

THE INTERNATIONAL  
LAW COMMISSION'S ARTICLES  
ON STATE RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction, Text and Commentaries

JAMES CRAWFORD



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THE INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMISSION'S  
ARTICLES ON STATE RESPONSIBILITY  
Introduction, Text and Commentaries

In 2001 the International Law Commission completed its work on State responsibility, begun forty years previously. The *Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts* marks a major step in the codification and progressive development of international law, comparable in significance to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. The articles cover such topics as: attributing conduct to the State; defining when there has been a breach of international law and the excuses or justifications for breaches; reparation for injury; the invocation of responsibility, especially standing of States in the public interest; and the rules relating to countermeasures. The articles develop basic concepts of international law, in particular peremptory norms and obligations to the international community as a whole. They signal definitively how international law has moved away from a purely bilateral conception of responsibility to accommodate categories of general public interest (human rights, the environment, etc.).

This volume includes a full introduction, the text of the articles and commentary, plus a guide to the legislative history and a detailed index and table of cases. It will be an indispensable accompaniment to the I.L.C.'s work on this central topic of international law.

JAMES CRAWFORD is Whewell Professor of International Law and Director of the Lauterpacht Research Centre for International Law, University of Cambridge. As a member of the United Nation's International Law Commission since 1992, he was responsible for the first draft of the Statute for an International Criminal Court (1994), and as the Special Rapporteur on State Responsibility carried through the second reading of the articles on State responsibility (1998–2001). He has a substantial practice as counsel and arbitrator in international courts and tribunals.

## PREFACE

The Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, with their commentaries, were finally adopted by the International Law Commission (I.L.C.) on 9 August 2001. They are the product of nearly forty years work by the I.L.C., guided by a series of Special Rapporteurs, F.V. García Amador (1955-1961), Roberto Ago (1963-1979), Willem Riphagen (1979-1986), Gaetano Arangio-Ruiz (1987-1996) and the present author (1997-2001). They are a contribution to the codification and progressive development of a fundamental chapter of international law. In that respect, potentially at least, they rank alongside the Draft Articles on the Law of Treaties of 1966 which became, with limited changes, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969.

This book is intended as a companion to the Articles on State Responsibility. It sets out the English text of the articles and their commentaries.<sup>1</sup> To these have been added an index, table of cases, select bibliography and guide to the legislative history. For the purposes of comparison the text of the Draft Articles as adopted on first reading (1996) is included in an appendix, with a table of equivalents. The introduction seeks to place the articles in perspective and to give an account of the major issues encountered during the second reading.

I am very grateful to all those who assisted, directly and indirectly, in the work for this volume. The Leverhulme Trust made a generous grant towards research assistance over the three and a half years of the project. This was supplemented by the British Academy and by the Faculty of Law and the Lauterpacht Research Centre for International Law, University of Cambridge. Many individuals assisted in the work. They included, in particular, Pierre Bodeau, who worked on the project at the Research Centre for more than two years and enabled me to meet many deadlines – not least by acting also as overnight translator of my tortured English into good French. I benefited greatly from a series of gifted interns from New York University School of Law – Tom Hillbink, Sara Rakita, Sarah Pellet, Jacqueline Peel and Simon Olleson; my thanks to the equally gifted selection committees for these years, especially Greg Fox and later Ben Kingsbury. Simon Olleson, Jacqueline Peel and my doctoral student, Christian Tams, made major contributions to this book and to the huge task of drafting, revising and completing the commentaries. Christian contributed especially to the important commentaries on articles 42, 48 and 54. Jackie produced from my various reports and other sources

1 The articles are taken from the final text contained in Chapter V of the Commission's Report on its Fifty-Third Session. They have been reformatted for this work.

initial drafts of many others. Simon was enormously helpful in the task of putting it all together. I am also grateful to Dr John Barker of the Lauterpacht Research Centre for preparing a first draft of the commentary on article 36 (compensation) and to Sarah Heathcote of the University of Geneva for preparing a first draft of the commentary on article 25 (necessity). A group of younger scholars assisted with input on the literature and practice which was particularly necessary for a linguistically challenged Special Rapporteur: they were Andrea Bianchi, Carlos Esposito, Yuji Iwasawa, Nina Jørgenson, Yumi Nishimura and Stefan Wittich.

