

PRESS RELEASE

Reclaiming the promise of accountability: The Global Initiative Against Impunity's Urgent Call to Action on the *European Union Day Against Impunity*

May 23, 2025

[The Global Initiative Against Impunity](#) (GIAI) marks this year's EU Day Against Impunity with grave concern, as international justice and accountability face escalating threats and direct attacks. Armed conflicts, state violence, and mass atrocities are on the rise across the globe, while many governments and international institutions remain largely silent in the face of widespread impunity and the increasing application of double standards. This selective inaction undermines the rights of victims and reinforces narratives that dehumanise the survivors of the most serious crimes.

We call on the EU and its Member States to take firm, bold, and concerted measures to uphold human rights and protect international justice mechanisms. This effort must be driven by a renewed commitment to victims and survivors. We must guarantee assistance to those who call for justice and ensure that their rights, voices, and needs remain central to all justice and accountability processes.

European countries and their allies recently commemorated the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II but the current global turmoil and staggering surge in armed conflicts cast a shadow on the celebrations. Civilians, particularly women and children,¹ bear the brunt of the violence. Mass casualties and the collapse of the rules-based order are more than collateral damage. They are the result of deliberate policy failures and legal inaction that demand urgent correction. For nearly a year, civil society organisations have been raising the alarm [over the unprecedented sanctions and threats against the International Criminal Court](#) (ICC) that have jeopardised the Court's fundamental work for victim and survivors worldwide. In a climate of mounting pressure on accountability, states' breach of their legal obligations and failure to uphold the decisions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) further undermine the efforts made to bring justice to where it is most needed.

The credibility and effectiveness of the international justice system depend on consistent support and compliance. The [European Parliament](#) has echoed these concerns and, on several occasions, has called on the EU to respond to attacks on international justice – this includes activating protective mechanisms such as the Blocking Statute. A robust and united response has yet to materialise considering Italy's and Hungary's failure to [execute ICC arrest warrants](#) and [Hungary](#) announcing its withdrawal from the Rome Statute of the ICC,

¹ 2024 was one of the worst years on record for children living in conflict zones in UNICEF's history. According to the UN agency, more than one in six children globally now live in areas affected by conflict.

thereby eroding the foundational values of the EU. Additional developments that have weakened international humanitarian law, such as the recent intention expressed by Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to [withdraw from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#) – fundamental to the prevention of war crimes and protecting civilians – are signals of further failures to fight against impunity. This dangerous trend undermines the international legal framework and threatens the lives and mental well-being of millions by effectively granting authoritarian regimes free rein to continue or escalate abuses.

At the same time, [civil society organisations are operating in increasingly hostile conditions, including inside the European Union](#). Civic freedoms have [deteriorated across the globe and have been severely restricted in Europe over the past five years](#) and this has led to the criminalisation of human rights defenders and solidarity movements that assist the victims of international crimes. Additionally, the withdrawal of vital sources of support, such as USAID's programmes and numerous European governments' funding cuts, threaten the provision of assistance to those in need, particularly women and minorities, and the ongoing efforts to improve accountability.

The cumulative impact of the ongoing threats compels renewed solidarity and a stronger collective commitment to support victims, survivors, and their communities in their call for justice, truth, reparation, and the non-recurrence of all crimes.

"We are not people who need to be fed. We are not hungry because we don't have food. We are hungry because we are under occupation, we are under siege, we are under genocide. This is not what people in Gaza want. It's not that they want only to eat. They want freedom. This is what we want."

Mosab Abu Toha, writer, poet, scholar from Gaza, and winner of the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for his portrayal of the Gaza war in the New Yorker, speaking on 6 May 2025 on [Democracy Now!](#)

The world is at a critical and historical inflection point which requires the EU to utilise fully the various mechanisms and tools at its disposal to preserve international law and advance peace, stability, and justice for future generations. This is why, on EU Day Against Impunity, the GIAI calls on the EU and its Member States to lead with resolve, to safeguard the institutions of justice, and to stand firmly with victims, survivors, and their communities in the global fight against impunity. In particular, we urge the EU and its Member States to:

1. Reorient security strategies to prioritize human security over militarized approaches, by addressing structural determinants of impunity, including corruption, discrimination, weak rule of law, and [militarized masculinities](#). This includes establishing accountability mechanisms for arms exports, ensuring they do not contribute to violations of international humanitarian law;
2. Prevent instances of all core international crimes in any situation, including by complying with provisional measures ordered by the ICJ, such as those requiring states to prevent acts of genocide, facilitate the provision of humanitarian and reparative assistance where needed, and preserve evidence related to all alleged core international crimes;
3. Cooperate with the ICC, including by executing arrest warrants, surrendering suspects

to the Court, and suspending diplomatic relations with those responsible for the most serious crimes;

4. Adopt and implement national and regional protective measures, such as the EU Blocking Statute, to support the operations of the International Criminal Court and to protect persons cooperating with the Court;
5. Guarantee the rights of the victims of international crimes, notably by ensuring their participation and meaningful access to justice, including by providing psychosocial support, translation services, and comprehensive witness protection;
6. Support UN accountability mechanisms and experts in their efforts to access victims, investigate, protect, advocate for human rights, and bring about justice for international crimes;
7. Investigate and prosecute international crimes domestically, by adopting necessary legislation and building the capacity of national authorities to ensure credible, independent, and effective proceedings, including through the use of universal and extraterritorial jurisdiction;
8. Advance survivors' access to reparation, including by promoting the use of targeted sanctions and asset recovery measures against the perpetrators of international crimes as a way to promote reparative justice for communities of victims;
9. Ensure that adequate and sustainable financial support is provided to international justice systems, including the ICC, the Trust Fund for Victims, and civil society organisations, particularly local organisations, working to improve justice and accountability;
10. Ensure transparency throughout the national efforts made to combat impunity, which is essential to coordinate work, identify blind spots, and provide meaningful assessments of states' commitments, by publishing annual disaggregated data on ongoing or past criminal proceedings for international crimes.

About the Global Initiative Against Impunity (GIAI)

The Global Initiative Against Impunity for international crimes: Making justice work (GIAI) is a Consortium of eight international NGOs and the Coalition for the ICC, co-funded by the European Union, which aims to contribute to the fight against impunity by supporting a comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive approach to justice and accountability for serious human rights violations and international crimes.

Driven by this commitment, today we are launching the [GIAI Knowledge Management Platform](#), an inclusive, multilingual digital clearing house for collaboration, learning, and information sharing.

"On this EU Day Against Impunity, I urge the EU to honor its legal and moral obligations by implementing laws and border management policies which respect the rights and protect the lives of migrants and refugees. Current practices put them at risk of torture, enslavement, and

shipwrecks which may amount to crimes against humanity, while providing safe havens for ICC-wanted criminals. Victims want to be heard, have a safe place to express their views and concerns, and feel that the justice system is still something they can hope on. Let's center survivors' voices in our fight for dignity, justice and accountability."

David Yambio, community advocate, human rights defender and spokesperson of [Refugees in Libya](#).

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