A declaration of war is a formal act by which one state goes to war against another. The declaration is a performative speech act (or the signing of a document) by an authorized party of a national government, in order to create a state of war between two or more states. The legality of who is competent to declare war varies between nations and forms of government. In many nations, that power is given to the head of state or sovereign. In other cases, something short of a full declaration of war, such