International legal community condemns US sanctions against the International Criminal Court

Joint statement, 16 October 2026

The undersigned organisations strongly condemn the latest sanctions imposed by the US government, implemented through the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), against the International Criminal Court (ICC), announced on 9 October 2026.

The ICC is an independent judicial institution, a cornerstone of international justice and a key component of international peace and security.

With 125 member states from across the world, the ICC operates under the jurisdiction of the 1998 Rome Statute to investigate and, where appropriate, try individuals accused of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, including crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. Under this mandate, the ICC aims to contribute to global peace and stability by ensuring accountability, promoting justice, and deterring future atrocities.

Since February 2025, US sanctions have targeted ICC judges, prosecutors and staff, as well as a UN Special Rapporteur and civil society organisations engaging with the Court. Many of our organisations, together with other organisations and States, have condemned these measures and warned of their impact on judicial independence, access to justice and the rule of law. The sanctions imposed on the Court itself on 9 October 2026 represent a significant escalation.

The consequences extend beyond the Court and those who work for it. As the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has warned, by targeting the ICC as an institution, the measures risk affecting its operations across its mandate, not only the proceedings that have prompted the US action. The ICC is currently investigating 13 situations, with seven individuals in its custody. Sanctions against the Court risk obstructing justice by undermining investigations and trials, witness protection, victims' rights to justice and reparation, and accountability for the most serious crimes.

We urge the US administration to withdraw all sanctions imposed against the ICC and its personnel, as well as sanctions against the UN Special Rapporteur and civil society organisations arising from their engagement with the Court, and to refrain from measures that interfere with the independent administration of justice.

We welcome statements by some State Parties to the Rome Statute reaffirming their support for the independence, impartiality, and integrity of the ICC, and call on all States Parties to use all possible diplomatic means to persuade the US to reverse the sanctions and to take effective steps to protect the Court's independence and ability to function, and to safeguard those who work with and support it.

At a time of increasing pressure on international law and its institutions, we must stand united with victims and those seeking justice, defend the independence of courts and legal professionals, and protect the ICC from political interference, attacks and pressure. No one is above the law, and the fight against impunity depends on preserving the Court's independence and integrity.

SIGNED:

Law Society of England and Wales
Lawyers for Lawyers
International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
Judges for Judges
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales
Unione delle Camere Penali Italiane (Union of the Italian Criminal Chambers)
Bar Council of England and Wales
Fédération des Barreaux d'Europe (FBE)
Law Society of Scotland
Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA)