



Concerns over sanctions imposed by the US administration on the International Criminal Court

3 September 2026

Judges for Judges and Lawyers for Lawyers are gravely concerned about the restrictive measures imposed by the United States against the International Criminal Court (ICC). We call on the States Parties to the Rome Statute, and in particular on the Netherlands as host State of the Court, to take immediate and concrete steps to mitigate the impact of these measures on judges, prosecutors, lawyers, counsel and staff of the ICC, and to safeguard the independence and impartiality of the Court as essential pillars of the rule of law and the effective administration of justice.

Since the adoption of Executive Order 14203, *Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court*, in early 2025, a series of sanctions have been imposed on members of the Court. Most recently, on 18 August 2026, the United States sanctioned ICC President Judge Tomoko Akane and Senior Trial Lawyer Abdoulaye Seye. With these latest designations, thirteen current or former ICC judges and personnel have been sanctioned under the Executive Order.

These measures have been accompanied by [statements](#) from the United States State Department indicating an intention to "systematically dismantle" the ICC and limit its ability to operate in matters involving United States personnel and officials.

Beyond their symbolic significance, these measures have [tangible practical consequences](#). Sanctioned individuals may be subject to asset freezes and travel restrictions, while financial institutions, technology providers and other service providers may restrict access to banking, communication and digital services. The resulting legal uncertainty can affect not only judges and prosecutors, but also lawyers and other legal professionals engaging with the Court. The impact may be compounded by overcompliance, whereby private actors restrict services beyond what is legally required. This risks undermining the effective functioning of the Court and access to justice for all those involved in its proceedings.

On 28 August 2026, a large group of [United Nations Independent Experts](#) issued a statement calling on governments, particularly ICC States Parties and the European Union, to actively defend the Court against escalating sanctions, which they described as a serious threat to judicial independence, international justice and accountability for atrocity crimes. The experts warned that "for victims of atrocities and their advocates, who rely on judges, prosecutors and Court lawyers for justice, accountability and reparation, these sanctions send a chilling message".

Similarly, the [Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe \(CCBE\)](#) has stressed that the sanctions extend beyond a dispute over specific investigations. According to the CCBE, they pose a broader challenge to judicial independence, the rule of law, and the functioning of international justice. It further warns of the operational impact of these measures on the Court, their chilling effect on judges, lawyers and other legal professionals, and the dangerous precedent they create by exposing those involved in the administration of international justice to political retaliation for actions taken in the exercise of their official duties.

The Court's judges, prosecutors, lawyers and staff must be able to carry out their functions free from intimidation, interference or coercion. Protecting the ICC is essential to upholding the rule of law and ensuring access to justice.

Echoing the calls of the United Nations Independent Experts and CCBE, we therefore urge:

- **States Parties to the Rome Statute** to publicly reaffirm their support for the ICC and to take coordinated measures to protect judges, prosecutors, lawyers, staff and all those engaging with the Court from the impact of unilateral sanctions.
- **The European Union and its Member States** to prevent and address overcompliance by financial institutions, digital service providers and other private actors, and to ensure that the Court can continue to operate effectively and independently.
- **The Netherlands, as host State of the ICC**, to continue and strengthen its efforts to safeguard the Court's independence, support those working with and before the Court, and promote a coordinated response among States Parties.