My colleagues at the International Law Commission were splendid companions in the collective work of revising and completing the text and the commentaries. I hope they will forgive me if I single out for particular thanks the four chairmen of the Drafting Committee during the second reading, Bruno Simma, Enrique Candioti, Georgio Gaja and Peter Tomka; as well as Teodor Meleşcanu who chaired a working group on the commentaries in 2001. Many other members of the Commission contributed substantially to the process, among whom I must mention Ian Brownlie, John Dugard, Constantin Economides, Zdzisław Galicki, Gerhard Hafner, Bob Rosenstock and Chusei Yamada. Alain Pellet challenged the work at every step in his tough, incessant way; many times he made me think again, and the work is much the better for it. Among the Secretariat I am particularly grateful to Mahnoush Arsanjani for her devoted work on the Project over many years and Arnold Pronto for his efficiency and friendly assistance.

I must thank many other people for their support in various ways during the project. They include: Daniel Bethlehem, Edward Helgeson, Glen Howard and Anne Skinner of the Lauterpacht Research Centre; Darren Peacock; David Wills, Squire Law Librarian, University of Cambridge; Pieter Jan Kuyper and other members of the W.T.O. legal office; Olufemi Elias and his colleagues at the U.N.C.C.; Peter Malanczuk who chaired an I.L.A. Working Group to comment on the second reading; Shabtai Rosenne; Vaughan Lowe, Frank Berman and Michael Wood whose input from a British perspective was most valuable; and Ronny Abraham, Directeur des Affaires juridiques au Ministère des Affaires étrangères and François Alabrune, Directeur adjoint, who gave similar assistance from the French side. In the last stages a willing group of I.L.C. alumni and attenders helped with checking and queries: Jonathan Halperin, Margo Kaplan, Larry Lee, Margaret Lewis, Carrie Noteboom, Dirk Pulkowski, Katja Peters, Christopher Timura.

I am most grateful to Finola O'Sullivan of Cambridge University Press and the Press editors for working so hard to see this volume through the Press so rapidly.

## NOTE ON SOURCES AND STYLE

The Annual Reports of the Commission to the General Assembly are initially published as Supplement No. 10 to the General Assembly's Official Records (thus the Report for the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly 2000 is *G.A.O.R.*, A/55/10). They are eventually published in vol. II (2) of the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission*. Reports of the various Special Rapporteurs are even more eventually published in vol. II (1) of the *Yearbook*. The most recent volume to be published is *Yearbook 1997*, vol. I, containing the summary records of debates at the 1997 session. Thus neither the Special Rapporteur's reports (1998-2001) nor the summary records of the debates during the second reading are yet available in the *Yearbook*. A list of the former is given in Appendix I, below, p. 347. They are available in electronic form at <http://www.un.org/law/ilc/index.htm>, as well as at <http://www.law.cam.ac.uk/rcil/ILCSR/Statresp.htm>. A summary of the debates is contained in the *I.L.C. Report*, which for the years 1998-2001 is cited here as *I.L.C. Report . . . 1998*, etc.

The texts of the articles and commentaries printed here are precisely as adopted by the I.L.C. on 9 August 2001. There are however some minor divergences of style, due to the process by which the approved I.L.C. text is subsequently submitted to the vagaries of U.N. "house style" prior to its publication in the *Report*. The following points should be noted:

1. U.N. editors insist in inserting a capital letter in subparagraphs of articles, even though these do not begin complete sentences. This stylistic barbarism was not adopted in earlier texts such as the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties or the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It is not adopted here.
2. The footnote numbering in the commentaries tracks that in the Report, and therefore begins with footnote 33.
3. U.N. house style insists on substituting *ibid.* in certain cases where the inclusion of the full reference is both more correct and more informative. In such cases the original reference has been retained here.

