

U.S. Congress threatens International Criminal Court with retaliation over arrest warrants for Israeli officials



Washington, April 30 (RHC)-- U.S. lawmakers are in the process of drafting a bill aimed at responding to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in case it decides to issue arrest warrants against high-ranking Israeli officials accused of committing war crimes in Gaza.

The legislation is being drafted in a retaliatory move against the ICC to prevent it from issuing arrest warrants against Israeli officials. It could also include sanctions against certain officials of the ICC, according to American news outlet Axios.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Monday that the U.S. did not support the ICC investigation, questioning the competency of the tribunal. "We don't believe that they have the jurisdiction," Jean-Pierre said.

Michael McCaul, Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, also anticipated the unveiling of a House bill that mirrors Senator Tom Cotton's proposal to impose sanctions on ICC officials who are part of inquiries targeting the U.S. and its partners, he told Axios.

Representative Brad Sherman also said that the U.S. should "think of whether we stay a signatory" to the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC. "We have to think about talking to some of the countries that have ratified [the treaty] as to whether they want to support the organization," he said.

Pro-Israeli Democratic lawmakers, Representative Ritchie Torres and Senator John Fetterman, have also expressed concern regarding possible warrants, urging for action from both Congress and US President Joe Biden to block them.

"I know Congress will ensure consequences for such an absurd decision," Sherman said in a post on a social media platform.

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson has criticized the possible warrants as "disgraceful" and "lawless," cautioning about severe repercussions if not dealt with. "If unchallenged by the Biden administration, the ICC could create and assume unprecedented power to issue arrest warrants against American political leaders, American diplomats, and American military personnel," Johnson said.

He urged the Biden administration to "immediately and unequivocally demand that the ICC stand down" and "use every available tool to prevent such an abomination."

The ICC, located in The Hague, the Netherlands, is currently conducting investigations into reported war crimes committed by the Israeli military. It has been looking into accusations of war crimes involving the Israeli military factions since 2014.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reportedly requested the intervention of Biden to avert the issuance of arrest warrants.

"As we have publicly said many times, the ICC has no jurisdiction in this situation and we do not support its investigation," a spokesperson for the White House National Security Council, who declined to comment over the details of Netanyahu's call with Biden, told Axios.

Although neither Israel nor the U.S. are members of the ICC, Israeli officials face potential risk of arrest in various other countries due to the imminent issuance of warrants.

Having joined the ICC, the majority of European nations are obligated by law to detain individuals targeted by an ICC arrest warrant.

Israel, which currently faces genocidal crimes at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), has killed 34,488 Palestinians since last October when it waged a bloody war on the Gaza Strip. Over 77,643 other Palestinians have also been injured, and around 8,400 may be trapped under rubble.



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