

# *World leaders react to Trump sanctions on International Criminal Court*

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**Countries condemn U.S. sanctions on the ICC alleging impunity for serious crimes and weakening international law.**

The Hague, February 8 (RHC)-- Donald Trump's decision to sanction the International Criminal Court (ICC) increases the "risk of impunity" for serious crimes, 79 parties to the global tribunal have said.

In a statement on Friday, a group of 79 countries – about two-thirds of the court's membership – affirmed its support for the ICC and said that sanctions would weaken international law after Trump signed an executive order sanctioning the court for investigating Israel.

"Such measures increase the risk of impunity for the most serious crimes and threaten to erode the international rule of law, which is crucial for promoting global order and security," said the joint statement, led by Slovenia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Sierra Leone and Vanuatu.

They were joined by dozens of other nations, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Brazil and Bangladesh.

"Today, the Court is facing unprecedented challenges," the statement warned, after Trump on Tuesday ordered asset freezes and travel bans against ICC officials, employees and their family members, along with anyone deemed to have helped the court's investigations.

"Sanctions could jeopardize the confidentiality of sensitive information and the safety of those involved, including victims, witnesses, and Court officials, many of whom are our nationals. As strong supporters of the ICC, we regret any attempts to undermine the Court's independence, integrity and impartiality."

While the U.S. has long pitched itself as the guarantor of an international order that promotes human rights and the rule of law, it has frequently attacked efforts by international bodies to probe alleged abuses by the United States and its allies.

In the executive order imposing sanctions, the Trump administration said that it would bring "tangible and significant consequences" for "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel".

While Trump is the first US president to sanction the ICC, his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden also considered the use of sanctions to penalise the court for investigating Israel.

In November, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes in Gaza, where Israel has carried out a scorched earth campaign that has killed thousands, levelled entire neighbourhoods, displaced millions of people, and included the widespread denial of humanitarian aid.

At least 61,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli attacks, most of them women and children, a figure that is expected to rise considerably as rescue workers search through the rubble for undiscovered bodies.

"Trump's International Criminal Court sanctions put the U.S. on the side of war criminals at expense of victims," Omar Shakir, Israel-Palestine director at Human Rights Watch said. "Sanctions are for perpetrators – not those working to hold them to account. States should defend the ICC for doing its job: ensuring no one is above the law."

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof said his country would seek to ensure the ICC, based in The Hague, could continue to operate despite announced US sanctions.

"Of course, as the host country, we have a responsibility to guarantee the unhindered functioning of the criminal court at all times. And we will keep doing that," Schoof told reporters, describing the move as a "disturbing signal and very regrettable" with potentially "significant implications" for the ICC's independence and ongoing investigations.

“The Netherlands stands by the International Criminal Court. We will continue to support it. We are the host country. We are also proud of the Netherlands and also of The Hague as a city for peace and justice. The ICC is an explicit part of that. And we will do everything we can to ensure that the ICC can fulfil its tasks.”

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