A few other references have been corrected in the course of preparation of this volume for the press.

The above is in no sense intended as a criticism of the members of the Codification Division itself, who have to prepare a large volume of material under acute time pressure in order to allow for the timely publication of the Report.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.D.P.I.L.C.</i>	<i>Annual Digest of Public International Law Cases</i> (Cambridge, Grotius)
<i>A.F.D.I.</i>	<i>Annuaire Français de Droit International</i>
<i>A.J.I.L.</i>	<i>American Journal of International Law</i>
<i>A.S.I.L.</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Society of International Law</i>
<i>B.Y.I.L.</i>	<i>British Yearbook of International Law</i>
de Lapradelle & Politis, <i>Recueil</i>	A. de Lapradelle and N. Politis, <i>Recueil des arbitrages internationaux</i> (Paris, Les Editions Internationales, 1954-1957)
<i>D.R.</i>	European Court of Human Rights, <i>Decision and Reports</i>
<i>E.C.H.R.</i>	<i>European Court of Human Rights</i>
<i>E.C.R.</i>	European Court Reports
<i>E.J.I.L.</i>	<i>European Journal of International Law</i>
<i>G.A.O.R.</i>	<i>General Assembly Official Records</i>
Hackworth, <i>Digest</i>	G.H. Hackworth, <i>Digest of International Law</i> (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943)
<i>I.C.S.I.D. Reports</i>	<i>Reports of Cases Decided under the Convention on the Set- tlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States, 1965</i> (Cambridge, Grotius)
<i>I.C.J. Pleadings</i>	International Court of Justice, <i>Pleadings, Oral Arguments, Documents</i>
<i>I.C.J. Reports</i>	International Court of Justice, <i>Reports of Judgments, Advi- sory Opinions and Orders</i>
<i>I.C.L.Q.</i>	<i>International and Comparative Law Quarterly</i>
<i>I.L.C. Report . . .</i>	<i>Report of the International Law Commission to the General Assembly (General Assembly Official Records, Supplement No. 10)</i>
<i>I.L.M.</i>	<i>International Legal Materials</i>
<i>I.L.R.</i>	<i>International Law Reports</i> (Cambridge, Grotius)
<i>Inter-Am.Ct.H.R., Series A</i>	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, <i>Reports of Advisory Opinions</i>



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<i>Inter-Am.Ct.H.R., Series C</i>	Inter-American Court of Human Rights, <i>Reports of Individual Claims</i>
<i>Iran-U.S.C.T.R.</i>	<i>Iran-US Claims Tribunal Reports</i> (Cambridge, Grotius)
<i>Moore, Digest</i>	J.B. Moore, <i>A Digest of International Law</i> (Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1906)
<i>Moore, International Adjudications</i>	J.B. Moore, <i>International Adjudications, Modern Series</i> (New York, Oxford University Press, 1929-1933)
<i>Moore, International Arbitrations</i>	J.B. Moore, <i>History and Digest of the International to which the United States Has Been a Party</i> (Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1898)
<i>O.J.E.C.</i>	<i>Official Journal of the European Communities</i>
<i>P.C.I.J., Series A</i>	Permanent Court of International Justice, <i>Collection of Judgments</i>
<i>P.C.I.J., Series B</i>	Permanent Court of International Justice, <i>Collection of Advisory Opinions</i>
<i>P.C.I.J., Series A/B</i>	Permanent Court of International Justice, <i>Judgments, Orders and Advisory Opinions</i>
<i>R.G.D.I.P.</i>	<i>Revue Générale de Droit International Public</i>
<i>R.I.A.A.</i>	United Nations, <i>Reports of International Arbitral Awards</i>
<i>R.T.A.F.</i>	<i>Recueil des Traités et Accords de la France</i>
<i>S.C.O.R.</i>	<i>Security Council Official Records</i>
<i>Secretariat Survey</i>	“‘Force majeure’ and ‘fortuitous event’ as circumstances precluding wrongfulness: survey of State practice, international judicial decisions and doctrine”, <i>Yearbook</i> ... 1978, vol. II, Part One, pp. 61-227
<i>U.K.T.S.</i>	<i>United Kingdom Treaty Series</i>
<i>U.N.T.S.</i>	<i>United Nations Treaty Series</i>
<i>Whiteman, Damages</i>	M. M. Whiteman, <i>Damages in International Law</i> (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937-1943)
<i>Whiteman, Digest</i>	M.M. Whiteman, <i>Digest of International Law</i> (Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963-1973)
<i>Yearbook E.C.H.R.</i>	<i>Yearbook of the European Court of Human Rights</i>
<i>Yearbook</i> ...	<i>Yearbook of the International Law Commission</i>
<i>Z.a.ö.R.V.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht</i>

