

## JOINT STATEMENT

### Save the International Criminal Court and the Rule of Law

**25 September 2025**

Reliable sources indicate that the United States (US) plans to sanction the International Criminal Court (ICC) as an institution in the coming weeks. This follows a series of designations, first against the ICC Prosecutor, Deputy Prosecutors, judges, Palestinian NGOs, and also the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory. Now is the time for states, civil society, academics, journalists, and all those committed to international justice and the rule of law to stand up and do everything possible to defend the Court and organisations supporting its work.

Civil society from around the world urgently calls on States Parties to the Rome Statute to do everything in their power to stop the proposed US sanctions against the ICC, an independent judicial institution with a mandate to confront impunity for the gravest crimes known to humanity. Sanctions against the ICC, taken unilaterally by a non-State Party, amount to an all-out assault on a global court backed by 125 States Parties and relied on by the international community to ensure accountability for atrocity crimes. Such sanctions would leave countless victims abandoned by obstructing a last resort to justice, weaponising the global financial system to choke the Court's work, and entrenching double standards where power and politics dictate which survivors deserve justice.

Sanctioning the ICC would mark a dangerous turning point in the history of international justice, transforming a system designed to hold the most powerful accountable for atrocity crimes into one that instead shields the powerful. It involves retreating from hard-fought progress toward a rules-based order to a world where might triumphs over right. An international justice system built over decades could crumble in the face of external pressure exerted to unduly influence the course of justice. It is a total affront to the rule of law with devastating repercussions for justice everywhere: if the ICC can be manipulated through financial coercion, no court or accountability mechanism is safe in any country or region.

Sanctioning the ICC as an institution could sever the Court's ability to function, including its access to financing from banks and states, and block essential services needed to keep it operating. US control over the global financial system ensures the impact of mere threats of sanctions reaches far beyond Washington, as non-American banks, insurers, and service providers often over-comply in fear of themselves being sanctioned, blocking even basic transactions. Without funds, the Court risks not being able to keep the lights on, pay staff, protect data, protect witnesses supporting its work, pay legal aid to victims and defendants, let alone deliver reparations to victims. It threatens core functions of the Court, including the detention of suspects. Hard-won gains, such as the recent arrest and surrender of former

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte and the German arrest of Libyan suspect, Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri, could be lost. Ongoing investigations of alleged international crimes in other situations might be stalled or abandoned indefinitely, leaving victims unable to access justice worldwide.

If sanctions render the Court inoperative, there will be no way back. We will have lost forever one of the most relevant institutions of the past century. The global community cannot let this happen.

We call on ICC States Parties to urgently protect the ICC and the Rule of Law by:

- Publicly and firmly rejecting sanctions against the ICC as an institution, its staff and officials, and organisations and individuals supporting its work.
- Bilaterally engaging with the US Administration to prevent designations against the ICC as an institution, its staff and officials, and organisations and individuals supporting its work.
- Adopting domestic and regional blocking measures including enforcing the European Union's Blocking Statute (Council Regulation (EC) No 2271/96), to demonstrate solidarity and protect individuals and entities from the impact of sanctions and shield businesses within their respective territories so that they can continue to work with the ICC, its staff and officials, and civil society supporting the Court.
- Protecting service providers by guaranteeing that providing services to the ICC and organisations supporting its work is lawful and shielded.
- Developing practical alternatives to the US-dollar banking network of transactions that are cleared through the US financial system, so the Court and its supporters can keep funding their essential work.
- Providing guidance and creating legal safeguards to prevent non-US banks and service providers from over-complying with threats of US sanctions.
- Fulfilling their legal obligations under the Rome Statute, including financial contributions to the Court's annual budget, strong political backing to the Court's independence and continued functioning, cooperation with the Court notably on the arrests and surrender of suspects, and resisting any pressure to disengage in response to sanctions.

### [List of signatories](#)

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