

# *U.S. secretary of state threatens International Criminal Court staff*

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Washington, March 19 (RHC)-- Amnesty International has condemned U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's comments threatening the International Criminal Court (ICC) staff and their family members for investigating alleged war crimes committed by the U.S. in Afghanistan.

"Threats against family members of ICC staff who are seeking justice is a new low, even for this administration," said Amnesty International USA's advocacy director Daniel Balson.

The court had announced at the beginning of this month that a probe into alleged U.S. crimes could resume after the court's Pre-Trial Chamber previously halted it. The news infuriated the Trump administration, which had been attempting to quash the investigation. "We oppose any effort by the ICC to exercise jurisdiction over U.S. personnel," Pompeo told reporters. "We will not tolerate its inappropriate and unjust attempts to investigate or prosecute Americans."

The secretary of state then suggested that retaliatory actions would be taken. "We want to identify those responsible for this partisan investigation and their family members who may want to travel to the United States or engage in activity that's inconsistent with making sure we protect Americans," he said.

Balson said the Trump administration was proving it was not interested in achieving justice. The fact that Pompeo is mentioning retaliation on families of ICC staff "is an ominous move," said Balson. "If there remained any doubt that the Trump administration's hostility towards the court is fundamentally punitive and callous in nature," he added, "these doubts have now been dispelled."

"Instead of pursuing the torturers, the U.S. is condemning the investigators and even their families."

The ICC started its functions in 2002 to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. The United States, as well as Israel, have refused to sign up to the court.

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