## TABLE OF CASES

<i>44123 Ontario Ltd. v. Crispus Kiyonga</i> , (1992) 11 Kampala LR 14; <i>I.L.R.</i> , vol. 103, p. 259 (High Court, Uganda)	120
<i>A. Racke GmbH &amp; Co. v. Hauptzollamt Mainz</i> (Case C-162/96), [1998] E.C.R. I-3655	305
<i>Acquisition of Polish Nationality, 1923, P.C.I.J., Series B, No. 7</i>	87
<i>Administrative Decision No. II</i> (United States–Germany Mixed Claims Commission), <i>R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. VII, p. 23 (1923)	204
<i>Administrative Decision No. III</i> (United States–Germany Mixed Claims Commission), <i>R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. VII, p. 66 (1923)	235
<i>Admissibility of Hearings of Petitioners by the Committee on South West Africa, I.C.J. Reports 1956</i> , p. 23	309
<i>Aerial Incident of 27 July 1955 (Israel v. Bulgaria)</i> , <i>I.C.J. Reports 1959</i> , p. 127	270
<i>Affaire relative à l'acquisition de la nationalité polonaise, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. I, p. 425 (1924)	82
<i>AGIP Spa v. Government of the People's Republic of the Congo</i> , (1979) 1 <i>I.C.S.I.D. Reports</i> 306	228
<i>Agrotexim v. Greece, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 330–A</i> (1995)	135
<i>Air Services Agreement of 27 March 1946 (United States v. France)</i> , <i>R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. XVIII, p. 416 (1979)	52, 53, 168, 281, 283, 285, 294-295, 298
<i>Al Adsani v. Government of Kuwait</i> , (1996) <i>I.L.R.</i> , vol. 107, p. 536	246
<i>Ambatielos</i> :	
<i>Preliminary Objection, I.C.J. Reports 1952</i> , p. 28	194
<i>Merits, I.C.J. Reports 1953</i> , p. 10	95
<i>Ambatielos</i> , (1956) <i>I.L.R.</i> , vol. 23, p. 306 (Arbitral Tribunal)	268
<i>Amco Asia Corp. and Others v. Republic of Indonesia</i> , (1990) 1 <i>I.C.S.I.D. Reports</i> 377	228, 229, 230
<i>American Bell International Inc. v. Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1986) 12 <i>Iran-U.S.C.T.R.</i> 170	113

