancement of material and symbolic reconstruction can the cycle of victimization and offending be interrupted, preventing war victims from becoming victimized offenders themselves.

Applied to the Iranian context following Israel's armed aggression against Iran in June 2025, this theoretical schema translates into a layered pattern of post-war criminality among those whose lives, homes, or livelihoods were directly shattered by the attacks. The shock of losing family members, jobs, or urban stability—combined with months of economic paralysis and psychological uncertainty—deepened alienation from the state and its institutions.

In the sphere of security-related crimes, certain affected individuals, perceiving governmental paralysis and inequality of

protection, engaged in hoarding fuel, illegal arms trade, hacking of official communication systems, or organizing localized resistance cells—acts intended as 'self-preservation,' although criminal under national-security statutes.

In the realm of crimes against persons, the same traumatized strata exhibited surges in interpersonal violence: family disputes escalated into assault, neighborhood quarrels turned lethal, and revenge against perceived collaborators or profiteers replaced faith in formal justice. War-related stress, insomnia, and humiliation translated directly into aggression and loss of impulse control.

Regarding crimes against property, massive financial strain and unemployment fueled widespread petty theft, embezzlement, cyber-fraud, and smuggling of scarce goods such as fuel, medicine, and currency. For many, these offenses were not motivated by greed, but by displacement, hunger, and despair. Thus, the victims of June 2025—the citizens who lost their physical security, economic footing, and symbolic sense of belonging—became the very agents of a post-war deviance cycle. Their transition from victim to offender underscores how unaddressed trauma, institutional weakness, and structural inequality can transform collective suffering into collective transgression, necessitating a cultural-restorative criminal policy to reintegrate these *victim-offenders* rather than merely punish them.

Declaration of the Use of AI and AI Assisted Technologies

This article was not authored by artificial intelligence.

Conflict of Interests and Funding

The author certifies that he has NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs affecting authors' objectivity) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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The author avoided data fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, double publication/submission and any form of misconduct against publication ethics. The author has properly cited all sources of ideas, words, and materials including pictures, charts, tables and statistics used in their paper.

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The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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