<i>American International Group, Inc. v. Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1983) 4 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 96	225
<i>Amoco International Finance Corporation v. Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1987) 15 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 189	225, 227
<i>Aminoil</i> : see <i>Government of Kuwait</i> . . .	
<i>Anaconda-Iran, Inc. v. Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1986) 13 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 199	237-238
<i>Appeal from a Judgement of the Hungaro-Czechoslovak Mixed Arbitral Tribunal (The Peter Pázmány University)</i> , 1933, P.C.I.J., Series A/B, No. 61, p. 208	207-208, 215
<i>Appeal Relating to the Jurisdiction of the ICAO Council</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1972, p. 46	291
<i>Applicability of the Obligation to Arbitrate under Section 21 of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement of 26 June 1947</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1988, p. 12	87, 130
<i>Application of the Convention of 1902 Governing the Guardianship of Infants</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1958, p. 55	87, 95
<i>Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide</i> :	
<i>Provisional Measures</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1993, p. 325	187, 246
<i>Preliminary Objections</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1996, p. 595	10, 79, 142, 242-243, 244
<i>Counter-Claims</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1997, p. 243	188, 246
<i>Arab Organization for Industrialization v. Westland Helicopters Ltd.</i> , (1987) I.L.R., vol. 80, p. 622 (Switzerland, Federal Supreme Court)	311
<i>Armstrong Cork Company, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. XIV, p. 159 (1953)	78, 126
<i>Asian Agricultural Products Ltd. v. Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka</i> , (1990) 4 I.C.S.I.D. Reports 245	220, 230
<i>Attorney-General of the Government of Israel v. Eichmann</i> , (1961) I.L.R., vol. 36, p. 5	246
<i>Australia – Subsidies Provided to Producers and Exporters of Automotive Leather</i> , Panel Report, 21 January 2000, WT/DS126/RW (W.T.O.)	197, 307
<i>Awards of Interest</i> , Decision 16, 4 January 1993, S/AC.26/1992/16 (United Nations Compensation Commission)	236
<i>Baldwin, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. VI, p. 328 (1933)	96
<i>Barcelona Traction, Light and Power Company, Limited, Second Phase</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1970, p. 3	17, 25, 39, 40, 79, 112, 127, 169, 184-185, 242, 244, 254, 276, 278

<i>Beagle Channel Arbitration (Argentina v. Chile)</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XXI, p. 53 (1977)	9, 308
<i>Bensley</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 3018 (1850)	99
<i>Blake v. Guatemala</i> , <i>Inter-Am.Court.H.R.</i> , Series C, No. 36 (1998)	136
<i>Bolivar Railway Company</i> , R. I. A. A., vol. IX, p. 445 (1903)	119
<i>BP Exploration Company (Libya) Ltd. v. Government of the Libyan Arab Republic</i> , (1974) <i>I.L.R.</i> , vol. 53, p. 297	216
<i>Brazilian Loans</i> , 1929, <i>P.C.I.J.</i> , Series A, No. 21	172
<i>British Claims in the Spanish Zone of Morocco</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. II, p. 615 (1924)	78, 116, 147, 153, 214, 238
<i>Brown (United States) v. Great Britain</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. VI, p. 120 (1923)	154
<i>Bryan-Chamorro Treaty (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua)</i> , A.J.I.L., vol. 11 (1917), p. 674	215
<i>Buzau-Nehoiasi Railway</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. III, p. 1839 (1939)	215
<i>Caire</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. V, p. 516 (1929)	99, 107
<i>Case U 9/100 Regarding the Law on the State Border Service</i> , judgment of 3 November 2000 (Constitutional Court, Bosnia- Herzegovina)	311
<i>Castelains</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 2999 (1880)	99
<i>Certain German Interests in Polish Upper Silesia, Merits</i> , 1926, <i>P.C.I.J.</i> , Series A, No. 7	95
<i>Certain Phosphate Lands in Nauru (Nauru v. Australia)</i> , Preliminary Objections, <i>I.C.J. Reports</i> 1992, p. 240	47, 133, 145, 151, 220, 261-262, 267, 268, 273
<i>Chattin</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. IV, p. 282 (1927)	95
<i>Chevreau (France v. United Kingdom)</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. II, p. 1113 (1923); A.J.I.L., vol. 27 (1933), p. 153	104, 223
<i>Church of Scientology</i> , 26 September 1978, VI ZR 267/76, N.J.W. 1979, p. 1101; <i>I.L.R.</i> , vol. 65, p. 193 (Bundesgerichtshof, Germany)	97
<i>Claims of Italian Subjects Resident in Peru</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XV, p. 395 (1901)	78, 94
<i>Colleanu v. German State</i> , (1929) <i>Recueil des tribunaux arbitraux mixtes</i> , vol. IX, p. 216	307
<i>Collector of Customs: Lewis's Case</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 3019	106

<i>Colozza and Rubinat v. Italy, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 89</i> (1985)	129
<i>Commission v. France</i> (Case 232/78), [1979] E.C.R. 2729	291
<i>Commission v. Hellenic Republic</i> (Case C-387/97), [2000] E.C.R. I-5047	19
<i>Commission v. Italy</i> (Case 52/75), [1976] E.C.R. 277	291
<i>Commission v. Italy</i> (Case 101/84), [1985] E.C.R. 2629	173
<i>Commission v. Luxembourg &amp; Belgium</i> (Cases 90 and 91/63), [1964] E.C.R. 625	291
<i>Compañía des Desarrollo de Santa Elena SA v. Republic of Costa Rica</i> , Case No. ARB/96/1, 1 February 2000 (I.C.S.I.D.)	238
<i>Comptroller and Auditor-General v. Davidson</i> , (1996) I.L.R., vol. 104, p. 526 (Court of Appeal, New Zealand)	105
<i>Confederate Debt</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 2900	116
<i>Confederate States</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 2886	116
<i>Corfu Channel</i> :	
<i>Merits, I.C.J. Reports 1949</i> , p. 4	77, 82, 146, 205, 233, 274, 289
<i>Assessment of the Amount of Compensation, I.C.J. Reports 1949</i> , p. 244	206, 221
<i>Criteria for Additional Categories of Claims</i> , Decision 7 of the Governing Council, 17 March 1992, S/AC.26/1991/7/Rev.1 (United Nations Compensation Commission)	223
<i>Cruz Varas v. Sweden, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 201</i> (1991)	146
<i>Currie, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. XIV, p. 21 (1954)	96
<i>Cushin and Lewis v. R.</i> , [1935] Ex.C.R. 103	177
<i>Customs Régime between Germany and Austria, 1931, P.C.I.J., Series A/B, No. 41</i> , p. 37	165
<i>Cyprus v. Turkey</i> (Application No. 25781/94), E.C.H.R., 10 May 2001	138, 252
<i>"Cysne" (Responsibility of Germany for acts committed subsequent to 31 July 1914 and before Portugal entered into the war), R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. II, p. 1035 (1930)	168, 169, 284
<i>Davy, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. IX, p. 467 (1903)	97
<i>De Becker v. Belgium</i> , (1958-1959) 2 Yearbook E.C.H.R., p. 214	135

<i>De Brissot and others</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 2967	97, 172
<i>De Cubber v. Belgium</i> , E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 86 (1984)	129
<i>Delagoa Bay Railway Co. (Great Britain, United States of America/Portugal)</i> , Martens, <i>Nouveau Recueil</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> series, vol. XXX, p. 329; Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. II, p. 1865 (1900)	228, 230, 240
<i>Denkavit Belgie NV v. Belgium</i> (Case 145/85), [1987] E.C.R. 565	173
<i>Denmark v. Turkey</i> , <i>Friendly Settlement</i> , judgment of 5 April 2000 (E.C.H.R.)	279
<i>Dermit Barbato v. Uruguay</i> , G.A.O.R., <i>Thirty-eighth Session</i> , Supplement No. 40 (A/38/40), p. 124 (1983) (Human Rights Committee)	200
<i>Di Caro</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. X, p. 597 (1903)	223
<i>Dickson Car Wheel Company</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. IV, p. 669 (1931)	78, 81, 126
<i>Difference Relating to Immunity from Legal Process of a Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1999, p. 62	16, 80, 95, 310
<i>Dispute concerning the Interpretation of Article 79 of the Treaty of Peace</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XIII, p. 389 (1955)	95, 96
<i>Diversion of Water from the Meuse (Netherlands v. Belgium)</i> , 1937, P.C.I.J., Series A/B, No. 70, p. 4	162
<i>Dix</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. IX, p. 119 (1902)	119, 204
<i>Donoughho</i> , Moore, <i>International Arbitrations</i> , vol. III, p. 3012 (1876)	106
<i>Drodz &amp; Janousek v. France &amp; Spain</i> , E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 240 (1992)	105, 154
<i>Dudgeon v. United Kingdom</i> , E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 45 (1981); 4 E.H.R.R. 149	13, 130
<i>Eastman Kodak Co. v. Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1987) 17 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 153	112
<i>East Timor (Portugal v. Australia)</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1995, p. 90	79, 151, 188, 242, 244, 246-247, 278
<i>Ebrahimi (Shahin Shaine) v. Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1994) 30 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 170	227
<i>Electricity Company of Sofia and Bulgaria</i> , 1939, P.C.I.J., Series A/B, No. 77, p. 64	135

<i>Eletronica Sicula S.p.A. (ELSI), I.C.J. Reports 1989, p. 15</i>	23, 87-88, 95, 108, 125, 265
<i>European Communities – Regime for the Importation, Sale and Distribution of Bananas, Report of the Appellate Body, 9 September 1997, WT/DS27/AB/R (W.T.O.)</i>	30
<i>Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, 1925, P.C.I.J., Series B, No. 10</i>	87
<i>Factory at Chorzów:</i>	
<i>Jurisdiction, 1927, P.C.I.J., Series A, No. 9</i>	32-33, 40, 44, 77, 83, 128, 162, 199, 201, 218, 262
<i>Merits, 1928, P.C.I.J., Series A, No. 17</i>	77, 83, 128, 201-202, 211, 213-214, 218, 219, 225, 228, 229, 275
<i>Faulkner, R.I.A.A., vol. IV, p. 67 (1926)</i>	224
<i>Filartiga v. Pena-Irala, (1980) 630 F.2d 876; I.L.R., vol. 77, p. 169 (Court of Appeals 2<sup>nd</sup>, U.S.A.)</i>	246
<i>Finnish Shipowners (Great Britain/Finland), R.I.A.A., vol. III, p. 1479 (1934)</i>	94
<i>Fisheries, I.C.J. Reports 1951, p. 116</i>	87
<i>Fisheries Jurisdiction (Federal Republic of Germany v. Iceland), Merits, I.C.J. Reports 1974, p. 175</i>	197, 218
<i>Fisheries Jurisdiction (Spain v. Canada), I.C.J. Reports 1998, p. 431</i>	9, 182
<i>Flegenheimer, R.I.A.A., vol. XIV, p. 327 (1958)</i>	88
<i>Flexi-Van Leasing, Inc. v. Islamic Republic of Iran, (1986) 12 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 335</i>	112
<i>Foremost Tehran, Inc. v. Islamic Republic of Iran, (1986) 10 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 228</i>	113
<i>Forests of Central Rhodope, R.I.A.A., vol. III, p. 1405 (1933)</i>	216, 271
<i>Free Zones of Upper Savoy and the District of Gex, 1930, P.C.I.J., Series A, No. 24</i>	87
<i>Free Zones of Upper Savoy and the District of Gex, 1932, P.C.I.J., Series A/B, No. 46, p. 96</i>	87, 215
<i>French Company of Venezuela Railroads, R.I.A.A., vol. X, p. 285 (1902)</i>	119, 181
<i>French Indemnity of 1831, Moore, International Arbitrations, vol. V, p. 4397</i>	147

<i>Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia)</i> , I.C.J. Reports 1997, p. 7	9, 16, 48, 49, 50, 52, 78, 81, 125, 127, 129, 139, 160, 161, 162, 168, 169, 171, 181-182, 183-184, 185, 189, 190, 194, 197, 205, 218, 281, 284, 285, 286-287, 295, 298, 309
<i>Gadino</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XV, p. 414 (1901)	106
<i>Gage</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. X, p. 226 (1903)	223
<i>General Electric Company v. Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1991) 26 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 148	230
<i>Gentini</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. X, p. 557 (1903)	268
<i>German Settlers in Poland, 1923</i> , P.C.I.J., Series B, No. 6	82, 95
<i>Gill</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. V (1931), p. 157	172
<i>Goldenberg</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. II, p. 901 (1928)	126
<i>Gould Marketing, Inc. v. Ministry of Defence</i> , (1984) 6 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 272	230
<i>Government of Kuwait v. American Independent Oil Company</i> , (1982) I.L.R., vol. 66, p. 529	214, 225, 238
<i>Greco-Bulgarian "Communities", 1930</i> , P.C.I.J., Series B, No. 17	87
<i>Greek Telephone Company</i> , in B.Y.I.L., vol. 40 (1964), p. 216	214
<i>Heirs of the Duc de Guise</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XIII, p. 150 (1951)	96, 154
<i>Heirs of Jean Maninat</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. X, p. 55 (1903)	223
<i>Heirs of Lebas de Courmont</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XIII, p. 761 (1957)	214
<i>Hénon</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XIII, p. 249 (1951)	215
<i>Hertzberg et al. v. Finland</i> , G.A.O.R., Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 40 (A/37/40), p. 161 (1982) (Human Rights Committee)	113
<i>Home Missionary Society</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. VI, p. 42 (1920)	116
<i>Hôtel Métropole</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. XIII, p. 219 (1950)	215
<i>Hyatt International Corporation v. Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1985) 9 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 72	100
<i>Illinois Central Railroad</i> , R.I.A.A., vol. IV, p. 134 (1926)	235
<i>INA Corporation v. Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1985) 8 Iran-U.S.C.T.R. 373	226



<i>Interhandel, Preliminary Objections, I.C.J. Reports 1959</i> , p. 6	265
<i>International Fisheries Company, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. IV, p. 691 (1931)	78, 126
<i>International Responsibility for the Promulgation and Enforcement of Laws in Violation of the Convention (Arts. 1 and 2 of the American Convention on Human Rights)</i> (Advisory Opinion OC-14/94), <i>Inter-Am.Ct.H.R., Series A</i> , No. 14 (1994)	130
<i>International Technical Products Corp. v. Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , (1985) 9 <i>Iran-U.S.C.T.R.</i> 206	112
<i>Interpretation of Peace Treaties with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, Second Phase, I.C.J. Reports 1950</i> , p. 221	77, 128
<i>Ireland v. United Kingdom, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 25</i> (1978)	135, 142, 246, 282
<i>Iribarne Pérez v. France, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 325-C</i> (1995)	154
<i>Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America (Cases No. A15 (IV) and A24)</i> , (1998) 32 <i>Iran-U.S.C.T.R.</i> , 115	130, 204
<i>Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America (Case No. A19)</i> , (1987) 16 <i>Iran-U.S.C.T.R.</i> 285	235-236, 239
<i>Island of Palmas, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. II, p. 829 (1949)	131
<i>Janes, R.I.A.A.</i> , vol. IV, p. 82 (1925)	97
<i>Jan Mayen Continental Shelf Delimitation (Iceland-Norway)</i> , (1981), <i>I.L.R.</i> , vol. 62, p. 108; <i>I.L.M.</i> , vol. 20 (1981), p. 797	9
<i>Japan – Measures Affecting Consumer Photographic Film and Paper</i> , Panel Report, 31 March 1998, WT/DS44 (W.T.O.)	96
<i>Japan – Trade in Semi-conductors</i> , G.A.T.T. Panel Report, 24 March 1988	96
<i>J. H. Rayner (Mincing Lane) Ltd. v. Department of Trade and Industry</i> [1990] 2 A.C. 418 (House of Lords, England)	311
<i>Johnston v. Ireland, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 112</i> (1986)	130
<i>Jurisdiction of the Courts of Danzig, 1928, P.C.I.J., Series B</i> , No. 15	87, 95, 209
<i>Kellet, Moore, Digest</i> , vol. V, p. 43 (1897)	234
<i>Klass v. Germany, E.C.H.R., Series A, No. 28</i> (1978)	130